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Looking at, through, and with YouTube

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Looking at, with, and through YouTube™

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1. Looking at YouTube

Begun in 2004, YouTube rapidly grew as a digital video site achieving 98.8 million viewers in the United States watching 5.3 billion videos by early 2009 (Jarboe, 2009, p. xxii). Within a year of its founding, Google purchased the platform. Succeeding far beyond what and where other video sharing sites had attempted, YouTube soon held a dominant position as a Web 2.0 anchor (Jarboe, 2009, pp. 2ff). Strangelove (2010) offers a sense of YouTube's scale:

There are conflicting reports about exactly how many people watch online video, but there is a general consensus that the number is significant and growing. YouTube claims that 20 hours of video are uploaded to its servers every minute—which suggests that 365,512 videos are uploaded every day. This is the equivalent of Hollywood releasing 114,400 new full-length movies into theaters each week. (p. 10)

Commentators in both the technology press and the popular media recognized it as something important and communication researchers soon followed.

Its very success, however, left researchers and others—even before they attempted to explore it—trying to define just what YouTube is, as well as its role in communication and its role in the wider cultures of the world. In addition, communication researchers explored how they might meaningfully comment upon it or provide some theoretical tools to foster greater understanding.

This review essay will first examine the commonly accepted history of YouTube and how people have defined it. It will then turn to studies of YouTube itself, then to studies of some of the main uses for YouTube, ending with a particularly apt research use: to employ YouTube as a source of data.

A. Defining YouTube

Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim began YouTube in 2004 as a way to post and share video material. (Though many have told their story, both Rowell, 2011, and Woog, 2009, provide a basic

history and a simple explanation of how the platform works.) YouTube was not the first attempt to manage online video. One of the first, shareyourworld.com began 1997, but failed, probably due to immature technology (Woog, 2009, pp. 9–10). In 2000 Singingfish appeared as a public site acquired by Thompson Multimedia. Further acquired by AOL in 2003, it eventually redirected users to AOL Video in 2007. Another site, blinkx (founded in 2004) launched a video search engine in 2005. Google video began in 2005 as another video search engine, helping its users find video on the web. And Yahoo! Video also began as a video search engine in 2005 and added an upload capability in 2006 (Jarboe, 2009, p. 2). YouTube differed in that it allowed people to upload, share, and find video. Later, in a key move, it added social networking features.

Jarboe terms the overall name for such sites “online video sites” and defines two broad categories: “video sharing sites” and “video search engines” (p. 5). The former (YouTube and MySpace TV, for example) store videos uploaded by users; the latter (Google Video and blinkx) find online videos much as search engines locate other content.

But YouTube presents itself as still more than this. Miles (2013) argues that YouTube actually combines several key elements: it is a video sharing site; it is a social networking site; it is an advertising or marketing site (Ch. 1, sec. 3). Miller (2012) defines it even more comprehensively, drawing in a number of key features; “YouTube.com—a free, public, online video archive with built-in social networking features—has created a platform for countless virtual communities, many of which are focused on transmitting knowledge in users’ areas of interest and expertise” (p. 17). Snickars and Vondereau (2009) also take the broad view of YouTube, though they describe it in terms of key metaphors:

The notion of “platform” is only one of several metaphors widely used to stress YouTube’s social, economic and technological importance. When plunging into YouTube discourse, one

indeed begins to wonder about the apparent resemblances YouTube bears to a number of established cultural institutions. YouTube is often spoken about as if it were a library, an archive, a laboratory, or a medium like television, with the respective metaphor inviting hypothetical exploration of what YouTube's possible, probable, and preferred futures might be. (p. 13)

Strangelove (2010) highlights a different aspect by noting, "YouTube is not merely an archive of moving images. . . . It is an intense emotional experience. YouTube is a social space" (p. 4).

The questions of definition and description merge into questions of use. Gauntlett (2011) sees YouTube as the "archetype of the digital creative platform" (p. 88) in three ways. It is "a framework for participation," that is, YouTube provides a digital place for people to do things. In this sense, "YouTube is essentially 'just' a platform for creativity. In an unglamorous formulation, it is a database website, which invites people to add data as files, comments, tags, and links between different bits of information (notably user profiles and video content)" (p. 89). Second, it works because it is "agnostic about content" (p. 92), that is, anyone can post anything as long as it falls within the YouTube user guidelines. Gauntlett explains the significance of this by noting that

the opportunities for innovation in content are left open to the users. Some people have used it in ways that mimic established forms or styles, such as the music video, the interview, the comedy sketch, or the product review "show." . . . Others post examples of their professional practice (such as demonstrations of training or consultancy styles, or architectural "walk-through" videos), in order to attract clients. Other contributors, however, are entirely unconcerned about reaching a broad audience. Some use it to share family videos with friends and relatives. Some create what Patricia Lange [2009] has called "videos of affinity," which are simply produced recordings, with little or no post-production, created purely to connect with a community of friends and acquaintances. (pp. 91–92)

Finally, Gauntlett sees YouTube as "fostering community" because, more than a video archive, it seeks to create community by encouraging "users to make comments, to subscribe, to give star ratings, to add friends and send messages, and to make videos responding to other videos" (p. 93).

Burgess and Green (2009) suggest that YouTube succeeds in these ways because it has become an institution, "operating as a coordinating mechanism between individual and collective creativity and meaning production; and as a mediator between various competing industry-oriented discourses and ideologies and various audience- or user-oriented ones" (p. 37). They trace this success back to some key features described by one of the founders, Jawed Karim. The founders' breakthrough came with the addition of "video recommendations via the 'related videos' list, an email link to enable video sharing, comments (and other social networking functionality), and an embeddable video player (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 2). In other words, YouTube worked because of its combination of a variety of content sources with personal interaction. "It was a combination of the mass popularity of particular user-created videos and the uses of YouTube to distribute broadcast media content that captured the public imagination. It is also this combination that has positioned it as a key place where disputes over copyright, participatory culture, and the market structures of online video distribution are taking place" (p. 4). For Burgess and Green, YouTube "is in the reach business as understood in traditional media business models" (p. 4)—it connects people and content and it does this in several ways at the same time. It serves "as both a 'top-down' platform for the distribution of popular culture and a 'bottom-up' platform for vernacular creativity. . . . be they user-created news services, or generic forms such as vlogging" (p. 6).

For Miller (2012), this makes "YouTube . . . a form of participatory culture" (p. 4). That aspect of participation, a hallmark of Web 2.0 applications, has touched a contemporary need. YouTube and other platforms promote the concept "that both digital media and embodied knowledge can bridge space and time, creating connections between dispersed and diverse individual human experiences" (p. 4).

Kavoori (2011) extends the metaphors to describe YouTube, noting that it functions as a "modern-day bard" or "a provider of modern-day myths," "a key element in the way we think about our on-line experience and (shared) digital culture," a "site for cultural aggregation" (p. 3). YouTube works as "a hybrid information management system," combining "the primary video that dominates the spatial organization of the page, the ancillary videos that appear alongside, functioning like a visual sidebar, and the comments that scroll beneath" (p. 5).

2. Studying YouTube

Because YouTube has a relatively short history, a number of researchers simply introduce it (Paganini, 2013) or attempt to outline its importance (Yanover, 2007). Others, like Levinson (2010) situate it in terms of other “new new media,” highlighting how it has turned “consumers into producers,” repositioned traditional media, bypassed gatekeepers, and sometimes fallen into traditional patterns of propaganda, for example (p. 1). Some have attempted an anthropological investigation of YouTube. Most interestingly in this vein, Wesch (2008) uses YouTube itself to publish his anthropological work in a series of engaging videos.

Other scholars capitalize on the popularity of YouTube with students to recruit their students in explorations of YouTube, a shrewd strategy when trying to make sense of an overwhelming amount of material. Those taking this approach include Strangelove (2010), Kavoori (2011), and Juhasz (2011). Juhasz wrestles with the contradictions within YouTube: amateur or professional; commercial or democratic; political or parody; bad video or good video; public or private. In her project, “YouTube is . . . subject, form, method, problem, and solution” (overview, ¶2).

In the context of a literature review on social networks, including YouTube, Pérez-Latre, Blanco, and Sanchez (2011) identify a number of general approaches. Those most suited to YouTube fall under the headings of convergence, users or audience, data collection, and network analysis. Burgess and Green (2009) see YouTube as culturally transformative, with an impact on many once-thought settled areas of media studies (means of production, role of the audience, copyright, and so on). In particular they identify YouTube’s role in participatory culture (p. 6). But this aspect also casts YouTube’s nature into relief:

There’s no getting away from it: YouTube is a commercial enterprise. But it is also a platform designed to enable cultural participation by ordinary citizens. It is a highly visible example of the broader trend toward uneasy convergences of market and non-market modes of cultural production in the digital environment, where marginal, subcultural, and community-based modes of cultural production are by design incorporat-

ed within the commercial logics of major media corporations. (p. 75)

YouTube also combines the commercial and the popular, the global and the local (sometimes very local), and amateur and the professional (p. 81)

Snickars and Vondereau (2009) organize a reader on YouTube in six sections, corresponding to the different approaches scholars have taken: mediality, usage, form, storage, industry, and curatorship (pp. 5–7). Consequently, this section of the essay will group studies about YouTube in a similar way: media, users and user characteristics, social networking, economic and technical factors, critiques, and legal issues.

A. Media / mediality

One approach to studying YouTube focuses on the external aspects, its qualities as a medium of expression and communication. Hardenbergh (2010) places YouTube in the context of the evolution of television, “including extent of viewership, corporate interest, and accountability to the public” as well as the “changed viewing environments” (p. 170) that YouTube has created. Gurevich (2010) also takes the big picture, arguing that the digital video as distributed on YouTube has created “cinemas of transactions.” “Neither a singular, unitary ‘cinema’ nor a singular ‘transaction,’ the cinemas of transactions constitutes a complex and multiply inter-related system of textual, technological, aesthetic, and economic developments whereby computer-generated attractions and promotional practices span many media and textual forms” (p. 367). Gurevich sees this not as something completely new, but as evolving from the history of cinema.

While YouTube differs from traditional television in many ways, it maintains the idea of a screen, even though its screen holds much more than the older ones. Chamberlain (2010) examines “the screens of menus and metadata that must be engaged, as part of emergent television viewing practices,” noting that they are “productive spaces that reframe the programming we watch, introduce new metadata-based aesthetics, alter the rhythms of the time we spend with television, and reveal the struggles between media corporations both established and emergent” (p. 84). For Gillespie (2010),

the most revealing aspect of YouTube derives from its choice of the term, “platform.” “The term has been deployed in both their populist appeals and their marketing pitches, sometimes as technical ‘platforms,’ sometimes as ‘platforms’ from which to speak, sometimes as ‘platforms’ of opportunity. . . . The term also fits their efforts to shape information policy, where they seek protection for facilitating user expression, yet also seek limited liability for what those users say” (p. 347).

If the idea of a platform or a screen forms one part of the YouTube experience, content forms another. Carlón (2013) warns against YouTube’s agnostic approach to content, seeing it as open to too much influence from the entertainment industry and questioning whether it offers much that is new. Morreale (2014) also remains critical of the blurred boundary between amateur and commercial content, as shown in the move of the “Annoying Orange” show from YouTube to a television series, seeing it only as “fodder for corporate media” (p. 113), leaving perhaps new content ideas in an old setting.

However, Russo (2009) does find something new in the ways that fans can produce their own content, though this presents its own challenge when they take “excerpts from motion pictures and television programs to make so-called video mashups,” leading to YouTube’s facing “legal issues related to copyright for posting these videos, placing the entire creative process in jeopardy” (p. 125). Beneventuo, Rodrigues, Almeida, Almeida, Gonçalves, and Ross (2010), while recognizing the value of user-generated content, worry that it falls subject to a kind of “pollution” arising from duplicate content, undesirable content, inaccurate metadata, and user dissatisfaction.

For Adami (2009) the “video response” option may offer a solution. This “new interaction practice, i.e., communication threads started by an initial video, built up by video responses, and resumed by a video-summary” can transform the user experience. Adami employs a “social semiotic multimodal analysis” to explore the ideas of interest and coherence (p. 379). Adami (2014) also examines the video response option, paying attention to the copy and paste capabilities. Noting that users’ “exchanges can be (a) fully cohesive and attuned; (b) cohesive and variously coherent; (c) cohesive but incoherent; (d) marginally related; (e) non-cohesive and inferentially related; or (f) can present no clues of relatedness,” Adami remarks that a lack of cohesion does not seem to bother users. Such “video exchanges frequently pri-

oritize an interested re-interpretation, transformation, assemblage, and recontextualization of signs/texts, often irrespectively of the authors’ intended meaning” (p. 239). Adami concludes that these practices call for a new understanding of what makes successful communication.

B. Users and user characteristics

Another way to study YouTube begins with its users, though here, too, one can take several paths. Several studies examine “vidding,” a process in which artists, primarily women, edit footage from television or motion pictures to create music videos” (Busse & Lothian, 2011, p. 139). The availability of a platform like YouTube has increased the visibility of this work. However, Coppa and Tushnet (2011) argue that “that the art form of women’s remix is being suppressed by services that allow users to create and share videos, such as YouTube,” often due to issues of content ownership and copyright (p. 131). Tucker-McLaughlin (2013) sees an issue for women larger than vidding and explores “the lack of female participation in the most-viewed videos on YouTube.” Urging women to participate in online video, she calls for a counterbalance to the “major themes in the most-viewed videos [which] include escapism, misogynistic discourse, violence, and obscenity” (p. 43).

Somewhat encouragingly, Guo and Lee (2013) note that a marginalized group can succeed on YouTube. They examine the “YouTube-based vernacular discourses created by two of the most well-known and influential Asian American YouTube celebrities: Ryan Higa and Kevin Wu,” using a model of “hybrid vernacular discourse” (p. 391). From the categories of “content, agency, and subjectivity,” they noted “some revolutionary potential” in the discourse.

A form of user-created content, the vlog—a video web log—has gained popularity and generated followings for a number of popular posters. Molyneaux, O’Donnell, Gibson, and Singer (2008) note that studying these “represent[s] a challenge to communication research, which has traditionally analyzed video material either from the point of view of its production or its effect on its audience.” They employ “a synthesis of these approaches . . . to analyze vlogs for sex differences in the presentation of content and in the makeup of their audiences” (p. 8).

A number of scholars studying YouTube focus on various characteristics, practices, or motivations of the

site's users. In this they more or less fall under the general heading of audience studies.

Several scholars find that YouTube challenges the received concepts of audience. Hughes (2014) calls for a new research approach into audiences through a focus on the workplace use of media. YouTube viewing often falls into this category, whether for education or, more likely, for clandestine entertainment. "Placing audience studies literature alongside discussions of labor and place, I sketch a preliminary outline for understanding these practices while pursuing questions related to the definition of audiences, the specificities of non-entertainment media, and mediated place and labor" (p. 644). Interested in social relationships, Pereira Salgado (2013) also attempts to "problematize the concepts of audience, fan, and community" in a study of Felipe Neto's channels on YouTube, attending in particular to the links between fans and their idol (p. 69). Napoli (2010) takes audience studies in a new direction by calling for a reconceptualization of the idea of the mass, particularly as it functions in the two-way communication of a Web 2.0 platform like YouTube. Renó (2007), drawing on the ideas of Luiz Beltrão and Néstor Canclini suggests that the audience, as it engages YouTube, highlights the "folk-communicational character" of the Internet (p. 1).

A number of researchers adapt traditional audience tools to their study of YouTube. Hanson and Haridakis (2008) see a value in the uses and gratifications tradition. "Because users play an active role in the production, distribution, and receipt of YouTube's media content (e.g., creating, sharing, and viewing), it is appropriate to examine YouTube use from an audience-centered perspective" (p. 6). They examined college students and, in line with uses and gratifications predictions, found "that different motives predicted watching and sharing different types of news-related content" (p. 6). A follow-up study (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009) "examined whether motives and individual differences (social activity, interpersonal interaction, locus of control, sensation-seeking, innovativeness, and YouTube affinity) predicted viewing videos on YouTube and sharing videos with others" (p. 317). Here, too, the uses and gratifications theory successfully predicted behaviors. "Results suggest that while people watch videos on YouTube for some of the same reasons identified in studies of television viewing, there is a distinctly social aspect to YouTube use that reflects its social networking characteristics (p. 317).

Taking into account not only the social networking aspect of YouTube but the content creation performed by the viewers, van Dijck (2009) examines the concept of user agency. The study "explores user agency as a complex concept, involving not only the user's cultural role as a facilitator of civic engagement and participation, but also his economic meaning as a producer, consumer, and data provider, as well as his volatile position as volunteer or aspiring professional in the emerging labor market" (p. 41). Granted that users are active, Camacho and Alonso (2010) question just how active they are. In a study of YouTube España viewers, they find "that Internet users who watch videos on-line have adopted the passive attitude that is inherent in the behavior of viewers of unidirectional and traditional media" (p. 1). Tracking over 650 million visits to 278 videos, they find more passive viewing than added agency.

Researchers categorize YouTube viewers in other ways as well. Dawson (2010) asks about a "digital television divide," based on the digital divide research that tracked those without access to the online world. Urging scholars not to forget the non-adopters of digital television, Dawson tries "to account for the sporadic and halting nature of the diffusion of digital television devices and services" (p. 95). Looking at the divide in how people watch, Waldfogel (2009) explores how much the users of YouTube watch web-based programming versus traditional television programming. Using a multi-year survey of college students, he finds that web-based viewing supplements rather than replaces television. Lange (2011) uses a study of "teen video makers on YouTube" to challenge the received binary divisions in the digital television research world ("videos made by professionals versus amateurs" and "the use of images for memory preservation versus sharing experiences and negotiating identities"). The teen sample did not show such clear divisions but did illustrate an "interaction between aesthetics and technical knowledge in video-mediated, parodic forms of nostalgia" (p. 25).

Because YouTube users can directly respond to what they watch, Thelwall, Sud, and Vis (2012) set out to identify patterns in those comments. "For instance, the typical YouTube comment was mildly positive, was posted by a 29-year-old male, and contained 58 characters. About 23% of comments in the complete comment sets were replies to previous comments" (p. 616). They also found that negative comments triggered a greater number of replies. Overall, they note that the

analysis “suggests different audience uses for YouTube, from passive entertainment to active debating” (p. 616). Harvey, Stewart, and Ewing (2011) look at a different kind of audience “comment”: the act of forwarding content. Using three YouTube videos as stimuli, they investigated aspects of the audience involvement. They note “that sender involvement and the amount of online communication across the tie are the most critical factors influencing propagation propensity” (p. 365).

Do inoculation effects hold for YouTube viewers? Lim and Ki (2007) found that, similar to other such experiments, “subjects who received a preemptive inoculation message were better able to detect unduly manipulative intent in a parody video, were more resistant to altering their original attitudes toward the issue, and demonstrated less favorable attitudes toward the sponsor of the parody video than did their counterparts in the control group” (p. 713).

Though seldom consciously thought about, YouTube viewers, producers, and the site itself continually negotiate power relations. Pauwels and Hellriegel (2008) explore this aspect of the YouTube users’ experience; focusing on a four-week period of political campaigning, their “analysis shows that—while YouTube actively participates in constructing the image of users being on an equal footing with the platform producers—pre-molded personal space, the presented (and ‘significantly missing’) options, and embedded steering mechanisms call into question the notion of user empowerment” (p. 51).

C. As a social network site

As noted earlier, YouTube combines its video material with the tools and qualities of a social networking site. A number of scholars have investigated this aspect of YouTube, either as a part of a larger exploration of online social networks or as one specific to YouTube. Several propose theoretical models. Cormode, Krishnamurthy, and Willinger (2010) find that traditional network study tools (node and edge graphs) cannot capture the complexity of these networks. They argue for “Entity Interaction Network models” and suggest the features of these models, which they then “apply it to three popular networks (Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube) to highlight important features” (p. 3). Yeo (2012) proposes “a structural equation model of the psychology of social media users” and finds that, applied to YouTube, the model “indicate[s] social media use falls into two personality

categories, as oriented towards the self or towards others” (p. 297). Yeo suggests that marketers can make uses of these characteristics to harness social media. Finally Fuchs (2014) draws on Habermas’ concept of the public sphere to understand social media critically. Fuchs’ paper “introduces a theoretical model of public service media that it uses as a foundation for identifying three antagonisms of the contemporary social media sphere in the realms of the economy, the state, and civil society. It concludes that these limits can only be overcome if the colonization of the social media lifeworld is countered politically so that social media and the Internet become public service and commons-based media” (p. 57).

In the light of widespread sharing of sometimes copyrighted material, Mabilot (2007) also examines online community regulation, but in terms of “the distribution and sharing of videos on the Internet” and highlights “the need for the film and audiovisual industries to socially construct new cultural and commercial experiences with film fans” (p. 39). In another approach to networks, Goldenberg, Oestreicher-Singer, and Reichman (2012) look at online content as “product networks, in which nodes are product pages linked by hyperlinks.” The addition of social networks creates “a dual-network structure,” which, Goldenberg and his colleagues argue, helps users with content. Using YouTube’s networks, they experiment with changing structural properties and find “that exposure to the dual network results in a more efficient (time to desirable outcome) and more effective (average product rating, overall satisfaction) exploration process” (p. 452).

In a detailed ethnographic study of YouTube participants, Lange (2007) describes how they “developed and maintained social networks by manipulating physical and interpretive access to their videos. The analysis reveals how circulating and sharing videos reflects different social relationships among youth.” She discovered different levels of “publicness” in the video sharing, ranging from keeping content as private as possible to a more public access, “while limiting access to detailed information about video producers’ identities” (p. 361).

In his lengthy study and promotion of social networking and participatory culture, Gauntlett (2013) includes YouTube as an example of the shift in culture from elite producers to the work of everyday participants. He argues that we have now experienced a cultural shift, facilitated by the various social networking sites.

Like Gauntlett, many observers see the capability of Web 2.0 for interaction and the creative efforts of YouTube participants as part of a new participatory culture. At the same time, some have recognized that we understand relatively little about how participatory culture sustains itself. Bou-Franch, Lorenzo-Dus, and Blitvich (2012) begin an exploration of this by examining “YouTube text-based ‘conversation’” for conversational coherence (p. 501). Three other studies examine different aspects of the participatory culture. Shifman (2012) asks why some videos achieve great popularity, becoming or fostering “memes.” A qualitative and quantitative examination of 30 memetic videos “yielded six common features: focus on ordinary people, flawed masculinity, humor, simplicity, repetitiveness, and whimsical content. Each of these attributes marks the video as incomplete or flawed, thereby invoking further creative dialogue” (p. 187). Shifman concludes that the impetus to imitate such themes marks participatory culture. Simonsen (2013) explores mashups, which he sees “as a mode of everyday bricolages,” a kind of “Vernacular Creativity.” He “argues that the novelty of mashups is not be found in its formal characteristic, but rather in its social and communicative abilities within the YouTube community,” a manifestation of the connectivity of the participatory culture (p. 47). Stein (2013) takes a very different approach to the idea of participation, applying it not to video content but to the domain of user policies. After comparing different social media sites, Stein concludes, “While YouTube and Facebook policies offer minimal participation over site content and governance, Wikipedia offers maximal participation. Moreover, understanding the terms of participation inscribed in user policies facilitates both more informed choices about user involvement in online platforms and advocacy for more equitable usage terms in policy, law, and practice” (p. 353).

D. Economic, business and technical aspects

Several studies examine the structure of YouTube: its economic, business, or technical side. Writing only a few years after YouTube’s birth, Jarrett (2008) tries to forecast its future based on tensions arising from two pulls: “[it is] based within regimes of consumer production and identity practices, yet it is also located within a traditional fiscal economy as indicated by the trademark identifier. . . . The difficulty of sustaining an emergent social economy alongside the requirements of advertising-driven economics raises

questions about the future of YouTube, and indicates the complex terrain of what lies beyond broadcasting” (p. 132). Subsequent history has shown how YouTube has negotiated this, opening the door for further studies. Cunningham (2012) regards YouTube as fostering a co-evolution of its amateur model with the formal or professional communication world, with attendant changes in copyright understanding, for example. Proposing a theoretical model, he analyzes YouTube “through the concept of ‘social network markets’—individual choices are made on the basis of others’ choices and such networked preferencing is enhanced by the growing ubiquity of social media platforms.” From this perspective he looks at “what is happening around the monetization and professionalization of online video (YouTube, for example) and the socialization of professional production strategies (transmedia, for example) as innovation from the margins” (p. 415).

Galindo Rubio and Nó Sánchez (2010) look at technical details, reviewing the key innovations in digital video and the production process: “image capture, editing and message postproduction, and broadcasting the final product” (p. 137). Kang, Zhang, Jiang, Chen, Meng, and Yoshihira (2010) remind us that YouTube is not the only video sharing site. They offer a contrasting study of “Yahoo! Video, the second largest U.S. video sharing site, to understand the nature of such unprecedented massive workload as well as its impact on online video data center design.” Their study analyzes the technical underpinnings of video sharing: “the impact of workload arrival distribution, Service Level Agreements (SLAs), and workload scheduling schemes on the design and operations of such large-scale video distribution systems” (p. 129).

In addition to producing shared video and managing data centers, platforms like YouTube must make this material searchable. Kim, Arslan Ay, and Zimmermann (2010) “present a framework based on the complementary idea of acquiring sensor streams automatically in conjunction with video content. Of special interest are geographic properties of mobile videos. The metadata from sensors can be used to model the coverage area of scenes as spatial objects such that videos can effectively, and on a large scale, be organized, indexed and searched based on their field-of-views” (p. 773).

Another challenge for video sharing comes from quality control. Xia, Mei, Hua, Zhang, and Hua (2010) report an attempt to assess the visual quality of uploaded material. They “regard the quality assessment

as a two-class classification problem: features motivated from domain knowledge are extracted to be the visual representation while the overall quality is the two-class label” (p. 826). They examine therefore the perceived quality as well as the editing style to create their measures.

E. Critiques

YouTube and the participatory culture does not lack for critics. Keen (2007) articulates one of the earlier critiques of social media in general, but including YouTube. Critical of the non-professional nature of the communication, he raises questions about the accuracy of the material, especially citizen journalists posting on YouTube (pp. 46–52); the mix of commercial and non-commercial content (pp. 88–91); the threats to the broadcast industry and the loss of quality in television (pp. 122–125); and the threats to intellectual property (pp. 141–145). Keen also warns about the ease of deception in online materials, stemming from the lack of professional oversight. Kim (2012) raises somewhat different concerns based on “the institutionalization of YouTube: its transformation from user-generated content (UGC)—oriented as a virtual village—into a professionally generated content (PGC) video site, especially after being purchased by Google” (p. 53). The mix of the two approaches weakens each of them in Kim’s view.

In the context of his enthusiastic support for participatory culture, Gauntlett (2013) recognizes some risks, particular in terms of the exploitation of labor: “Web 2.0 sites provide no content themselves, but instead become highly valued and (in some cases) profitable businesses off the back of the creativity of their users” (pp. 186–187). Though he ultimately discounts this—the creators after all retain ownership of their work—the danger lies in the precedent. Juhasz (2009) also raises issues about the structure of YouTube. “She notes that while the site is popular, it is not democratic, and that anything critical or original is lost to low viewership or is censored by popular opinion.” Further, YouTube’s claims to community are exaggerated. “It does not allow for real-time comments or bulletin boards but does facilitate advertisements” (p. 145).

F. Legal issues

YouTube’s role as a video-sharing platform allows users to upload almost any kind of material, including televised material recorded from an existing source or a film clip ripped from a DVD. Publishing

such material violates copyright regulations, both in the United States and in other jurisdictions. A number of researchers have looked at the legal issues.

Von Lohmann (2007) offers an introduction to how the copyright rules enshrined in the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) affects sites like YouTube. Von Lohmann feels that the DMCA may offer greater freedom to those publishing their own material. Postigo (2008) provides a look at the ways that the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) framed the ideas of digital rights in response to the DMCA, highlighting fair use provisions. “In so doing the EFF develops a legitimizing rationale for expanding consumer privileges in copyrighted works. The analysis shows that the user-centered notion of fair use articulates with broader historical and emerging trends in media consumption/use and thus finds accepting audiences both within the movement and outside of it” (p. 1008). More recently, Corsaro (2012) has updated discussion of the copyright laws in light of the “development of Peer-to-Peer (‘P2P’) networks and the proliferation of user-generated content sites.” While the courts have limited P2P sites, they have given protection to user-generated content sites against claims under the DMCA. With some issues left unclear, Corsaro argues “that the substantial noninfringing use standard enumerated in the case of *Sony Corp. of America v. Universal City Studios, Inc.* could provide a guide for developing a standard for secondary liability of user-generated content sites” (p. 449).

Litigation continues in the U.S. courts on YouTube’s liability under the DMCA. “Although YouTube is often aware of the existence of infringing videos on its website, it only takes down such videos when copyright owners notify YouTube that a specific video is unauthorized. This policy prompted Viacom International to file a one billion dollar copyright infringement lawsuit against YouTube in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York” (Katz, 2011, p. 100). Trombley (2007) examined the case shortly after its filing and argued that “such corporate alliances with YouTube demonstrate a striking willingness on the part of other major content providers to accept a participatory model of media consumption. Through this, individuals are allowed to take professional content and reuse or remake it in their own art” (p. 647). Meyer (2009) offers another look at the case, in which the courts ruled in favor of YouTube. Holding that the case raised greater awareness of copyright issues, Meyer “examines and com-

compares two proposed sets of such standards and practices: the Principles for User Generated Content Services and the YouTube Video Identification tool. It also analyzes the standards and practices in light of the fair use provisions of section 107 of the Copyright Act” (p. 935). Finally, Katz (2011) disagrees that the DMCA shielded YouTube from liability in the case and “argues that the court’s holding was erroneous because it misapplied several ambiguous provisions in the DMCA at critical junctures of its analysis. This article therefore proposes legislative amendments to the DMCA, and argues that the decision must be reversed on appeal in order to adequately protect the rights of copyright owners” (p. 100).

Looking at copyright issues in another way, Hilderbrand (2007) argues that YouTube has used the DMCA and various litigation as an excuse to “introduce new ways to regulate and deny access to such content under the guise of enforcing copyright” (p. 48). Conti (2013) takes a similar view in a discussion of “the political remix videos (PRV) that critique dominant discourses and power structures through the copyrighted footage” (p. 3) and feels that YouTube’s opposition due to copyright stems from its for-profit status.

3. Using YouTube

Individuals and groups employ YouTube for a wide variety of purposes, many of which fit into traditional communication study. This section will review the scholarship in a number of these areas (alphabetically ordered): advertising, archival work, education, entertainment, journalism, political communication, and others.

A. Advertising

YouTube has become a platform not only for participatory culture but also for business. Its parent company, Google, has from the beginning sought to monetize YouTube content, running advertising along with the social networking that has contributed to YouTube’s success. In addition, companies and marketing consultants have found that a presence on YouTube matters to business.

Writing from a marketing perspective, Jarboe (2009) offers a guide for businesses to develop a video marketing strategy on YouTube. Following a how-to format, Jarboe breaks down the process into topics

Such restrictive applications of copyright law and other forms of censorship occur in other jurisdictions as well. Prakash (2012) reviews the situation in India where, despite protections in the Indian constitution, the government has tried to block online content, including YouTube videos. Yalkin, Kerrigan, and vom Lehn (2014) examine Turkish citizen’s reactions to government censorship of YouTube through a series of in-depth interviews. They found that citizens see the censorship as ideologically driven. They also noted “that citizen-consumers engage in two types of resistance strategies against such domination by the state: using irony as passive resistance, and using the very same technology used by the state to resist its domination” (p. 271). Youmans and York (2012) look at the situation across the Arab world. Like Hilderbrand (2007), they see a threat coming both from governments and from sites like YouTube. Their analysis of YouTube’s policies “illustrate[s] how prohibitions on anonymity, community policing practices, campaigns from regime loyalists, and counterinsurgency tactics work against democracy advocates” (p. 315). They feel that the for-profit model behind sites like YouTube makes them vulnerable to government pressure.

such as video marketing tactics, implementation of a campaign, placing videos, channel development, and measuring results. Miles (2013) presents a similar how-to guide for the business use of YouTube. The book begins with a brief history of YouTube and an indication of its importance for businesses. Miles then indicates key topics: “Why YouTube is a huge opportunity for businesses; Why companies frequently fail at YouTube marketing and how to fix faltering performances; What are some effective styles of video making; How to get your videos done quickly and easily; How some of the best marketers on YouTube are creating massive followings; How you can advertise on YouTube to drive traffic and revenue to your existing business; How you can monetize your YouTube work and make real money by creating simple videos” (p. 1). The book combines case studies of successful marketing on YouTube with instructions to accomplish each step of the marketing plan. For Miles, the key benefit of YouTube lies not so much in the video hosting (as important as that is), but in its role as a social net-

working site, something he sees a much more important for a successful marketing campaign.

Veilo, Sellnow, and Petrun (2012) study a challenge for brand managing that has grown with the participatory culture of YouTube: refuting false or unsubstantiated claims about a product or business. Using the case study of Dominos' response to a 2009 YouTube hoax, they suggest that the company created a learning opportunity. They found that "learning manifests in observable actions that further emphasize a commitment to the values and norms the organization originally met to earn social legitimacy prior to the crisis" (p. 322). They also stress the importance for the company to respond to the same audience that saw the initial claim (that is, by using YouTube).

Yu and Chang (2013) examine another approach to marketing on YouTube: the use of a micro-film as a tool for branding. "Based on the storytelling theory of emotional responses, sympathy and empathy, and the persuasion theory of elaboration likelihood model, this study develops hypotheses to test the relationship between the storytelling power embedded in micro-films on brand attitude and the moderating effect of cognitive involvement on the overall effect." Data collected from YouTube users "confirmed the positive relationship between sympathy and empathy on brand attitude, and the moderating effect of cognitive involvement" (p. 674).

Other studies of marketing on YouTube have investigated particular, more technical aspects. Moon, Jung, and Lee (2011) examined the impact of video format. In an experimental study, they explored "whether online video quality and image size will influence viewers' response toward online video advertising" and found that enhancing quality "may have an important impact on advertising effectiveness" through a greater sense of presence (p. 154). Pashkevich, Dorai-Raj, Kellar, and Zigmond (2012) looked at in-stream advertising. This feature on YouTube allows "the user to skip directly to the desired video content after five seconds of viewing." Google's own study found that these skippable ads "may be as effective on a per-impression basis as traditional video advertisements" (p. 451). The researchers conclude that this format for advertising can satisfy both the advertiser and the content creator, whose viewers have an improved viewing experience. Pérez Rufí, Navarrete, and Gómez Pérez (2014) examine a different approach to YouTube advertising: product placement within videos. Their content analysis of 50 music videos found that the

product placement strategy is "extraordinarily usual" (p. 83), though it will not work for every product or brand.

B. Archival work

As a video-sharing site, YouTube has become both an accidental repository of billions of videos and, more deliberately, a film and video archive. Because it is not a video search engine (it depends on Google for that), YouTube provides limited functionality in finding or classifying its material. And so a number of people have stepped in to give some sense of the available material on YouTube. Kavoori (2011) opens his reader with a simple question, "How does one make sense of YouTube?" (p. 1) and then proceeds to lay out a guide based on genre analysis and digital media criticism. Focusing on storytelling as an organizing concept, he suggests sorting YouTube content into a number of key genres. The first, and most thoroughly addressed in the book is "the Phenom" or phenomenon, a category that deals with fame. It "has as its defining characteristic a vast viral impact. In each case, the thematic, stylistic or narrative treatment of the subject is less important than its sheer discursive import—it is watched by millions" (p. 14). The stories here could come from music, politics, celebrity, moments of life, but all find a common theme in their impact. Kavoori's next category is "the short," or short film. It "typically defined as a short film that follows the narrative conventions and dramatic possibilities that an abbreviated narrative offers—a focus on characters rather than complex events, on the personal as opposed to the historical or sociological" (p. 14). The third general category is "the mirror." This refers to "the posing, placement, and recording of the self over time, with the central idea of keeping a public memory of personal change (and continuity) available on-line" (p. 15). The morph "involves 'morphing' different images—typically those of the human face or body. The Morph is delineated from the Mirror in its undertaking of a fundamentally different rhetorical action—one of manipulation rather than a record of the self" (p. 15). The "witness" refers to reportorial videos, things that document events. The "word" is a YouTube genre where there is little textual commonality across different examples of the genre, rather the commonality comes from the singular resonance of a set of words (phrases, song titles, conversations) across different on-line realms (videos, blogs, forums)" (p. 15). Kavoori's final category is "the experiment," a more or less self-evident grouping. As Kavoori himself recognizes, this attempt to make sense of

YouTube marks just a beginning: The sheer volume of video uploaded each day means that other groupings will no doubt emerge.

While Strangelove (2010) also looks at the video on YouTube, his interest falls more in the ethnographic realm: using the video content to understand those who participate by uploading videos, to gain a sense of “YouTube as a domain of self-expression, community, and public confession” (p. 4). The categories that he uses, then, serve less to sort out YouTube as to shed light on the people. They include the home and family life, the video diaries, the women of YouTube, the YouTube community, the documentary (politics, religion, armed conflict), and the post-television.

Weaver, Zelenkauskaitė, and Samson (2012) direct their attention to only one class of YouTube video: violence. A content analysis of three general categories (most viewed, highly rated, random) examined “frequencies of violent acts and the context of violence (e.g., characteristics of perpetrator and victim, justification, consequences)” and indicated “less violence as a percentage of programming on YouTube than there is on television. Moreover, the violence that was present showed more realistic consequences and more negative context than television violence” (p. 1065).

YouTube’s potential as a video archive has received some attention. Gehl (2009) actually questions YouTube’s role as a new kind of archive, seeing it “not as opposed to traditional corporate media but in the same genealogy as previous archival technologies and techniques. In archives, all content is flattened and has equal weight, so it is up to a curatorial authority to present content to audiences” (p. 43). YouTube’s lack of a curator or similar authority leaves the question open and the platform less valuable as an archive. As Gehl implies, the idea of curation tends to follow existing patterns. Spigel (2010) offers a very interesting study to illustrate just how online archives imitate existing archives by exploring “the cultural logics of television archives by looking at the architectural designs of buildings that have housed TV collections since the early 1960s and by tracing this to the more recent viral architecture of Internet sites on which people post clips of old TV shows and programs” (p. 52).

Writing from Australia, McKee (2011) examines the possibilities of YouTube as an archive, comparing its television holdings with the government’s National Film and Sound Archive. Looking at curatorial practices and cataloguing, McKee found that:

NFSA is stronger in current affairs and older programs, while YouTube is stronger in game shows and lifestyle programs. YouTube is stronger than the NFSA on “human interest” material—births, marriages, and deaths. YouTube accessioning more strongly accords with popular histories of Australian television. (p. 154)

YouTube often has shorter clips but also “more surprising pieces of rare ephemera” and more reliable cataloguing and metadata (p. 154). Pietrobruno (2013) explores YouTube as a UNESCO “archive of intangible heritage.” Pietrobruno notes that UNESCO has promoted “the storage of videos of immaterial heritage on YouTube. Individuals have also been producing videos of the very practices sanctioned by UNESCO and uploading them to this website,” thus developing an informal archive. She reports a study that asks “whether social archiving has the potential to counter official heritage narratives that can reproduce distinctions based upon gender” (p. 1259). Her study focuses on the Mevlevi Sema ceremony of Turkey.

As both Gehl and McKee noted, curatorial practice matters if YouTube will function as an archive. But such a system of practice will take time to develop. Some, like Geisler, Willard, and Ovalle (2011) propose “a framework that would enable the detailed indexing of film and television media through crowdsourcing. By making it easier to generate detailed data about these media on a large scale, fans and scholars can more efficiently produce a wide range of artifacts that reflect their interests in this content” (p. 73). Others, like Puhl and Araújo (2012) offer suggestions “to study YouTube as a tool for construction of collective memory in digital form.” Looking at five categories, “store/post; categorization/tags; sharing; interaction mechanisms; and tools of suggestion by the system,” they found that “the collective memory network is constructed by both the action of the system and by user action, allowing constant flow between the individual and collective manifestations” (p. 705).

A number of researchers have suggested particular subjects for archiving on YouTube, even while they recognize some limitations. Birchall (2009) calls attention to avant-garde films. Though YouTube and other video-sharing sites “has created a wealth of historical avant-garde film for those interested, however, there is little to aid them in organizing and understanding the films they have access to” (p. 12). Brunow (2011) looks to online archives to preserve the output of “col-

lective film-making practice in Germany,” the work of video collectives from the 1970s and 1980s. While these “videos can be perceived as an important contribution to left-wing cultural memory, this memory of the various media practices of the last decades is currently fading away” (p. 171).

Others have begun to collect or critique the subjects of the video collections. Wall (2009) examines YouTube videos, “featuring the countries Ghana and Kenya . . . finding that this citizen media tool is allowing ordinary people to construct representations of African countries.” However Wall judges “that these are much more likely to come from westerners” or to show Africans who “most likely to appear in entertainment, especially music, videos” (p. 393). Yeung (2014) looks at YouTube in its role “in the repository and distribution of lesbian television programs” and examines the “use of the site in the preservation and community building of lesbian representations worldwide” (p. 43). Allgaier (2013) suggests collecting music videos about science and technology. He “explores what kinds of music videos about science are available and how they could be categorized,” arguing “that music videos could be helpful tools for science communication and science education” (p. 266).

C. Education

Educators have quickly grasped the potential of YouTube. Educational uses range from the well known, like the Kahn Academy, to the one-off videos prepared by individual faculty members at all levels of instruction. Communication journals have begun to see more researchers discussing YouTube, either as a resource for communication classes or as a potential for improving the communication of all subjects

Not long after YouTube’s rise in popularity, Kaufman (2007) saw its educational potential. In suggesting possibilities for research, Kaufman suggested 10 recommendations:

- (1) Establish a research center for the future of the moving image in education;
- (2) launch new, self-consciously high-quality educational productions in television, film, video, and radio;
- (3) develop a strategy for privileging library-, museum-, and university-sourced moving images in the online chaos of the YouTube world;
- (4) support a research fellows programs, bringing specialists to cultural and educational institutions to work with video in particular;
- (5) publish research papers systematically on these topics;
- (6) design college-level and K-12 courses

around these initiatives; (7) launch standards and best practices workshops for moving image questions; (8) explore experimentation around with large data sets or digital material; (9) support the establishment of the American Archive; and (10) last, but immediately, release moving image and recorded sound material for the public to engage with. (p. 1)

Two years later, López (2009) outlined the progress made, introducing some of the riches of YouTube to a Latin American audience. By 2009, she analyzed the “benefits and challenges” of creating a “library of educational materials, and the efforts by colleges and universities to make lectures and classes available to the general public through online resources” (p. 76).

Creating material for YouTube can also have educational benefits. Lin and Polaniecki (2008) report “a case study of a group of middle-school students that investigates their making of video documentaries” (p. 92). In this instance, the teachers used YouTube as a research tool and a method to develop visual literacy among the students. Tan (2013) also recounts a visual/digital literacy project that employed YouTube in the classroom. Using focus groups, she asked “what constitutes learning in these spaces; how valid this is perceived to be by the students and how they engage with materials in this space.” Among other things, she discovered information about “how the students interacted with each other in these informal spaces and the role that YouTube video content plays in community formation and supporting informal peer learning” (p. 463).

Morain and Swarts (2012) explore the use of “user-generated tutorial videos . . . as a new form of technical communication, one that relies on text, images, video, and sound alike to convey a message.” Given an increased popularity of the form, they offer “an approach—a rubric—for assessing the instructional content of tutorial videos that considers the specific roles of modal and multimodal content in effective delivery” (p. 6). Similarly, Swarts (2012) looks at instructional video “as a vernacular form of technical communication serving readers unwilling to consult print documentation.” After reviewing materials, he offers a set of recommendations based on best practices. These include the following: “Good videos spend significant time introducing an instructional agenda and forecasting goals and steps. . . . Good videos also focus on demonstrative content, in which steps are both performed and explained or elaborated. . . . Good videos were also designed so that their instructional

messages could be easily identified and accessed, easily understood and applied, and so that the messages were engaging and encouraging” (p. 195).

A particularly fruitful area for the use of YouTube in education lies in language study since the online videos provided material from native language speakers that language teachers could use in their classrooms. Balcikanli (2009) offers an overview, while Jyh Wee Sew (2012) suggests that coupling YouTube clips in weblogs helps in development of Malay literacy at the tertiary level. Rahimah, Prain, and Collet (2014) offer a more in-depth look at the ESL learning strategies in a Malaysian university setting. Their research presentation rests on a study of 400 students in a language program. Chuang and Yang (2010) report successes with YouTube for creating English-language podcasts by language students.

Researchers report other educational applications of YouTube. Allgaier (2013) has found a number of music videos about science and technology and urges the “science communication community . . . [to have] a better understanding of the practices of online video sharing and the effects of music videos about science” (p. 266). Daniels (2012) offers “a strategy for teaching health communication” and describes “how one class took the lead in designing a community event that critically engaged both a YouTube video and a documentary film about police brutality as a public health issue” (p. 137). Lehman, DuFrene, and Lehman (2010) had students produce YouTube videos on communication ethics as part of a business communication curriculum. They argue that the approach worked well as a substitute for the case study method. “Students produced videos displaying violations of corporate ethics codes for analysis and discussion by their classmates” (p. 444). Lester (2012) reports something similar in a different business communication course; in this instance students created an applied advertising project. LaBelle (2012) offers a primer for Extension agents to familiarize themselves with visual literacy and create materials for their clients that they could distribute on YouTube or some other video site. Turning the lens on motion picture history, Snelson and Perkins (2008) look at the roots of the history of YouTube in film and television. They identify several key themes, including “(1) the intrinsic advantages of motion picture technologies, (2) differing opinions about the benefits of film and video, and (3) access and equipment issues” (p. 1) and then apply this to online video.

Finally, Clark and Stewart (2007) offer a look, not at the classroom, but at how a university center used YouTube videos to promote its programs.

D. Entertainment

YouTube has changed television and affected the entertainment industry, deeply affecting television’s “monopoly on video distribution” (Miles, 2013, p. 1). In a shifting world, several scholars have tried to understand these changes, either to entertainment in general or to the music video in particular. Aoun (2007) notes that “the digital era has simultaneously created two manipulative environments which includes the private and the public. The availability of iPod and YouTube provides entertainment to consumers.” Both of them develop individual aesthetics based on their user interfaces, which in turn become part of the entertainment experience. Smith (2013) approaches the changes in the entertainment industry not from a content delivery perspective but from that of content creators. Examining a change in the television industry that opened the door to unknown writers, he credits this change “to the popularity of online videos featured on the website YouTube, the 2007 Writers Guild of America strike, and the 2008–2009 U.S. recession” (p. 56).

YouTube has had a strong effect on music videos. The format fits well into the YouTube platform, in length, audience appeal, and social networking response. Edmond (2014) traces the history of the shift of music videos from the big budget productions geared to music television stations to “a new music video culture.” She “not only documents the impact that digital convergence has had on music videos but it also describes the lingering role that older music and media industry paradigms might play in shaping the future of online video” (p. 305). Vattellós (2009) also credits YouTube with saving the music video by changing “their distribution, consumption, and purpose.” She argues that this has “made them more accessible for the public and cheaper and easier to produce for musical acts, regardless of fame and funding” (p. 49).

Skågeby (2013) studies one particular kind of music video: a “shreds” video, one that “combines existing live music concert footage, predominantly including a famous male rock guitarist or guitar based rock group, with a self-produced overdubbed soundtrack. The result is a musical parody that exists in an intersection between production and consumption and works as a within-genre evolution.” The format is controversial on YouTube because of possible copyright

infringement. Skågeby's study situates the format as "a co-dependence between: (1) production and consumption; (2) homage and subversion; (3) comprehension and miscomprehension; and (4) media synchronicity and socioeconomic dis/harmony" (p. 63). Lingel and Naaman (2012) also examine fan-produced music videos based on concerts recordings. Using interviews with these fans, they discuss "motivations for the capture of personal video recordings, the protocols for sharing of videos, and the roles videos play in online fan activities" (p. 332). Reguillo (2012) also looks at the relationship of fans with music culture in the social network of YouTube, suggesting ideas for future research.

A subgenre of the music video is the dance video. Carroll (2008) examines one particular kind: those that feature various swing dances. YouTube videos have benefitted a revival of the dance form and "swing dancers make great use of digital online technology, from YouTube and the exchange of digital audio-visual clips to discussion boards, instant messaging and email." Carroll places this in "the transgressive and subversive history of swing dances in African American communities" (p. 183).

YouTube has also provided a platform for other entertainment forms not always featured in mainstream media. Christian (2010) uses interviews and vlogs to discuss how "Camp, a style of performance in queer subcultures, is being reimagined in the online video portal of YouTube. Online performers—mostly young and queer—have infused camp with a neoliberal sense of individuality, emotional authenticity, and personal development, thereby challenging historical understandings of camp as wholly ironic and disengaged or politically charged" (p. 352). Dhaenens (2012) examines queer culture in terms of soap operas. "This article argues that fan-produced re-edited videos of soap operas may embed the potential to expose and challenge the way that heteronormativity functions. By a textual analysis of Christian & Oliver, a fan-produced YouTube series based on the German soap *Verbotene Liebe* (Forbidden Love), the article enquires how subversive practices of rearticulating narrative conventions of soap operas may function as strategies of resistance" (p. 442).

YouTube also provides a site for comedy. Erhart (2014) focuses on the Australian comedian Chris Lilley's TV material on YouTube. The article "examines the themes that emerge in user comments and the nature of the pleasure that fans get from Lilley's shows, particularly involving the popular gender non-con-

formist and female characters, Mr G and Ja'mie" (p. 176). Chu (2009) analyzes "online videos centered on 'Bus Uncle,' a YouTube celebrity who rose into fame in Hong Kong during April 2006." Drawing on popular culture, the videos highlighted the "playful and sarcastic." Chu argues that YouTube and other video-sharing site "take on the roles as public space, a playground, and a cultural public sphere" (p. 337).

E. Journalism

For many, some of the strongest evidence of YouTube's contribution as a change agent comes from its role in citizen journalism. The participatory culture ideal spreads to citizens' roles in reporting news or posting documentary- or cinema-vérité-style video. Professional journalists and critics have shown mixed opinions—Keen (2007) articulated one of the first critiques, questioning the accuracy and validity of such reporting. On the other hand, Ornebring (2008) reports greater acceptance.

But how new is the citizen-journalist? To situate that question, Hartley (2008) presents a history of journalism and popular culture to trace the relationship:

The paper offers an historical account to show that popular culture was the source of the first mass circulation journalism, via the pauper press, but that it was later incorporated into the mechanisms of modern government for a very different purpose, the theorist of which was Walter Bagehot. Journalism's polarity was reversed—it turned from "subjective" to "objective." The paper concludes with a discussion of YouTube and the resurgence of self-representation, using the resources of popular culture, in current election campaigns. (p. 679)

Hartley argues that YouTube's citizen journalist has swung the balance to the subjective side of journalism. Blaagaard (2013) also takes up the theoretical question of the subjectivity or bias of citizen journalism in YouTube. She highlights "ways in which professional journalism is positioned in relation to engaging subjectivity of citizen journalism—as convergence media, as well as independent forms of knowledge and information sharing" (p. 187).

Ornebring (2008) reports that many traditional journalistic organizations (particularly newspapers) "have developed extensive sections of their Web pages based on UGC [user generated content]." Ornebring then asks how much this has affected the news judgment of the professional journalists and reports on a

content analysis of two tabloid papers (in the UK and Sweden). “The results show that both tabloids are similar in that they provide users with the opportunity to generate mostly popular culture-oriented content and personal/everyday life-oriented content, but little or no opportunity to generate news/information-oriented content” (p. 771). Also applying a content analysis to YouTube news videos, Peer and Ksiazek (2011) explore how “ritualized journalistic practices govern the production of news content.” They found that “most news videos adhere to traditional production practices (e.g., editing techniques, audio quality), but break from common content standards (e.g., use of sources, fairness)” (p. 45). They also noted that those videos that broke more with traditional news values received more views, something they feel calls for more study. Kperogi (2011) argues that corporate media have coopted citizen journalists. The study “highlights the potential of profusion of web-based citizen media to inaugurate an era of dynamic expansion of the deliberative space, and as a counterfoil to the dominance of the discursive space by the traditional media.” However his analysis of iReport.com, “stresses the effect of corporate-sponsored citizen media in blurring the distinction between citizen and mainstream journalism” (p. 314).

Several researchers frame the discussion of citizen journalism, as found on YouTube, in terms of an ideology of news. In a somewhat theoretical piece, Rebillard and Touboul (2010) examine the assumptions of Web 2.0 journalism, its effectiveness, and the ways its ideology becomes concretized in sites like YouTube. Stromer-Galley and Bryant (2011) look at journalistic assumptions in action in terms of “the evolving dynamic between citizens, journalists, and politicians—what we call agenda control—using the CNN/YouTube presidential primary debates as a case.” A content analysis comparing these debates with traditional candidate interviews “suggests that journalists do a better job of getting candidates to answer questions than do citizens in the YouTube video format, not by virtue of being journalists, but by virtue of asking the right form of question” (p. 529). May (2010) notes a change in political journalism practice since 2008 as YouTube has welcomed news organizations to post raw video. The study “explores the developments and tracks the audience changes to the largest YouTube news and politics sites from just before the election through early 2010. Corporate media were found to be more successful in building large sustained audiences, while online-only

operations with a political bent have lost audience share since the election and appear to be confined to a niche” (p. 499).

Another kind of research study on citizen journalists on YouTube examines the reporting of particular events. Sumiala and Tikka (2013) propose a methodology—“netnography,” the tracking of a news event—to examine this emerging news style. They “found that YouTube promotes visually motivated, amateur-driven news culture that alters the truth claims of news and the professional hegemony of news making, and affects the ways in which we, as the audience, maintain relations with professional news institutions, people, places, and practices related to news making and the globalized world beyond ‘our own’” (p. 318). Part of the challenge to reporting with so many citizen sources lies in constructing the story. Beginning with a soft news story about an injured koala in Australia first appearing on YouTube, Hess and Waller (2009) looked at “the way journalists create disjointed narratives around YouTube footage to extend a story’s lifespan. We call these new narrative forms ‘fractured fairytale news’ to describe this emerging phenomenon of convergence culture. Further, we suggest that news media exploit the YouTube community for their own commercial gain and conclude that the fractured fairytale style is a poor vehicle for the future of news” (p. 75).

Antony and Thomas (2010) focus attention on one of the most noteworthy efforts of citizen journalists: the recording of the shooting of Oscar Grant III by Bay Area Rapid Transit officers. The video uploaded to YouTube became emblematic of what citizen could do in a news situation. Examining viewer responses to the video, Antony and Thomas “argue that these findings necessitate a reconceptualization of traditional notions of the guard-dog media and the public sphere to accommodate new media technologies” (p. 1280).

Lee (2012) looks at a different aspect of the journalistic response to YouTube news—the ways that newspapers cover it. Reporting a case study in Hong Kong, they note “that Hong Kong newspapers seldom based their judgment of the newsworthiness of online videos solely on the videos’ online currency. Rather, newspapers used the reporting of online videos to meet a variety of existing professional and/or organizational needs, such as filling news space, reporting on newsworthy events, performing as a watchdog, and representing public opinion” (p. 1). Overall they find a growing consistency in this kind of reporting, one that they feel may influence how people accept citizen jour-

nalism. Pelli (2013) also reports a case study of people using YouTube to call attention to news in their community. Examining the protests over transport fare increases in Rio de Janeiro in 2013, Pelli notes that 91% of the protesters heard the movement from the Internet," perhaps an acknowledgment of the organizers' use of YouTube (p. 33).

Christensen (2008) points out that not only witnesses contribute video to YouTube. He reports on the use of online platforms by participants themselves, in this case U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Poell and Borra (2012) also discuss how participants seek "the appropriation of social media as platforms of alternative journalism" in a study of the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto, Canada. Protest organizers encouraged people to record and upload video to social media, including YouTube. A content analysis indicated that "social media did not facilitate the crowd-sourcing of alternative reporting, except to some extent for Twitter. As with many previous alternative journalistic efforts, reporting was dominated by a relatively small number of users" (p. 695).

This group of studies indicates that the citizen journalist efforts tend to bear fruit only when uploaded video is picked up by journalists and made part of a larger narrative.

F. Political communication

Communication researchers interested in political communication have found a fruitful source in YouTube, particularly as it has added a new dimension to the ways in which candidates interact with the public. The first election cycle to embrace YouTube occurred with the 2008 U.S. presidential election, one that some called the "YouTube election" (Towner and Dulio, 2011, p. 626). That election has received a great deal of scholarly attention.

Musser (2009) examines the differences between that 2008 election and the one in 2004, looking at the videos produced by independent organizations, finding some surprise in the sheer number of the over 1,000 pro-Obama music videos. Vernallis (2011) also uses audiovisual viral media to track a cultural shift between the 2004 and the 2008 elections. Kindblom (2009) does something similar though the focus here lies on the primary campaigns of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, with content analysis of the candidates' non-verbal behaviors. Davisson (2008) draws on the concept of speech genres of Bakhtin to examine the rhetorical strategies of Clinton's primary campaign videos. Duman and Locher (2008) look at the Obama and

Clinton campaigns' use of the metaphor of "conversation" through YouTube.

To shed light on the impact of the YouTube election channel, "YouChoose'08," Towner and Dulio (2011) set up an experiment and found "that those exposed to YouChoose'08 exhibit more cynicism toward the U.S. government, yet also had a heightened sense that they influence the political system. Exposure to YouChoose'08 had no influence on attitudes toward candidates or Internet sources" (p. 626). Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, and Ponder (2010) take up the theme of media use and political cynicism. Their study looked at social media, political cynicism, various background characteristics; they found that "several individual differences were stronger predictors of political cynicism than was social media use. . . . Results supported uses and gratifications' notions that the influence of social media on political cynicism is more attributable to user background and media-use differences than to sheer use of these popular sites" (p. 584). Taking up another traditional topic of political communication research, Ragas and Kiouisis (2010) examined

intermedia agenda-setting effects among explicitly partisan news media coverage and political activist group, citizen activist, and official campaign advertisements on YouTube—all in support of the same candidate. . . . The data provided evidence of first- and second-level agenda-setting relationships. Partial correlations revealed that the citizen activist issue agenda, as articulated in the contest ads, was most strongly related to the partisan media coverage, rather than to the issue priorities of the official Obama or MoveOn.org ads on YouTube. (p. 560)

Hess (2010) notes that partisans often used YouTube for negative campaign ads. He completed a rhetorical analysis of their argumentation strategies and argues that "the videos construct a form of spectacle, dialectically reliant upon mainstream media frames and market-based logics of viewership" (p. 106).

One particular feature of the 2008 election was the "YouTube debate," a conscious attempt to make use of the then-new video platform. "During the 2007–2008 U.S. presidential primaries, CNN partnered with YouTube to create the first nationally televised presidential debates where citizens interrogated the candidates via video questions posted to the Internet" (McKinney & Rill, 2009, p. 392). Designed to involve younger citizens, the debates presented different formats. McKinney

and Rill compared “young citizens’ reactions to the CNN/YouTube debates and also to a more traditional presidential debate with candidate questioning controlled by a journalist. Results suggest that while exposure to candidate debates in general yields positive effects on young citizens’ normative democratic attitudes, there was very little difference found in the effects of exposure to the CNN/YouTube debates when compared to a traditional journalist-controlled presidential debate” (p. 392). Carlson and Ben-Porath (2012) also turn to the debates for a case study. Their interest lies in who speaks, as the debates pit elite voices of professional journalists against the popular voices in the public sphere, a struggle they see played out in the debates.

Dylko, Beam, Landreville, and Geidner (2012) also examine the elite/non-elite split, noting that the elite voices still dominate even in YouTube videos. They argue that “the non-elites can create their own political news content which is independent of mainstream traditional media and can effectively distribute it to a massive audience” (p. 832). With these growing opportunities for non-traditional voices in elections, YouTube campaigning affected the journalistic coverage of the election. Stromer-Galley and Bryant (2011) consider the effectiveness of journalism and its use of online interaction in both Europe and the U.S.

As Stromer-Galley and Bryant (2011) indicate, the YouTube phenomenon extends beyond U.S. politics. Pineda, Garrido, and Ramos (2013) compare, by content analysis, campaign commercials from the 2008 U.S. and from Spanish national elections. Not surprisingly, they find such ads focus on the candidates in both countries. However, they do note differences “regarding the focus on negative advertising in both countries, as well as the issues used in American and Spanish ads” (p. 73). Berrocal, Campos-Domínguez, and Redondo (2014) also look to Spanish use of YouTube, but in the context of a mayoral election in Madrid, seeking to “identify the kind of political content Internet users consume and produce.” They found that online politics “is characterized by massive consumption of information but passive reaction with regard to production and participation” (p. 65).

Similar studies of candidate and voter use of either Web 2.0 sites in general or of YouTube in particular feature reports on elections in Australia (Gibson & McAllister, 2011; Macnamara & Kenning, 2011). Both note mixed impact of the social media site. Reilly (2011) reviews the 2011 Canadian federal election, noting that some of the voter turnout came

from younger voters influenced by YouTube videos, particularly negative ads. Shah (2009) looks to Taiwan and suggests that YouTube videos, often dismissed as non-political, can offer opportunities for political engagement. Rahimi (2011) suggests something similar for Iran, seeing the spaces of social networking sites like Facebook or YouTube, where dissent can emerge. Rahimi notes that “online social media are agonistic arenas where information, ideas, values, and subjectivities are contested between (uneven) adversaries, and where new contexts could potentially emerge for new ways of doing politics” (p. 158). Aparaschivei (2011) feels that Romanian researchers have not yet fully explored the impact of social media. He offers an initial study of Romanian politicians’ use of social media, including YouTube. Shibl (2012) employs Dependency Theory to evaluate the attitudes of Egyptian politicians, academics, and media leaders towards new social media, finding that most believed that more people used these media than the traditional media during the revolution.

Most theorists see YouTube and other social media as particularly valuable in promoting civic engagement. Giving people access to express their views, to persuade others, and to see the uncensored views of others promotes civic dialogue. Lim (2013) sees what she terms a “democratizing” effect, particularly among the younger groups in societies under greater social or political control. Using focus groups with Malaysian young adults, she “examines how video-sharing websites are fast becoming popular, albeit contested, spaces for critical documentary and experimental works to inform, educate, and encourage discourse among young adults,” especially on issues like human rights and justice (p. 300). McCosker and Johns (2014) look at the negative side of such greater engagement—instances of personal attacks, racist comments, bullying, and so forth. They note that “government policy has been shifting steadily towards potential regulation of social media ‘misuse’ in relation to appropriate forms of ‘digital citizenship.’” Using case studies from Australia, they argue that the focus on negative interactions “often overshadows these platforms’ productive potential, including their capacity to support agonistic publics from which productive expressions of cultural citizenship and solidarity might emerge” (p. 66).

Trying to understand the dynamics of online civic engagement, Lim and Golan (2011) report an experiment, based on the third-person effect, that measured the perceived impact of political parodies

on YouTube. Their results showed that people credited the videos more when researchers told them they came from “highly persuasive intent” sources. The “results [also] showed that the perception of influence on others was positively associated with participants’ willingness to take a corrective action—the likelihood of engaging in political social media activism” (p. 710).

Two case studies presented material on instances of citizen activism. Van Zoonen, Vis, and Mihelj (2010) look at the responses to an anti-Islamic video. In particular they used “this case to analyze whether and how the participatory opportunities of the digital technologies invite performances of citizenship, especially with respect to the articulation of religious and/or political identity (p. 249). Bekkers, Beunders, Edwards, and Moody (2011) look at a grass-roots movement of Dutch secondary school students who opposed a new graduation requirement imposed by the government. The students organized their action through YouTube and other social media. In their study “the authors analyze how the course of the political agenda-setting process is being transformed through the interplay between processes of meso- and micromobilization, and through new micro-to-mass media crossover effects” (p. 209).

Similarly, YouTube and similar platforms can support new kinds of political deliberation and dialogue. Hess (2009) reports an attempt by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to use YouTube to publicize its anti-drug agenda, generating a number of video responses. Hess analyzes the controversy with “a dual analysis of the discursive content and structural features of YouTube,” noting that the critique of the anti-drug messages became diluted by “the structural limitations of the medium of YouTube and the overwhelming use of YouTube for entertainment.” Based on this, he concludes that “YouTube’s dismissive and playful atmosphere does not prove to be a viable location for democratic deliberation about serious political issues” (p. 411). Uldam and Askanius (2013) also look at whether YouTube can form a space for deliberation and dissent. They ask “how commenting on activist videos can help sustain civic cultures that allow for both antagonism and inclusive political debate,” basing their study on protests against the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference. The larger question ask “how online modes of debate engage notions of the public sphere in contemporary online environments” (p. 1185).

Rather than look at citizen deliberation, Li and Wang (2010) focus on public diplomacy. “Using the cases of the Iranian riots and the Xinjiang riots in 2009, the article investigates the emerging strategic implications of social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube in national and international politics” (p. 7). They see such use as increasingly important, as ways for local groups to put pressure on governmental actors.

Kim (2011) notes that the availability of online video through YouTube has increased citizen participation, a finding as part of a case study of a Korean protest movement. “Examining how female protesters constructed their political agency via online communication, this paper further maintains that videos require rethinking the conventional roles of media spectacles that (re) produces the dominant ideology” (p. 1).

YouTube also provides material for a greater understanding of political communication. Lance Holbert and Geidner (2009) encourage political communication scholars to re-examine key theories in the light of social media. They focus on “Interpersonal communication, persuasion, communication information technology, media effects, and strategic communication” based on the 2008 election “discussions of race and gender, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, YouTube, Saturday Night Live, and lifestyle political campaigning” (p. 344). YouTube also offers support for students. Journell (2009) provides information about social studies instruction on election propaganda. His essay “provides a starting kit on how use online site YouTube to teach presidential propaganda by listing 12 popular political advertisements found in the website, along with short description that represents a certain type of campaign propaganda” (p. 325).

G. Other uses

In addition to the uses of YouTube that merit study in key areas of communication like journalism, politics, advertising, and education, other areas have emerged where communication scholars see interesting applications of the shared video platform.

Art and culture. Valtysson (2010) uses the theories of Habermas, Castells, and Lessig to frame an argument about cultural participation. Valtysson seeks “to study how cultural policy makers can learn from these examples [of online video] and how they can make use of the participatory, self-publishing characteristics of Web 2.0 in order to create accessible digital cultural public

spheres” (p. 200). Vonderau (2010) continues his work (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009) in a discussion of “co-creative culture” by examining the participatory culture of YouTube. Tripp (2012) offers a more applied discussion of the history of video art and “the changes that have taken place in the art form as the result of technological advancements, cheaper equipment, and video sharing websites such as YouTube” (p. 5). In another applied discussion of online art, Light, Griffiths, and Lincoln (2012) explore “Vernacular Creativity” and those “appropriating social networking sites, such as YouTube” as spaces for the “creative practices that emerge from non-elite, specific everyday contexts”; they include a case study of “young people in relation to doing graffiti with YouTube” (p. 343).

Another form of art emerging on YouTube are mashups. Simonsen (2013) analyzes them “as audiovisual recontextualizations that are given new meaning, e.g., via collaborative social communities or for individual promotional purposes.” Seeing them as yet another form of Vernacular Creativity, he argues that “Mashups reveal a double articulation of connectivity; one that involves the social mechanisms of the Mashups, and another mode, which concerns the explicit embedding of structural connectivity that accentuates the medium-specific infrastructure of YouTube” (p. 47). He and Zha (2014) also look at mashups, conducting two studies “to increase the understanding of the use and adoption issues with social media mashups,” particularly in higher education institutions (p. 160).

West and Laird (2011) turn to more established television culture as they focus “on the renovation of the television program ‘Masterpiece Theatre’” and its marketing on YouTube. They identify “six changes which show its adaptation of a writerly approach which include popularization, sexual candidness, and visual flamboyance” (p. 306).

Though not creative expression in the same sense as the arts, some uses of YouTube get at another (perhaps negative) aspect of creative expression. Using the case study of a 2008 school shooting in Finland, Sumiala (2009) examines the idea of circulation—how images move from YouTube and social media to press and electronic media and eventually back to social media. Sumiala discusses in some detail the “social imaginaries of violence” (p. 75).

Religion. Various religious groups have turned to YouTube, leading to some scholarly attention. Martin (2012) suggests that the Catholic Church in the U.S.

might use YouTube and other social media platforms in its outreach efforts, while Oertel (2009) recounts how Pope Benedict XVI used YouTube to broadcast a speech on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Vatican television center. Pihlaja (2013) examines a controversy among Evangelical Christians (over the use of biblical texts) that took place through YouTube. He concludes that his analysis “provides both an empirical case study in the interpretation of figurative language and a challenge to the common assumption that Evangelical Christians are committed to a ‘literal’ interpretation of the Bible” (p. 103).

Somewhat more scholarly attention has addressed Islam’s presence on YouTube. A 2008 video by the Dutch anti-Islam parliamentarian Geert Wilders prompted thousands of YouTube video responses. Van Zoonen, Vis, and Mihelj (2011) examines that debate through the lens of political theory. Proposing some research methods to approach online video debates, they see the debates fueled by a combination of the widespread presence of religion online, the acceptance of the digital platform for ordinary citizens to express themselves, and the ease of video sharing. In a companion piece, Vis, van Zoonen, and Mihelj (2011) present a feminist perspective on the debate. Noting that the original film “expressed an extremist Orientalist discourse, in which women are presented as the current and future victims of the oppression of Muslim men and Islam,” they argue “that YouTube videos give voice to women themselves who come from across the globe, are relatively young and often active Muslims.” Further these women find no bar to speaking for their own religious beliefs. The researchers “propose to understand these videos as acts of citizenship through which women constitute themselves as global citizens, in some cases by engaging in ‘deliberation’ as it is understood in feminist political theory, in other cases by taking a ‘voice’ that can be responded to” (p. 110).

Mosemghvdilsvili and Jansz (2013) study how YouTube videos more broadly frame Islam, particularly in videoblogs. They investigate “three aspects of Islam’s representation: (a) how Islam is framed in user-created videos; (b) how it is visualized; and (c) what are the motivations of the YouTubers who create these videos” (p. 482). They conclude, based on a sample of 120 videos, that the videoblogs tend to an overall balanced tone, though some extreme views appear. Interested in another aspect of civic practice, Hirzalla, van Zoonen, and Müller (2013) ask whether humor might help in some of the controversy over Islam.

Focusing on two comic videoblogs (one seeking inter-religious harmony and the other antagonistic to Muslims), they note that the comments “comprise negative and positive sentiment in the same patterns, often expressed in an antagonistic style” and urge caution in accepting humor as a form of civic deliberation (p. 46).

Healthcare. Healthcare providers and managers see great opportunity in YouTube. Popovic, Smith, and Hellebusch (2013) report a survey of industry leaders about their attitudes to using social media in marketing products and services. While “very few believe social media marketing has been transparent and responsible,” when asked to assess sites, “YouTube ranks as most acceptable” (p. 22). Roundtree, Dorsten, and Reif (2011) call for a great use of social media, including YouTube, for communicating about health in the U.S. They conclude that “communication and rhetoric of science scholars can help shape the future efficacy of Web 2.0 healthcare communication and the strategies its practitioners use toward patient activation” (p. 1).

Military. Members of the military, often young soldiers on duty, have taken to YouTube in an attempt to share their experiences. Smith and McDonald (2011) argue that this has led to a great deal of documentary evidence about the U.S. participation in the war in Iraq. They “examine how YouTube videos produced and consumed during the War in Iraq offer an alternative to the military-media control over information and images both during and after the conflict.” One type, combat music videos, raise important issues due to their nationalistic and western perspectives. Smith and McDonald “discuss how the circulation and consumption of both vernacular soldier-produced videos and hybridized participatory media products from the U.S. military in the YouTube digital space problematizes notions of vernacular and hegemonic . . . [and] complicate public deliberation regarding the War in Iraq because of their ambiguous authorship” (p. 292). Andén-Papadopoulos (2009) also looks at the YouTube videos uploaded by soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. She asks “how perceptions of war, and the conventions of war reporting, change as new media technologies allow soldiers to log on to the Web and upload personal views from the front lines. . . . The firsthand testimonials by soldiers offer the public uncensored insights into the experience of warfare and may provide the basis for a questioning of the authority and activity of U.S. foreign policy (p. 17). Examining YouTube videos of military homecomings, Silvestri

(2013) suggests that they have led to a kind of spectatorship as a performance of citizenship. Citizens align themselves with the military mission or sacrifice by watching these rituals.

The U.S. is not the only nation to feature military uses of YouTube. Stoeihrel (2013) discusses what the Swedish Armed Forces have done to show their military at work. In his discussion, Stoeihrel situates this politically by looking at “the way in which the aesthetic and affective experience of Swedish defense and security policy is socially and (media-)culturally (co-) constructed and how the official representation of Swedish military intervention (re)produces political and economic effects when these activities are distributed through traditional and social media such as YouTube and digital apps” (p. 21).

Fandom. YouTube has enabled fans to follow and interact with their favorite stars (music, film, sports, etc.) in new ways, a phenomenon that scholars have begun to explore. Mendonça and Salgado (2012) look at the relationship between “Felipe Neto’s performance on his video ‘Desabafo e coisas da madrugada’” and his audiences based on the idea of spectacle (p. 31). For Thornton (2010), the focus falls on film stars. She examines fan videos, noting their various functions, “including a celebration of their idols, an engagement with a transnational audience, and a space in which they can create and project a packaged self. The results are the development of a form that draws on the techniques and images of classical film, mixed with the duration and aesthetics of the modern music video” (p. 53). Fan devotion can also have a negative side by increasing surveillance on the stars. Examining several incidents involving professional athletes, Sanderson (2009) notes how YouTube and other online sources “enable sports organizations to capitalize on free labor provided by audience members to intensify surveillance of professional athletes and how fans’ ability to comment on news coverage of these stories reinforces organizational control, further reifying professional athletes as commodities” (p. 240).

Interpersonal communication. People have also found YouTube to support interpersonal relations in many ways. Li (2009) traces how online Chinese have shifted from using sites for political purposes to letting them serve “as a vehicle of independent self-representation.” He uses the “metaphor of ‘the wall’ . . . to chart the contours of the struggle for self-expression and representation” (p. 50). YouTube has

also gained popularity in Pakistan, particularly among teenagers. Zia, Paracha, and Jan (2012) surveyed teens about their uses of and attitudes to YouTube. They report that the “majority [of] respondents consider it a healthy activity because it helps in studies and research work” (p. 26).

Harley and Fitzpatrick (2009) explore the ways in which YouTube offers opportunities to connect older and younger people. Reporting a case study of “an 80-year-old video blogger . . . and a video dialogue that develops between himself and three of his younger

viewers on a particular topic,” they explore the kinds of contact, conversations, and intergenerational communication that YouTube makes possible (p. 679).

Animals. No report of the uses of YouTube would be complete without at least one reference to cat videos. O’Meara (2014) explores the popularity of these videos and sees in them a deeper purpose: “The unselfconsciousness of cats in online videos offers viewers the capability to imagine the possibility of freedom from corporate surveillance and to experience the power of surveillance administration as unproblematic” (p. 7).

4. Observing through YouTube

YouTube plays another, somewhat unexpected, role in communication studies: that of a data source. Researchers interested in any number of topics turn to YouTube’s videos for materials to study. For some, the video sharing site offers material for case studies; for others, the sampling frame coincides with the thousands of videos posted from all over the world. This section of the overview will offer a flavor of what communication researchers draw on from YouTube.

A. Language

Language study and linguistics form one cluster of topics. Focusing on the online performer Kevin Wu, Chun (2013) looks at “the cultural significance of cross-racial embodiments of linguistic signs that may be legible as ‘black’ within mainstream U.S. discourses but, in YouTube’s transnational space, may be subject to alternative interpretations” (p. 592). Guo and Lee (2013) also consider Wu as well as Ryan Higa to examine what they term “hybrid vernacular discourse” (p. 391).

Lorenzo-Dus, Garcés-Conejos, Blitvich, and Bou-Franch (2011) look at more general U.S. discourse in order to study impoliteness. Their experimental work showed, among other things, “considerable overlap between ‘lay’ . . . and ‘analyst’ . . . assessments. The former, in addition, are found to relate principally to norms of public discourse associated with civility” (p. 2578). Dynel (2012) also investigates impoliteness, but in the form of swear words, using YouTube commentaries as the data set.

Jones and Schieffelin (2009) draw on U.S. television ads on YouTube to investigate the “linguistic status of texting.” Opening up a debate about slang, the com-

mercials’ appearance on YouTube “invited dialogic metalinguistic discussions, young people and texting proponents sharing the floor with adults and language prescriptivists” (p. 1050). Tolson (2010) employed YouTube user-generated communication to study “broadcast talk” and authenticity in YouTube conversations. Gathering data from material originating the Saint Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Wrobel (2012) proposes ways to investigate creole talk and vernacular uses. She argues for greater use of YouTube as a source of linguistic material.

YouTube goes beyond samples drawn from the U.S. English-speaking world. Hachimi (2013) uses online videos to explore the varieties of Standard Arabic and spoken vernaculars, looking particularly at “the ‘Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology’: the hierarchical relationship between Mashreqi (Middle Eastern) and Maghrebi (North African) vernacular Arabic varieties” (p. 269). Schröder (2013) turns to YouTube for linguistic perspectives on German.

Oakley and Crisp (2011) offer an innovative approach by comparing language allegory of 17th century England with a 21st century YouTube video.

Several other studies used YouTube material as prompts to study persuasion, usually in a political setting. English, Sweetser, and Ancu (2011) looked at persuasive clips in political deliberations on health care, while Goodwin and Rhoades (2011) considered the appeals of those advocating for animal rights on a California ballot initiative.

B. Children

YouTube appears in various studies of children, less as a data source and more as a topic that provides

insight into children's attitudes. Livingstone, Kirwil, Ponte, and Staksrud (2014) surveyed 10,000 children as to what they perceived as risks on line. The children identified concerns about pornography, bullying, violent content. "Video-sharing websites such as YouTube were primary sources of violent and pornographic content" (p. 271). Blackwell, Lauricella, Conway, and Wartella (2014) used a national sample of 442 children to investigate their online preferences. "Results indicate that YouTube and Facebook were the two most favored Web sites. . . . [R]esults suggest children's Web site preferences are consistent with emotional, social, and cognitive development encountered in middle childhood (p. 1).

C. Portrayals of various groups

Because of its wide range of material, posted from all over the globe, YouTube provides materials to scholars interested in the portrayal (positive or negative) of groups and individuals. Kopacz and Lawton (2011, 2013) examined YouTube videos relating to Native Americans, along with the viewer comments. Even on YouTube they find a level of marginalization of and discrimination against the group. Banaji (2013) analyzes YouTube responses to a racist video as way to understand portrayals of race and prejudice.

Others look at portrayals of cross-dressing and same-sex eroticism (Gregg, 2008), male sexuality (Lehman, 2007), gay marriage (Howard, 2012), hatred and revenge (Schmidt, 2011), oppressed political groups (Neumayer, 2012), various forms of self-presentation (Griffith & Papacharissi, 2010), and even "idiocy" as a kind of transgressive behavior (Goriunova, 2013).

D. Health

Researchers interested in health communication have found a wealth of online materials, some on YouTube channels sponsored by various health organizations and others from loosely connected groups of sufferers. People have studied materials related to the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (Briones, Nan, Madden, & Waks (2012); pro- and anti-vaccination activists (Chin, Keelan, Tomlinson, Pavri-Garcia, Wilson, & Chignell, 2010); cancer survivors (Chou, Hunt, Folkers, & Augustson, 2011); teen pregnancy (Cunningham, 2014); doctor-patient communication on issues such as anorexia, pediatric cancer, and multiple sclerosis (Dinolfo, 2009); inflammatory bowel disease (Frohlich & Zmyslinski-Seelig, 2012); smoking

(Kim, Paek, & Lynn, 2010; Paek, Hove, & Jeon, 2013); e-cigarettes (Paek, Kim, Hove, & Huh, 2014); organ donation (Tian, 2010); and anti-marijuana public service announcements (Walther, DeAndrea, Kim, & Anthony, 2010).

E. Government, NGOs, and protests

A number of researchers use YouTube videos in their studies of governments, non-governmental organizations, and protests against governments. Abdelsalam, Reddick, Gamal, and Al-Shaar (2013) have studied Egyptian government social media websites while Agostino (2013) has look at how Italy uses YouTube to support public communication. Those examining NGOs and the non-profit sector include Almaraz, González, and Van-Wyck (2013), who looked at "third sector organizations"; and Auger (2013) who studied non-profits connected with "the pro-gun/gun control issue and the pro-choice/pro-life issue" (p. 369).

Protest movements with material on YouTube also draw attention. These include Occupy Wall Street (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012), other Occupy movements (Thorson, Driscoll, Ekdale, Edgerly, Thompson, Schrock, Swartz, Vraga, & Wells, 2013), the Tibet and Olympic torch protests (Di Wang, 2009), the "Kony 2012" group opposed to the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda (Elali & Keiser, 2012), and the Toronto community mobilization network (Poell, 2014).

F. News and information

Because YouTube hosts videos from both professional news organizations and from citizen journalists, a number of researchers draw data samples from it in order to study a variety of current events. These include events in Greece (Georgakopoulou, 2013), the Madeleine McCann child disappearance story (Kennedy, 2010), the shooting of Oscar Grant III by Bay Area Rapid Transit police (Malkowski, 2012), various school shootings (Lindgren, 2011), and Latino political activism and identity (Blitvich, Bou-Franch, & Lorenzo-Dus, 2013).

G. Commerce

As noted in the last section, many businesses, commercial enterprises, and promotional organizations have found YouTube a good platform to inexpensively advertise their companies and venues. Scholars interested in these areas draw on the online videos as sources. Batat and Prentovic (2014) examined sustainable tourism through an analysis of

tourism ads for the UK, France, and Serbia. Boon (2013) studied “social couponing, . . . an e-commerce business model that offers consumers heavily discounted deals on a regular (daily) basis, and gives merchants access to a mailing list of potential new customers in exchange for a commission” (p. 843).

5. Conclusion

YouTube began 10 years ago, an eternity in Internet time, but a eye blink in the history of communication technology, which arguably began with writing some five to six millennia ago. But because of its high profile—despite its many competitors, it remains the best known video sharing platform—YouTube has attracted a wealth of communication research, as briefly introduced here.

What should communication research make of YouTube? Very honestly, it is too soon to tell. But a weakness of contemporary culture lies in the desire to form an instant reaction, to provide immediate judgments, or to be the first in print or online. Many of the studies reported here—from 2006 or 2007—seem dated and inaccurate after only a few years. Predictions failed and explanations did not hold up. Curiosities no longer seem so strange.

Communication research does need to grapple with YouTube but it also needs to refine the tools and theories to help understand it.

What do we know about YouTube?

It’s new. It upends the traditional media structures, at least in the highly commercialized economies. It’s wildly popular. It shows that ordinary people have things to communicate. It challenges ideas of a mass audience. It cuts across categories—it is not simply a video-sharing site; it is more than a social media site; it is more than a communication channel; it is more than a place for creativity; it is more than a place for semi-private sharing; though it is all these things.

The YouTube experience will demand a rethinking of a great deal of communication theory. Some key constructs will indeed carry over and some researchers have tried to apply, say, uses and gratifications theory to YouTube. There may be an agenda-setting function, but one independent of the press or news media. A number of theories will work quite well in predicting or explaining some kinds of communication behavior,

Campbell, Pitt, Parent, and Berthon (2011) investigated “consumer-generated advertising” and the challenges it poses to communication research methods. They “show how conversations around ads can be mapped and interpreted, and then develop a typology of consumer-generated ad conversations” (p. 87).

either that depicted in the videos or that the videos prompt. However, in many ways, YouTube has offered communication research a different look at human communication behavior as a whole, a look so new that people have difficulty in theorizing it beyond describing it as “Vernacular Creativity” or “participatory culture” (is any culture not participatory?, though we all know what the terms tries to describe with YouTube).

Perhaps YouTube is simply too big for one set of theoretical concepts. It does combine mass audience appeal with niche audience applicability. It links professional and amateur work. Like the Internet it cuts across the cultures of the world, challenges gatekeepers, and suggests possibilities. Like the Internet it creates or reinforces a digital divide. It can help to reimagine education. It can link individuals marginalized by their local communities. Mediated by technology, it creates interpersonal bounds. And it creates parasocial interaction.

YouTube needs more communication research.

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In the 1984 mockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*, Spinal Tap lead guitarist Nigel Tufnel (played by Christopher Guest) famously declared that their amplifiers “go up to 11 . . . [or] one louder” than other amplifiers. His boast proclaimed that Spinal Tap’s equipment had levels that exceeded anything any band had done before. In his mind, they went beyond the limits of ordinary scales of performance. When questioned by the interviewer in the documentary (played by Rob Reiner) as to why 11 was special and not a round number like 10, Tufnel’s vacant look and simple response, “but these go up to 11,” seems to enact Ronald Bishop’s point in *More: The Vanishing of Scale in an Over-the-top Nation*: that the media’s unreflective pursuit of pushing representations of reality beyond reasonable limits has significantly shaped our views on politics, popular culture, raising children, and many other endeavors. Bishop seems to argue that our entire culture is “set on 11” and, frankly, his writing style suggests he’s fed up with it.

Scale, as it applies to media texts, deals with “the *significance* we should ascribe to emotions, attitudes, behaviors, actions, and events, the amount of *effort* we should invest in actions and activities, and the amount of *intensity* we exhibit when taking these actions” [author’s italics] (p. 4). When media texts of many types operate with no scale, our ability to draw from the media priorities and differentiations in content and apply them to our lives is lost. Bishop draws from the cultural studies notion of “preferred readings” that have abandoned scale in favor of loud, over-the-top, and exhausting expectations among media consumers.

Three chapters deal with media framing of producing and raising children. In “Go Forth and Multiply,” Bishop notes the absence of scale in media representations of large families being either normal (the Duggars) or freakish (media cover age of the birth of octuplets to Nadya Suleman, “the Octomom”). Careful family planning, something that perhaps might fall in the middle of the scale, is not strong material for hiking television ratings. In “Is Breast Best?,” he reviews examples of various media to show that consumers are inundated with breast-feeding information (p. 46) if not propaganda, and the notion that we’d better prepare to be a super parent (a la Jennifer Garner in *Juno*) or our kid may not be able to function in the world. Mean-world-type allusions to media stereotypes

Book Reviews

Bishop, Ronald. *More: The Vanishing of Scale in an Over-the-top Nation*. Waco, TX: Baylor University