USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC) REVOLUTION?:

CRITIQUE OF THE PROMISE OF YOUTUBE

by

Jin Kim

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Communication Studies
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Mark Andrejevic

ABSTRACT

This dissertation concerns the relationship between the liberating potential of an individuals' use of new media and the various institutional constraints on that. While I aim to explore the emancipatory potential of YouTube, I seek not to lose sight of the cultural, historical and political forces that limit individual use of it. This dissertation examines YouTube from agent, institution and text perspectives, the triangle of media studies. Each perspective illustrates tensions and conflicts between the personal and the public, amateurism and professionalism, narrowcasting and broadcasting, and User-Generated Content (UGC) and Professionally-Generated Content (PGC).

Technological development promises the expansion of the human being, the empowerment of individuals and widening opportunities of communication through personalized media. Amateur users take advantage of the convenience and accessibility in YouTube, and consequently they have a chance to deeply engage in the media content production-distribution-consumption-feedback system. With its encouragement of amateur video production, this new medium seems to have the capability to change the nature of media users, from passive audiences to active creators. However, the myth of the active user is inseparable from celebrity culture. Self-expression on the web is often imbued with the fascination with fame, but is not the same as user empowerment. Amateurism in UGC came to be compromised when the line between UGC and PGC started to blur. From a techno futuristic perspective, YouTube seems to make the audience into interactive users, but that interactivity is close to active consumption in the realm of disposable celebrity.

The development of mass media always involves a tension between mass communication and interpersonal communication. Historically, YouTube is positioned within the development of

personalized media. YouTube is an evolutionary medium under the influence of traditional broadcasting, rather than a revolutionary medium discontinuous from media history. What contemporary people think new about YouTube are likely the consequences of technological evolution rather than those of media revolution. Exploring YouTube, I do not deny the convenience and accessibility of UGC media, but I do not want to lose sight of the legacy of amateurism, individualism and user participation.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my advisor Mark Andrejevic. His guidance throughout my studies and this project has been invaluable. I thank John Durham Peters, whose Fall 2006 graduate seminar 'The Public Sphere' sparkled my interest in YouTube and User-Generated Content. I have benefited greatly from the wisdom and wit of Mark and John, who are always willing to talk theories even on the Ultimate field. I also extend thanks to my committee members – Kembrew McLeod, David Depew and Laura Rigal.

Throughout the writing process, I am grateful to people who commented on various chapters at various stages of production: Zack Stiegler, Amit Baishya, Lisa Angelella and Elise Cook. The administrative help of Wanda Osborn and Becky Scott has been instrumental throughout the dissertation process, particularly while I was away from Iowa City.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation concerns the relationship between the liberating potential of an individuals' use of new media and the various institutional constraints on that. While I aim to explore the emancipatory potential of YouTube, I seek not to lose sight of the cultural, historical and political forces that limit individual use of it. This dissertation examines YouTube from agent, institution and text perspectives, the triangle of media studies. Each perspective illustrates tensions and conflicts between the personal and the public, amateurism and professionalism, narrowcasting and broadcasting, and User-Generated Content (UGC) and Professionally-Generated Content (PGC).

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CHAPTER I. HISTORY OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

In the post-broadcast era, User-Generated Content (UGC) has transformed from an amateurs' experiment to one of the important concepts in the new media environment. Proponents of UGC argue that audiences are being empowered through participation and interactivity. However, seemingly increased user participation is not automatically giving liberating power to the people. While UGC culture is celebrated for its democratic and revolutionary possibilities, mere participation is not the same as power sharing. The genius of UGC media lies in its potential to transform audiences into producers, but the fact that more options become available to users does not necessarily guarantee their empowerment. Despite its liberating potential, UGC media are often compromised by the influence of traditional media and dominant culture.

As an online UGC medium, YouTube is a particularly significant cultural artifact in that it leads us to look into diverse important issues in the field of communication studies. As a convergence medium merging broadcasting and narrowcasting, YouTube engages users in the media content production-distribution-consumption system. While YouTube facilitates online community with individuals' active participation, whether mere participation leads to empowered interactivity requires a deeper level of investigation.

It is one thing to recognize that YouTube brings about the chance for self-disclosure, but another to find a gap between self-expression and self-empowerment. Furthermore, the flourishing of YouTube culture, characterized by celebrity and the fascination with new media technology, can be properly understood under institutional constraints on communication technology. After Google's purchase of YouTube in 2006, YouTube has institutionalized quickly. Originally, the founders of YouTube stressed user-participation, free expression and social

networking, showing hesitance towards the commercial use of their invention, but Google showed deep concern over the financial model of YouTube. While it is worth considering the potential of new media technology, it is important to distinguish sheer reality from hype, and consequently I aim to demystify the myths of YouTube.

Borrowing Haeckel's quote, "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," (quoted in Gould, 1997) one of my major arguments in this dissertation is that the development of YouTube mimics the evolution of the Internet, in terms of the institutionalization of media. YouTube has evolved from personal to public to commercial. With YouTube serving as a primary focus, this dissertation concerns the relationship between the liberating potential of an individuals' use of new media and various institutional constraints on that. I will examine YouTube from agent, institution and text perspectives, the triangle of media studies (Peters, 2009). Each perspective illustrates tensions and conflicts between the personal and the public, narrowcasting and broadcasting, User-Generated Content (UGC) and Professionally-Generated Content (PGC).

Theorizing UGC is incomplete without historicizing mass media, and the development of mass media always involves a tension between mass communication and interpersonal communication. On the surface, personalized media solve the problems of mass media, but as mass media history shows, solutions get new problems. The democratic potential of UGC often leads to cultural flattening, one of the fears about mass society. The moment personalized media seem to solve the fear of losing individuality, audience segmentation, the problem that mass media sought to settle down, rises. I will argue this is a vicious circle of mass and personal media, dialectic of media and a revenge of mass media.

YouTube and UGC should be understood as on-going phenomena, or evolutionary consequences, not as revolutionary products. What contemporary people think new are likely the

consequences of technological evolution rather than those of media revolution. While I do not deny the convenience and accessibility of UGC media, I do not want to lose sight of the legacy of amateurism, individualism and user participation on them. One of the purposes of this dissertation is positioning YouTube within the development of individualized media.

My overall questions include whether user participation actually leads to user empowerment and how individuals' use of YouTube and institutional constraints compete and compromise. While I aim to explore the emancipatory potential of YouTube, I seek not to lose sight of the cultural, historical and political forces that could limit individual use of it. The goal of this project is not to downplay the potential of interactivity, convenience and accessibility in YouTube. However, it should be critically important to consider the price of buying into myths of new media without asking questions.

Understanding YouTube

The history of media is the history of media convergence, and YouTube, one of the technological innovations in the 21st century, can be analyzed in the eyes of media convergence, in terms of not only content but also format. With regard to media content, a variety of visual communication genres coexist on YouTube: speeches, confessions, personal diaries, lectures, news reports, dramas, movies, skits, home videos and music videos. With regard to media technology, this online visual UGC medium owes a great debt to old media: television, cable, video recorder, radio, magazine, photo album, slideshow and face-to-face communication. This distinction between content and format is what Silverstone (1994) contrasts: media qua material objects and media qua texts. New media as objects carry old media as texts. Old content is recycled in new formats. Therefore, new media are evolutionary consequences, rather than

revolutionary products. This research will deal with YouTube as technological object as well as YouTube as content.

Merging different media in hybrid genres, YouTube.com is an online video storehouse. It is a free video sharing website from which users can watch video clips as well as upload self-made, self-edited, or imported clips for free. In terms of number, YouTube is a very popular medium. As of March 2009, more than 5.4 billion videos existed, 13 hours of videos were posted per minute, and 80 million viewings per month were recorded on YouTube (Bradshaw & Garrahan, 2008; *USA Today*, 2009). The original intention of the creators differed from what really occurred. Former PayPal employees Chad Hurley and Steve Chen, who created YouTube, were inspired by the photo sharing site, Flickr.com, and they thought friends and family could exchange home videos through YouTube. What they did not expect was that people would upload television clips. YouTube was supposed to be a private medium, yet it developed in public sphere. Through YouTube, private experiences are socialized in the public domain, and this new medium links the private and the public.

YouTube came to birth in the 21st century, yet the idea of online video came into being in the 20th century. Showing his concern over television segmentation, Katz (1996) warned the death of TV as a tool for participatory democracy overwhelmed by TV as an entertainment tool. His prediction that the future of TV would be to repeat similar genres and programs reads naturally within the age of multichannel and YouTube: "Television today is like a middle-sized video shop, offering the viewer an effortless, and soon it will be a mega video shop offering viewers home delivery of anything that exists on tape" (p. 24). With regard to TV's road to segmentation, Katz contends that easy accessibility to video clips and weakening geopolitical boundaries induce audiences to consume more non-political and global materials. His vision of

the future of television as a video shop resonates with the recent popularity of online video services, including YouTube.

On YouTube, one can find television and movie clips, music videos, as well as User-Generated Content (UGC) such as personal diaries or home videos. We can look at YouTube from diverse, albeit equally valid, perspectives. Technologically, YouTube is another case that demonstrates convergence between television and the Internet. Socio-psychologically, it highlights people's desire to be celebrities. As a culture cultivation tool, this new media technology induces users to reinterpret original visual texts. Encouraging ordinary people to deeply participate in media milieu, UGC and YouTube resonate with Web 2.0 culture, coined by O'Reilly (2005), "the second generation of web-based technologies that foregrounds user-controlled platforms… enticing bloggers… [and] video sharers" (Dijck, 2007b, p. 2). Some people also experiment with YouTube as a persuasion tool for political purposes. Economically, the rise of YouTube implies the new mode for garnering advertisement revenue, which could possibly victimize the old media money business: television broadcasting. In the legal sphere, YouTube has copyright infringement issues.

The recent development of user generated media, for example blogs, the photo sharing sites including Flickr, video blogs (vlogs), and video clip sharing sites including YouTube, is directly related to the diffusion of cheap camcorders (both analog and digital) and easy-to-use video converting and editing software. Indeed, YouTube shows the convergence of television (old medium) and the Internet (new medium), the combination of broadcasting and narrowcasting, and the amalgamation of a transmission medium (television) and a recording medium (VCR).

As its slogan "Broadcast Yourself" shows, YouTube provides a certain possibility of personal broadcasting, or narrowcasting, which implies that amateurs deliver their programs to an anonymous audience, rather than that professionals institutionalize dissemination for the mass. In the digital age, as Garfield (2006) notes, YouTube provides the new rationalism of "I post, therefore I am" for the digital age. This self-expression dimension of YouTube rationalizes users' desire to become celebrities, and the skyrocketing popularity of online video resonates with the newly constructed myth of YouTube as a stepping-stone medium to fame.

Because of YouTube's popularity, industries have shown deep interest in its potential as new advertising revenue. In October 2006, Google, Inc. announced that it had reached a deal to acquire the company for $ 1.65 billion. Despite its seemingly promising economic potential with several monetary tactics (banner ads on videos, home page advertisements, selling key words in search engines), whether YouTube actually generates revenues as a "financial jackpot" (Cohen, 2006) has not been confirmed at the time of this writing.

Economic and legal frameworks tend to step behind technological development. YouTube seems to be pushed far beyond government policies and industry strategies (Delaney, Smith & Barnes, 2006). Especially in terms of copyright issue, YouTube is at a complex and frustrated crossroad because it is filled with television programs, movie clips and music. Some argue that YouTube will face similar problems as Napster, a pioneering peer-to-peer (P2P) music file sharing program. Of the top 100 popular videos on YouTube, 15% clips are video materials edited to music tracks and 60% contain commercial music or video (Delaney, Smith &Barnes, 2006). Video posters use clips from television shows or even bootlegged concert videos. Although record companies explicitly opposed and suppressed P2P sites, they have to confront the 2nd and the 3rd generations of Napster. The deal between music companies and YouTube

represents always ongoing negotiation between old economic strategy and new technology in order to soften the aftermath of suppressing new high technology.

YouTube has avoided lawsuits from major companies by depending on the "safe harbor" provisions of the *1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act.* YouTube is free from charge only if it takes down the clips once industry claim its copyright. As long as copyholders do not claim their copyright, posted videos are fine. But in October 2006, YouTube deleted 30,000 clips after a Japanese entertainment group's copyright complaint and Comedy Central's objection to posting of clips from *South Park* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (Cohen, 2006). In order to protect copyright, media industries have proposed inventing an automatic music tracking code, audio "fingerprint" technology to track down all the illegally used songs on the web.

Before exploring YouTube in details further below, I will introduce User-Generated Content (UGC), an umbrella term for YouTube. By broadening the theoretical scope, I seek to explain historical legacy on YouTube and thus to point out commonalities in the development of amateur generated content media. Furthermore, one of the main goals in this dissertation, demystifying the hype around YouTube, can be more productive after elaborating this umbrella term.

History and Myths of UGC

Brief History of User-Generated Content (UGC)

Although UGC became a popular idiom recently, the practice of amateur users in building up media content has a substantial history. The birth of the United States cannot be separated from Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, an originally anonymous pamphlet published during the late 18th century, which sparked social change in American history (Armstrong, 1981). Resistant and alternative media have always played critical roles in society because they let

marginalized people (e.g. women, minorities and working class) to talk for themselves. In this regard, nonprofessional journalists and alternative media nowadays are heirs of Thomas Paine.

According to a simple distinction between mass media as the tools for mass dissemination of mass produced messages and personal media as "the tools for interpersonal communication and personal expression" (Lüders, 2008, p. 684), personal media indicate UGC media. In other words, mass media content is generated within institutions by professionals, and personal media content is made outside institutional routines by amateurs. Techno futurists may find the momentum of the crumbling of these binaries in digital media, but amateur production of media content outside professionalized structures is not new, considering the development of fanzines, grass roots movement media and personalized public journals (Atton, 2002).

The history of UGC will show that the digital UGC fad should be understood as a part of general UGC media development, including *Common Sense* in the 18th century, periodicals in the 19th century, garage cinema, zine culture and home videos during the 20th century (Davis, 1997; Petrik, 1992; Ross, 1991). Both Turner (2006) and Armstrong (1981) find libertarianism to be a driving force in the development of UGC culture during the 60s and the 70s. Turner argues that digital utopianism has roots in the nonprofessional counterculture, and Armstrong points out that alternative media blossomed during this era.

Turner (2006) explains a lineage of digital utopianism from the counterculture of the 60s and the 70s. According to him, positive belief in technology and American individualism are characteristics common to both digital utopianism and counterculture. User participation, amateur Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture and democratization of culture are repetitive discourses found both in the 70s counterculture and the 90s technoculture (Benkler, 2006). Though local amateur zine culture flourished during the 70s, there was already user-generated publishing in

the early 20th century. Entering the 90s, blogs, social networking sites, including Facebook and MySpace, and online self-publishing sites including Lulu.com come into being as breeds of user-generated publishing.

Pointing out the "libertarianism and hedonism of the Beats" (p. 21), Armstrong (1981) traces how resistant and alternative media influenced social change in the 60s and the 70s. Unlike Turner who sees through ambivalence in counterculture (i.e. individual resistance in institutionalization), however, Armstrong believes in an interactive relationship between mainstream and alternative media. He says, "[not] only do ideas introduced by alternative media modify society, they are also themselves modified in the course of being absorbed by mainstream culture" (Armstrong, 1981, p.25). It is true that alternative media have the potential for social change, but the potential becomes concrete, whether by being recognized as necessary or being suppressed as radical (Brian, 1998). Armstrong (1981) says, "[i]n effect, the mass media, through which the public is introduced directly to those ideas, use the alternative media for research and development" (Armstrong, 1981, p.25). One of the possible dangers in the discourses on new media is equalizing innovation and its social impact. Not all innovations have the same level of influence, and it takes time to measure the influence of new media. Furthermore, successful innovations likely confront, compete with and compromise traditional media structure.

Ordinary people's participation, such as readers' letters or radio phone-ins, has played an important role in media institutions. Broadly speaking, any media content that users contribute can be counted as UGC. Jingle contest and newspaper reader opinions are UGC. Outside professional media institutions, a certain heritage of "DIY," "alternative" and "independent" media can be traced as the historical tradition behind online UGC media (Armstrong, 1981).

Inside mass media institutions, chat programs encourage user participation in forms of collaboratively produced content. Even though mass media can no longer enjoy a monopoly situation in the age of digital media environment, media institutions came to acknowledge the value of UGC (Lüders, 2008).

While a broad definition requires exhaustive research on UGC and is beyond the scope of this dissertation, even the digital UGC on the Internet means a variety of media content, including online encyclopedias (e.g. Wikipedia and reference web sites), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace and Twitter), photo sharing (e.g. Flickr), user rating & review (e.g. Amazon, Internet Movie Database and metacritic), market (e.g. eBay and craiglist), blogs, discussion boards, video games (e.g. *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*), and online video sites (e.g. YouTube and hulu). Of them, the main emphasis of this dissertation lies on YouTube.

Defining UGC

UGC can be broadly defined as anything amateur users produce. Croteau (2004) explains UGC as self-produced media content. A broad definition of UGC widens the scope of media, and thus helps us to understand media history from the lens of a history of UGC. Any content that is presented by amateur users, even readers' letters a newspaper or a call-in radio show, could be UGC.

Even in a narrowed down definition of UGC, different definitions are found. OECD (2007) defines UGC as "i) content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) which is created outside of professional routines and practices" (p. 4). Despite its heuristic usage, OECD's definition is slippery in real life usage. It is getting hard to find purely amateur production, non-profit interest drive and 100% creatively produced media content. One of the main reasons for this difficulty in defining UGC is that big

media companies exploit the notion of UGC in order to invite people to engage actively in any UGC-like media usage. User activity per se may be UGC, yet once users' activities turn into a commodity with economic value or an information about users, "cybernetic commodity" according to Mosco (1989), the notion of UGC as purely amateur-produced content loses its validity.

The opposite of UGC is PGC (Professionally-Generated Content), and while Hollywood movies and television shows are traditional PGC, media history tells us that mainstream media have already adopted audience participation and UGC in their content production. *America's Funniest Home Videos* is a joint UGC program and mainstream platform. The Internet makes it easier for people to produce short clips of their own, and cables and networks accept amateur-produced videos. The cable channels targeting the younger generation are more willing to adopt UGC. VH1's *Show Us Your Junk* works similarly like *America's Funniest Home Videos*: the best submissions are selected and featured. Often, amateur submissions are traded: channel providers get cheap programs, and submitters receive prize money or electronic gadgetry. On *Current* channel, short videos are selected for broadcast by Internet user votes, and the video producers, usually amateurs, are paid $500 to $1000 (Siklos, 2006).

Entering the 21st century, the notion of UGC was highlighted, especially thanks to the skyrocketing popularity of online services such as Facebook, Google, Wikipedia, Twitter and YouTube. To achieve a deeper analysis of YouTube, I will limit my discussion of UGC to online UGC in this dissertation.

Discussion: Revenge of Mass Media

A distinction between mass and interpersonal might be made for convenience's sake. Mass media's adoption of the strategies of interpersonal communication is not exceptional, but

ordinary. UGC in traditional media shows how mass media developed outsourcing strategies. While UGC culture implies increasing individual freedom, concerns over exploitation of UGC also have arisen. Digital UGC shares traditional media's hopes and fears: individualism, interactivity and information gathering.

Contrary to common belief, the personalization of mass media often leads to mass management based on scientifically calculated classification, rather than to the empowerment of individuals. Consequently, the supposedly autonomous users are far from overcoming social engineering. The technological utopianism and new libertarian individualism are imbued with democratization of the mass. The promise of democratization corresponds to increasing user involvement and participation. Yet, without guaranteeing users' increasing power in decision-making process of the media content production-distribution-consumption-feedback system, the promise cannot lead to an appropriate solution, even if it gives the correct diagnosis.

Being mobilized and well-informed, consumers come to believe in the uniqueness of their preferences. Equipped with 'revolutionary' communication tools, people get used to the notion of active participation. Laid-back passive media consumers seem to be replaced by active media users who are enthusiastically involved in various stages of the content production process. However, what the techno futurists confuse (or, intentionally blur) is the difference between diagnosis and prescription, problems and solutions, and reality and myth. Customization occurs in two ways, from consumers and from producers, and this gives the impression that consumers play a crucial role in the production system. But the problem is that user participation is not the same as power sharing (Andrejevic, 2007).

The notion of YouTube as a revolutionary medium requires deep speculation in that YouTube has not passed the test of time yet. Stephens (1998) argues that the test of time should

be a core condition for a communication revolution. According to him, a communication revolution takes time, and the changes that the revolution brings about are far reaching. Likewise, it would be historically amnesiac to ignore the repetitive promises of new media whenever they first came (Mosco, 2004). Being immature, new media often imitate old media, and at the same time, are attacked by them. At the time of this study, YouTube was turning five years old, and it is too early to measure its social influence in communication history.

"Invention is not the same as impact," says Peters (2009). It may be true that YouTube copies television and legal, political and economic issues reside in the development of YouTube, but mere adoption of new communication technology does not necessarily guarantee its impact on society. In addition to its shallow historicity, the YouTube revolution statement has limitations, taking into account that YouTube emphasizes user accessibility rather than technological improvement. Peters (2009) reminds us that "the energy of invention is found not so much in recording or transmitting or building better sensory simulations, but rather in ease, accessibility, and mobility" (p. 10). Just as the mp3 file became popular because of easiness and portability, not because of acoustic improvement (Sterne, 2006), the secret of YouTube's popularity resides in its convenience, not its technological improvement.

Technological development promises the expansion of the human being, the empowerment of individuals and widening opportunities of communication through personalized media. However, mere technological progress does not guarantee social transformation. Dominant products or technologies cannot characterize a society. It is the basic structures of political, social and economic relations that explain a society (Peters, 1987). Similarly, the trajectory of social transformation does not necessarily correspond to that of technological innovation. Society and media are interdependent, and it is hard to tell what is a cause or a

consequence. It would be more significant to notice the complications in the relationship between media technologies and certain ideas behind them, rather than to point out a clear-cut direction of impact.

The personalization of mass media is a sheer reality, yet this reality is shaped not only by optimistic promises (e.g. the coming of a new interactive era and empowered individuals) and pure technological inventions (e.g. digital UGC and humanized communication technology), but also by old problems (e.g. transmission and recording) and conditions of technological innovations (e.g. standardization and copyright). Seemingly personalized media solve the problems of mass media, yet at the same time, the new media contain similar problems with slight difference. The dream of democratizing media often leads to a flattening individual talent and creativity. The unintended consequence of all this democratization is cultural "flattening." Twentieth-century media history is filled with stories of mass media: mass media as the good and the evil, the cure and the problem. Especially radio and TV were treated as the origin of social problems in the middle of the twentieth century (Simonson, 2003). Once the roots of pseudo-individualism and the tools of totalitarianism, now the community function of mass media seems to be re-discovered in the murky ground of the fragmentation of digital media. The price we pay for diversity, more choices and individuality would be, as Putman (2000) argues, general interest media and shared culture. This is the revenge of mass media.

The development of mass media always involves a tension between mass communication and interpersonal communication. Although UGC culture may be welcomed because of its potential to increase individual liberation, concerns over exploitation of UGC always loom. Techno futurism and reception theories emphasize the potential of UGC culture for self-presentation, sociability, community and new literacy (Bruns, 2008; Jenkins, 2006, 2008;

Rheingold, 1993, 2002). UGC culture might encourage user self-expression, but the final results of their online activities come to be owned by the market, which exploits the free labor of users (Andrejevic, 2008; Terranova, 2000). In theorizing UGC, Dijck (2009) thinks, that "UGC is firmly locked into the commercial dynamics of the mediascape" (p. 53). In that sense, the optimistic discourses on UGC, including self-expression and self-realization, are nothing but promotional phrases for the market. Media companies use double measurement of copyright issues in UGC culture: they use strict intellectual property right for their own products yet often neglect user free labor for creating content. This irony implies that copyright issues in UGC culture are driven beyond market incentive. Andrejevic (2009) argues, "the battle over intellectual property rights is a proxy for a broader struggle for control over the interactive media environment and the value generated by YouTube's users" (p. 406).

User participation is nothing new, especially if we look into how the notion of the public developed into that of the mass in the 20th century. Before moving onto the issue of the transformation of the public into the mass, since users' practices of media technology is one of the key points in this dissertation, I will introduce some theoretical concerns about communication technologies during the 20th century.

Theories of Technology

Critique of the one-dimensional praise of new technologies is important in this dissertation that aims to find a middle ground between individuals' autonomous use of technology and the automatic development of technology, between technologies-as-tools and technologies-as-structure perspectives (Schudson, 1989). While I take a critical approach to media technology, I seek not to lose sight of historical interpretations of media technology and the Weberian legacy on media studies.

Weberian Legacy

Weber's views on technology are closely linked with his concerns about rationality and bureaucracy, which influence Horkheimer and Adorno, Mumford and James Carey. Weberian concerns about bureaucracy and social order touch the dialectic of rationality; as Horkheimer and Adorno (1944) put it, "[t]he paradoxical nature of faith ultimately degenerates into a swindle, and becomes the myth of the twentieth century; and its irrationality turns it into an instrument of rational administration by the wholly enlightenment as they steer society toward barbarism" (p. 20).

Horkheimer and Adorno's (1944) fear of cultural industries stems from "instrumental reason," which resonates with institutionalization, industrialization, standardization and rationalization. Their dialectical thinking that "[i]nner and external domination go together" (Peters, 2003, p. 63) implies that the exploitation of modern technology involves more than class dominion and an unequal distribution of economic resources: material reality does matter, yet so does consciousness, and on this point Horkheimer and Adorno are under the influence of Weber. In that sense, the main concern of "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" chapter in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* comes closer to the bureaucratization of society than the commodification of objects in ordinary lives.

Mumford (1934) regards the nature of media as institutional. Considering the monastery clock as "the key machine of the modern industrial age" (p. 14), he argues that media co-ordinate and synchronize human activities and things. He was influenced by Marx, but he did not regard media as mere tools for shaping human consciousness. One of the main quotes in *Technics and Civilization* shows his view on mechanization and the human being well: "The mechanization of men is a first step toward the mechanization of things" (p. 84). Mumford refers to the priority of

consciousness over the development of capitalist society, which is characteristic of the Weberian approach. He does not believe in causality; he rather sees affinities between human consciousness and the material conditions of social reproduction. Although he does not like the modern world and modern technology, he still believes in the potential of technology and human reason, and furthermore "a universal democracy in technology" (Carey, 1989, p. 186).

Mumford's influence on Innis, McLuhan and Carey are multiple – hatred of causality, flexible interpretation of the term "media," media and monopoly (especially for Innis), a penchant for irony and paradox, etc. Carey (1989) was deeply interested in media as institutions. Drawing on his focus on communication as culture (as well as communication as transmission), Carey argues that "the telegraph was not only a new tool of commerce but also a thing to think with, an agency for the alteration of ideas" (p. 204). For Carey, sheer reality cannot be easily straightened, so he takes a bit of an ambivalent approach to media and their influence on society.

Weber sees the major characteristic of contemporary society as bureaucratic organization rather than commodification. In the Weberian tradition of communication technology theories, the problems of 20th century capitalism originate from "bureaucratization" (Horkheimer and Adorno), "standardization," "mechanization" (Mumford), and "monopoly" (Innis). Contrary to these critical interpretations of the Weberian intellectual legacy, mainstream discourse on the information society and digital revolution are colored with reductionism and futurism. What information society proponents share in common with critical interpreters of Weber is that they understand the crisis of contemporary capitalism as emerging from the rigidity of a hierarchical social structure. The difference is that information society theorists emphasize that the diffusion of new media would lead to a decentralized network, and thus the democratization of society, which critical Weberians would not endorse as an expectation of the future.

Historical Interpretations of New Media

The works of Walter Benjamin, Friedrich A. Kittler, Harold Innis and Marshal McLuhan provide significant insights for this research in multiple ways. First, they do not assume any causality in the relationship between media influence and social change. This dissertation will explore the dynamics of how individual uses of User-Generated Content (UGC) media shape and construct social conditions, rather than focus on their linear relationship. I will more so focus on the patterns of interdependence between media and society. Second, just as these scholars look to the past to understand the present, I am interested in the ’70s cases because they are the precursors of online UGC in a retrospective way. Furthermore, I believe that there are affinities, loose patterns, and flexible tendencies between the past cases and recent phenomena. Recognizing certain similarities and tendencies between now and then is necessary, so as to clarify the problems of the present. Third, what these scholars emphasize is the physical aspects of media, rather than a certain materiality that can be reducible, quantifiable and profitable, on which information society proponents focused.

Benjamin’s insights on active audiences, new media as tools for social change, and historical interpretations are closely related to user-driven media phenomena as well as to early twentieth-century amateur radio broadcasting. Through “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility,*”* Benjamin (1936) shows his belief in the revolutionary potential of the masses and new technologies. He expected that media technology would bring about the achievement of egalitarianism and the democratization of art. In the article, Benjamin argues that photograph and film, the new media in his period, have changed the mode of people’s perception and experience in general, as well as the nature of art in particular. Yet, there is ambivalence or subtlety in his view on technology. He does not see any intrinsic nature in technology. Its uses

and effects are dependent on people's demands or relations of social reproduction such that whether art worked as a tool for Fascism or Communism remained an unsolved problem. Benjamin's (1940) skepticism about causality is repeated in his perspective on history.

Both Benjamin and Kittler confirm the importance of historical rupture and of the reinterpretation of the past. The big difference between them is that Kittler is not afraid of taking a media deterministic viewpoint, from which Benjamin keeps his distance. Looking into pure technological elements in communication, Kittler (1986) opens *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* with this sentence: "Media determines our situation" (p. xxxix). Instead of the creation of media content, he is interested in the development of the media from the technological perspective, and his theory remains anchored in historical contexts. Just like Paul Virilio (1977), Kittler points out the close link between media and war. Providing the analogy of a gun and the movie camera, he contends that "[t]he history of the movie camera thus coincides with the history of automatic weapons" (p. 124). With his notion of "so-called man," this German scholar seems to be anti-humanist, disbelieving in the idea of the autonomous human being. However, he emphasizes the physical aspects of communication by demystifying the priority of human consciousness over the human body.

Media studies based on historical approaches are relevant to this dissertation in two ways: as 1) historical interpretations and as 2) theories of media determinism. First, the main object of study in my dissertation is YouTube, an online User-Generated Content (UGC) medium, and I will look at the gap between the realization and the anticipation of the development of such media forms. In addition to Benjamin's and Kittler's approach of interpretations, I also agree with another historian's insight, Mumford's (1959), that "the realization has retrospectively disfigured the anticipation" (p. 534). Reading how the future was projected in the past leads us to

understand not only how far the gap between anticipation and realization is, but also how images of the future shape the present. Second, the historical perspective's emphasis on the role of media in social change should be distinguished from uncritical and institutionalized discourses about the linear relation of technology and society.

In exploring YouTube, I will take up a critical theory of technology position, which combines the Weberian tradition and historical interpretation approaches to technology. I agree with Benjamin's and Kittler's theories of media technology as media determinism with a focus on intertwined and interdependent connection between media and society. However, this media determinism should be differentiated from techno futurism. In the following section on the information society discourses, I will explicate in detail the techno futuristic perspective on technology.

Critique of Techno Futurism

What I mean by techno futurism is the one-dimensional optimistic vision of new communication technology in general, and as examples, I present a series of discourses on the information society during the '60s and the '70s. I will explain this series of utopian and deterministic views of technology, which are distinguished not only from the critical and historical perspective on technology but also from media determinism.

For the sake of clear conceptualization, I will point out three characteristics of techno futuristic discourses on the information society, ahistoricism, technological determinism and economic determinism, which this research plans to debunk. The '60s and the '70s are colored with counter culture movements and increasing doubt against political authorities, yet at the same time, institutionalized discourses including information society theories also became

influential and persistent. One of this dissertation's goals is to explore such conflicts between society and discourses, and to reveal how the tension will shape the new media environment.

Techno futurism originates from a series of discourses on technology and the information society from the '60s through the '70s. Because of its overly optimistic view of the influence of new technology on society, techno futurism often leads to myths of new media technology. Critical Weberian scholars were worried about the price of rationalization in the development of high technologies, whereas information society proponents have paid considerable attention to the convenience and accessibility of new communication media. The reasons I introduce the discourses on information society is twofold. First, it is necessary to distinguish the subtlety of the critical approach on media as form from technological-market determinism. Second, I will debunk ahistoricism.

Expectations on the recent online UGC are often overdrawn. For instance, the chants about YouTube in mainstream media are filled with high expectations. Naming "the invention of the year," *Time* praised the YouTube phenomenon as "Power to the people," saying that "[y]ou can control the media now, and the world will never be the same" (p. 42). About Google's purchase of YouTube for $ 1.65 billion in stock, the *New York Times* wrote "financial jackpot" (Cohen, 2006).

These optimistic views on new media are not limited to UGC in particular. Futuristic, technology-driven, market-oriented, and ahistorical beliefs are recurring topics on new media in general. In 1994, with the metaphor of an "information superhighway," the US Vice-President Al Gore showed enthusiasm about the creation of a Global Information Infrastructure (Gore, 1994). One year later, Bill Gates (1995) lauded the communication revolution. He wrote that "we are watching something historic happen," comparing the Internet's transformation into a global

information superhighway with “the discovery of the scientific method, the invention of printing, and the arrival of the Industrial Age did” (p. 273).

Retrospectively, one can find the similar utopian perspectives on new media from the past. Focusing on recurring expectations on new media, I will look at the discourses on the information society from the ’60s through the ’70s in detail. Major works on the information society are Fritz Machlup’s *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (1962), Peter Drucker’s *The Age of Discontinuity* (1968), John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The New Industrial State* (1971), Daniel Bell’s *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973), and Marc Porat’s *The Information Economy: Definition and Measurement* (1977). From a critical reading of the major works on the information society, I will present three characteristics of American information society (ahistoricism, market determinism and technological determinism), and problematize them.

Historical Amnesia

With the notion of “historical amnesia,” Mosco (2004) criticizes one particular weakness of the techno futuristic perspective. Futuristic chants on information society often fail to recognize the double-edge sword of new communication technology. Analyzing the futuristic discourses on electric media, including television, radio, cable, electricity and telegraph, Mosco points out repeated patterns in the discourses on especially early stages of new media. Proponents of new media technology likely “encourage us to think that we have reached the end of history, the end of geography, and the end of politics” (p. 117). Yet, history, geography and politics never died in reality. As he says, “[t]he mythic promise of cyberspace is many things, but it is certainly not new” (p. 139).

Information society is qualitatively different from industrial society, but it does not mean that information society is replacing capitalistic society. While industrialism and capitalism have been closely connected, they are not one and the same thing. Industrialism is characterized in terms of modes of development and capitalism in terms of modes of production. Modes of development – industrialism and informationalism – are "defined by the element that is fundamental in fostering productivity in the production process," and modes of production – capitalism and statism – are characterized by "[t]he structural principle under which surplus is appropriated and controlled" (Castells, 1996, p. 16).

Information society as post-industrial society and information society as post-capitalistic society must be distinguished. The first notion can be affirmed because information has become a core commodity and the information sector has become a major economic field. The second notion is difficult to confirm. The information society has been developing within a capitalistic framework. It is defined in terms of a mode of development, so it should be compared with industrialism, not capitalism. In the discourses through the use of diverse terminologies such as "post-industrial society" (Bell), "age of discontinuity" (Drucker) and "the new industrial state" (Galbraith), the information society is positioned in opposition to an older industrial society.

In *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973), Bell emphasizes the change in the character of knowledge as the major source of structural transformation. The axial principle in post-industrial society is "the centrality of theoretical knowledge as the source of innovation and of policy formulation for the society" (p. 14). Characterizing today's era as "the age of discontinuity," Drucker (1969) assumes an "age of continuity" that preceded it. In the age of continuity, most industrial technology is "an extension and modification of the inventions and technologies of that remarkable half-century before World War 1" (p. 8). Great economic growth

is not the only factor that distinguishes the age of discontinuity from the age of continuity. Even in Victorian and Edwardian times, there was rapid technological and economic development. According to Drucker, what makes the new age different is the rise of the information industry and the transformation from a continuous period to a discontinuous one, from manual to mental work, from electricity to information, from experience-based life to knowledge-based life and from apprenticeship to theoretical knowledge. New industries are based on the new 20th century knowledge and "represent a discontinuity fully as great as that of the industries that came into being between the 1860's and 1914" (p. 41).

The main difference between techno futurism and the critical approach on technology is that in techno futurism the conversation between yesterday and today is not important. For Benjamin, "the present" links the past and the future, and the past matters because re-reading it can lead to an insight into the contemporary. The 60s and the 70s information society proponents believe in the discontinuity of history, ignoring historical legacy of the past on the present. In general, these information society discourses repeated the fallacy of ahistoricism, or what Mosco (2004) warns of when he speaks of a "historical amnesia with regard to promises made about earlier technologies" (p. 139).

The discussions on the history of UGC in this dissertation will be more than chronicles of what happened; rather, they will be about what happened, disappeared, but yet still haunts us. From the '40s through the '60, commercial contests adopting UGC strategies boomed. Even though this heyday of commercial contests may be gone, the strategies of harnessing audiences to participate in media persist in forms of user-contributed commercial contests, reality shows and online UGC phenomenon.

Technological Determinism

Complicated social surroundings are filtered into simple factors in economic and technological determinisms. They are reductionisms, in which social, political and cultural factors are blocked out from consideration. According to Bell (1973), technological determinism is a belief in the primacy of technological factors over the structural transformation of society. From this perspective, it is not capitalism but technology that gave birth to the contemporary world. The opposite theoretical stance is social construction of technology approach (Webster and Robins, 1986, 1999). Criticizing Bell's post-industrial society theory as "asocial," Webster and Robins (1986) argue that technology is an integral part of society, with concrete technologies like machines and devices acting as part of the social process, and that technologies are misconceived if removed from that context. Webster and Robins see technology "not as a socially neutral force, but as an expression of social and political relations – of relations of power" (p. 307). In technological determinism, media are anthropological a priori, and the human being cannot have invented technology; rather, they must have evolved as its pets, victims, or subjects. That is, human beings are appendages of media technologies, rather than beneficiaries of their storage and communication potential. Social construction of technology is akin to instrumentalist anthropocentrism; media are means for human beings.

With regard to the relation between technology and social change, Galbraith (1971) sees technology as "the logical point at which to break in" (p. 20) in this chicken and egg problem. Likewise, Bell (1973) does not believe that the social structure determines other aspects of the society, such as the economy and culture, arguing "the present-day autonomy of culture brings about changes in life styles and values which do not derive from changes in the social structure itself" (p. 39). In other words, Bell argues for the primacy of technological factors over the

structural transformation of society. In technological determinism, technologies shape social structure and a linear relation of technology and society is assumed. In Machlup (1962), a certain linear form of social development driven by technological pervasiveness is identified. He identifies the current society as an information society marked by mechanization and automation.

There are several points that differentiate the technological determinism of the information society theories from critical theories of technology. First, there is no clear boundary line between the social, cultural and political dimensions of the latter's approaches. Kittler's reference to the close link between war and media goes beyond the strong influence of media on society. He explicates how weapons and toys work similarly, how macro and micro levels of media are closer than we think, and how media shape people's consciousness as well as influence material conditions. Second, what is missing in the theories of the information society is the use of media. Without taking into the consideration complexity of ordinary uses of media, the analysis of the relation of media and society is nothing but linear and one-dimensional. Criticizing the simplification of the social by the proponents of information society, this dissertation aims to probe the process through which new media interact with people's response to and use of them, rather than the immediate influence of new media technology.

Economic Determinism

Information society issues are often understood as economic realities generated by market forces interacting with technological innovations. For Drucker (1969), these new economic realities are accompanied by the increasing importance of knowledge as a "central economic resource," "the foundation for productive capacity," and a form of "systematic, purposeful, organized information" (p. 40). Machlup (1962) also employs an economic perspective to examine knowledge and its production. Coining the term "knowledge industry,"

Machlup (1962) refers to the close link between information, knowledge, communication, and economic activity. He thinks that all information is knowledge and that the production of knowledge is communication and economic activity as well. In other words, the production of knowledge is an "activity effectively designed to create, alter, or confirm in human mind," and communication means "all of the procedures by which one mind can affect another" (p. 30). According to Machlup, all the information flowing in society has the potential to become a commodity. Furthermore, by considering information and knowledge as the same thing, measurable and quantitative features eclipse the qualitative character of knowledge.

One of the interesting points in American discourses on the information society is that concerns about state power are hard to find. In market determinism, a free market not only mediates power in the most effective way, but is also presented as "an unavoidable reality" (Goodwin & Spittle, 2002, p. 238). According to market determinism, state interference and regulation should be passive in order to ensure the efficient operation of markets. Here, one underlying assumption is that the development of an information society is driven by the market, and so government intervention should be limited.

Critique of the Discourses on Information Society

One of the problems of the information society discourses is their ahistorical point of view. Even though discontinuous to industrial society, information society is still under the influence of a capitalistic structure. Information society discourse tends to be preoccupied with predictions about the future. Its biggest weakness is that it does not adequately explain the present. The definition of a new state of affairs might attach itself to a certain specific object (information), not "a general structure of social and economic relations" (mode of product). The discourses on information which largely focus on information as an economic resource are

problematic, because in these discourses, what characterizes a society is its specific product, not its general structure of social relations (Peters, 1987).

There are affinities between information society and digitalization discourses. For instance, notions of the free flow of information and copyright infringement from institutional settings rely on the issues surrounding the quantification of information in the past. Just as the electronic music file sharing phenomenon is becoming primarily framed as copyright infringement, rather than as autonomous and collective use of new technology, the importance of knowledge was mainly taken into account in terms of its economic value during the ’60s and the ’70s. People talked about an information revolution then; now, we talk about a digital revolution. Just as the fear of new technology and the belief in the development of science were nothing but different sides of the same coin in the discourses on the information society, utopian and dystopian views on the future go hand-in-hand in digitalization discourses.

The information society theorists also argue that use of new media technology renders a decentralized society. What they miss is the roles played by institutions, which bridge the ideal of autonomous individuals and the norms of society. In other words, optimism on the relation of technology and the future originates from uncritical interpretation of Weberian concerns about bureaucracy and instrumental rationality.

In the following section, I will look in detail at how the meaning of the mass changed during the 20th century. A literature review on the mass is crucial to developing some of my research questions, including how users are involved in the development of new technology and in the production of media content, and how institutional settings render audiences’ voluntary activities.

The ‘New’ Mass?: From the Ideal of the Public to the Myth of Active Audience

The discourses on new media tend to assume that audiences’ activity increases as communication technology develops, and vice versa. Tracing US TV history, Lotz (2007) argues that “(n)ew technologies have both liberated the place-based and domestic nature of television use and freed viewers to control when and where they view programs” (p. 5). However, it is hasty to assume a cause-effect relationship between new communication technology and certain characteristic of the audience. The historical interpretation of the development of new media requires the distinction of the hyperbolic expectations about new media and the actual consequence of their diffusion. Likewise, it would be helpful to distinguish mere expectations on the mass and the actual figure of them by tracing how the notion of “the mass” oscillates between a series of dichotomies: the active and the passive, the rational and the irrational, the public with common interest and a crowd without purpose, individuals with their own characters and a sum of fragmented entities with quantifiable nature.

From the Public to the Mass

After progressive faith in social democracy had been challenged in the 1910s, Dewey (1927; 1929) still believed in democracy, community and communication. For him, communication is symbolic practice, which, just like language and discourse, functions as “natural bridge that joins the gap between existence and essence” (1929, p. 167). He views the public as rational groups of people who are provided with education and tools of communication. On the contrary, Lippmann (1922) was more cynical toward the public, regarding it as fiction, or “pictures in our head”: the public is no longer rational, and public opinion is a mental picture. He emphasized the role of experts, decision makers, and propaganda. Lippmann believed in representation, but Dewey did not to the same degree. Lippmann saw that individuals can

possess correct representations of the world, so that public opinion can be formed as the statistical aggregation of such correct representations. Although Dewey believed in the vote, he saw that public opinion is not measurable in general, because it is formed through discussion in community.

Lippmann's public stands in for self-consciously scientific, value-free individuals whose opinions are vulnerable to manipulation. His public resembles voters in political campaign or consumers in market. Dewey's public stands in for self-realizing, critical personals that form community to communicate with each other. His public is made of citizens. Images of the public as consumers as well as citizens are mixed in Horkheimer and Adorno's mass, though it leans more towards the concept of consumers.

The Mass in Culture Industry

With regard to an understanding the category of the public, one reading of Horkheimer and Adorno's "The Culture Industry" chapter in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* would be that individuals are passive consumers, and individualism in contemporary society is nothing but pseudo-individualism. However, their text should be read with more subtlety. They may regret the amount of energy people pour into mass entertainment, regarding mass media as a distraction tool rather than as a liberation device. But that does not mean they dislike pleasure; they just hate the way pleasure turns into boredom in the culture industry (Peters, 2003).

Horkheimer and Adorno's dialectic on the nature of the public (passive mass yet with potential resistance) and pleasure (easily turning into boredom yet with possible intensity of art and culture) later became separated into pessimistic position, as in mass society theory in the '50s and optimistic position, as in the British cultural studies tradition and the "Uses and Gratification" theories of the '70s. Their pointing to people who use movie theaters as

disappearing acts, rather than passively consuming movie content resonates with the notion of the resistant public in British Cultural Studies as well as with "Uses and gratifications" theory tradition. "Uses and gratifications" theorists argue that "people are sufficiently self-aware," highlighting "the audience as a source of challenge to producers to cater more richly to the multiplicity of requirements and roles that it has disclosed" (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974, p. 22, 31).

The Mass Society Theorists

The dark and pessimistic side of the mass in Horkheimer and Adorno was magnified in mass society theories. In a sense, mass society theory is retroactive to denunciation of the many who only want bread and circuses. One of the mass society theorists, Erich Fromm is interested in the human factor in the modern world, stressing the psychological side of freedom. Fromm (1941) is negative about public opinion and common sense, in that they decrease individuality and the ability to think originally. He refers to "the dialectic character of the process of growing freedom" in modern society, which is that "[man] becomes more independent, self-reliant, and critical, and he becomes more isolated, alone, and afraid" (pp. 89-90). Fromm believes in the virtue of uniqueness, criticizing the increase of social abstractness: people become abstract, so that they can be measured as consumers. According to Fromm, an ideal image of the individual in mass society is the artist who can express him/herself spontaneously. There is not much room for public opinion in mass society theories, except for statistically manipulated and selected data for the benefit of business or politics. Fromm writes, "[a]s an abstract customer [man] is important; as a concrete customer he is utterly unimportant" (p. 110).

At the core of the pessimism of the mass in the 1950s lie increases in the external world of electronic media and vicarious experience and the decrease of the inner world of drawing

inner resources. The habits of imagining ourselves in the ways others and media images portray us resonate with the Chicago School's themes of communication. Lang and Lang's study on MacArthur's parade through Chicago (1952) reversed old assumptions on the relationship between liveness and mediation. Their study shows that home television audiences get more vivid images of the parade than the live public. Most people had a certain level of expectations about the spectacle. While the crowds' expectations were unfulfilled, TV audiences' were fulfilled, because "television remained true to form until the end, interpreting the entire proceedings according to expectations" (p. 332). Thanks to technological effects (e.g. close-up, camera angle, editing) and announcer's and reporters' commentary, audiences can be a more informed public through media: media does not distort reality, but provides a more clear sense of reality. Another interesting study from the Chicago School is Horton and Wohl's parasocial interaction theory (1956). According to them, such television performers as announcers, quiz show hosts, and interviewers simulated the persona of friends, counselors, and comforters. The simulation of intimacy gives audiences "the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer" (p. 374).

Both Chicago School studies emphasize the importance of media, imagination, and virtual relationships in mass society, pointing to the fact that mediated experience is not inferior to the real one. In a sense, Lang and Lang's and Horton and Wohl's studies are applications of the Frankfurt School's notions of pseudo-individualism and media as duping tools, thereby overestimating mediated communication in the creation of social life. However, the Chicago School deals with one of the important communication problems in contemporary society: communicating without a body and/or at a distance (Peters, 1999). Additionally, they ask the question about the imagined public in the media-saturated society.

The Paradox of the Public

The historical context of the mass image in mass society theories is limited to the post World War atmosphere, and especially influenced by the fads and fashions of popular culture. However, Habermas' (1962, 1989) public sphere theory provides deeper and longer historical context for the transformation of the nature of the public. He shows concerns with the structural transformation of the public sphere (refeudalization of the public sphere): the transformation from a culture-debating public to a culture-consuming public, from "critical participation to consumerist manipulation" (Peters, 1993, p. 543). Here, the change of the nature of the public is inseparable from the transformation of the social structure.

Habermas touches on paradoxes of the public sphere. While capitalism gave birth to the public sphere in the modern world, it destroyed the public sphere through intensification of consumerism and the development of the welfare state. The birth of the bourgeois public sphere implies the increase of an enlightened and educated public. Yet, more education and more rationality did not guarantee a mature public sphere. Rather, the public in capitalism came to be in danger. The paradox of the public, seemingly rational citizens but actually indifferent consumers, resonates with the ambivalence of the mass in "The Culture Industry" chapter in from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and the coexistence of two different views on the same public by Lippmann and Dewey.

Active Audience and Reception Studies

Active audience and reception studies show the transformation of passive audiences to active ones during the 20th century. For a better understanding of the 20th century audience, Butsch (2000) investigates the 19th century audience, and his basic finding is that 19th century audiences were more active than 20th century: "In the nineteenth century, the problem lay in the

degenerate or unruly people who came to the theater, and what they might do. In the twentieth century, worries focused on the dangers of reception, how media messages, might degenerate audiences. In the nineteenth century, critics feared active audience; in the twentieth, their passivity" (p. 2). In other words, 19th century audiences were hyperactive and rowdy, attending performances in the theater with a tint of carnival. Throughout the 20th century, people might have evolved into more civilized audiences, however, increased passivity occurred with a vengeance, in that passivity has been emphasized by mass media. Butsch's concern with passive audiences resonates with Habermas' concern with refeudalization, Frankfurt school's concern with pseudo-individualism, and mass society theorists' concern with social isolation.

While the question of an individual's autonomy was still problematic, the field of communication studies provided the theories about active audiences during the '70s and the '80s. From the critical-cultural angle, Hall (1973) and reception study theorists argued that the audience is active and media content are open to interpretation, and preferred reading exists (Morley, 1993). Out of the media effects research tradition, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) outlined three objectives of "Uses and gratifications" theory: to explain how audiences use mass media to gratify their needs, to understand their behavior, and to identify consequences that follow from needs, motives, and behavior (Rubin, 1994). Audience activity is the core concept in both qualitative reception theory and quantitative uses and gratifications theory.

In his seminal work "Encoding/Decoding" (1973), Hall points to an ideal of active audiences who can resist and subvert traditional media production-consumption circulation. Under the Marxist notion of production, however, he still believed that production and consumption are not clearly separate phases, but intertwined subcategories in a macro level of social reproduction. Although "Encoding/Decoding" influenced later reception studies, Hall's

understanding of audience and message interpretation should be understood for more than its emphasis on active audience and open reading of text. It is true that he emphasizes the limit of encoding which cannot totally guarantee decoding process, and thus he denies the univocal and uncontested role of "a dominant cultural order." Just as he focuses on the liberal potential, nonetheless, he also points out the limit of freely decoded text. He says, "[i]n speaking of dominant meanings, then, we are not talking about a one-sided process which governs how all events will be signified. It consists of the 'work' required to enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of dominant definition in which it has been connotatively signified" (p. 172). There is neither a one-sided process of dominant meanings, nor ideally interactive, two-sided resistant meanings. What he means by "negotiated codes" depends on situated logic which are conditioned by discourses of power.

Hall's Encoding/Decoding theory helped open the second generation of reception studies (Ang, 1985; Jenkins, 1988; Radway, 1984; Silj et al., 1998). Often relying on ethnographic methodologies (interviews and observation), the '80s reception studies strive "to move past the direct text/audience relationship" (Bird, 1992, p. 8). They used face-to-face and in-depth interviews, so that they could replace social science studies, which use survey and experiments as their methodology. The main problem of social science research is that researchers regard audiences as measurable entities, so that they can be reduced to numbers and tables. This originates from the heyday of propaganda research during the '40s and '50s. Though they pursue alternative ways of defining ordinary people, even in their use of research methodology, ethnographic reception studies often deploy artificially constructed groups and consequently meet the problem of limited cultural context in their studies.

Historicizing audience research, Livingstone (2003) chronicles the evolution of audiences: from live to mass, from mass to active, and from active to interactive. She points out the problems of prejudiced interpretation in audience studies, especially related to class and gender. Borrowing from Davison (1983), she quotes: "a middle class man attentively watching the news is assumed to be alert and thoughtful, a working class woman attentively watching a soap operate is assumed to be mindless and uncritical. Other people's children are mindless, your own can concentrate properly" (Livingstone, 2003, p. 349). Livingstone's concern is not different from Williams' (1958) notion of the mass, who are others, not me.

After the '90s, audience studies diversified objects, from supermarket tabloids (Bird, 1992), online communities (Baym, 2000), and bloggers (Jenkins, 2008). Other than these, several differences from the previous studies are found. First, the notion of active audiences is closely tied to the development of media technology, especially digital, interactive and online media. In other words, people's increased activity in relation of media content is greatly indebted to the nature of media, and that is why I explored the history of technology in the first part of the chapter. In addition to new media, the recent skyrocketing popularity of reality TV format programs is also relevant to the notion of active audiences. However, the emergence of active audiences is nothing new: Langs, Horton and Wohl, and even Horkheimer and Adorno (seemingly pessimistic about the mass) refer to the potential of active audiences. On the one hand, it is important to notice the difference between the preceding arguments about active participants and the on-going arguments about interactivity. On the other hand, it is another goal in this dissertation to dissect the elements that embrace discourses on active media users, amateur users beating the professionals, and thus finding certain similarities or patterns in the relationship of formation of new media and discourses on active users.

So far, I investigated the brief history of discourses on technology and society in the 20th century and the transformation of the meaning of the public and the mass. The joining of these two concepts, technology and audience (whether as the public or the mass), is the key in this dissertation, and the notion of interactivity lies at the core of this research.

User Participation and Interactive Media

Looking at the transformation of the US commercial television system in the latter half of 20th century and early 21st century, Lotz (2007) problematizes TV as a mass medium in the digital age: "The U.S. television audience now can rarely be categorized as a mass audience; instead, it is more accurately understood as a collection of niche audience" (p. 5). According to Lotz, the US television left its "network" era (from the 50s through the mid-80s) to "multi-channel transition" (from the mid-80s through the mid-2000s), and recently arrived at a "post-broadcast" era, which is fundamentally differentiated from the network era in two ways: more choices and control over the viewing experience. In other words, digital innovation induced an abundance of channels and variety of programs, and audiences' ability to control television watching conditions, though with limitations, has increased.

With multidimensional research on television production, distribution and consumption stages, Lotz thought that the way audiences deal with television has been fundamentally transformed. Especially, for "digital narratives," "native speakers of technology, fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet" (Prensky, 2001, p.8) and the generation who never knew network-only television, television watching is "viewsing" (view + using) (Harries, 2008, p. 172).

As audiences get closer to a media production environment, professional creators and broadcasting institutions gain more control over audiences. Digital technologies may have

provided more information to audiences who came to earn new visual literacy as savvy media users, but new communication technologies also enable broadcasting companies to gain information about audiences' watching behavior easily. It is certainly the case that the transformation of broadcasting environment is a result of a series of conflicts, tensions and compromises between individual use of new media and institutions' urge to control audiences.

Personalized Media and Revenge of Mass Media

Recent scholarly and popular discourses on the 21st century media environment are often imbued with notions of audience fragmentation and personalization of media. However, the imagery of audience fragmentation was long in the making, and personalization of media can be taken into account retrospectively. New media are often understood as the final products of recent technological revolution, yet I will argue, they are the consequences of technological evolution. I am not underestimating the availability, accessibility and efficiency of YouTube, but I also do not want to ignore the legacy of amateurism, individualism and user participation on UGC media. One of the purposes of this dissertation is positioning YouTube within the historical trajectory of individualized media.

Discussions about the personalization of media are quite relevant to recent scholarly interest in the development of digital personal media. Criticizing technological determinism, Lüders (2008) distinguishes media technology (e.g. printing and the Internet), media forms (e.g. books and newspaper) and social function (e.g. uses of media). According to him, it is too simplistic to assume a linear development from media technology to media form, and media form to media genre. Technological determinism is nothing but a belief in autonomous technical imperatives, which hinders comprehensive understanding between media technology and its social function. Digital technology does not automatically have an intrinsic nature. When digital

Internet technologies are implanted in the forms of emails or instant messaging, they construct personal media forms, rather than mass media form. The same technology can be applied to different media forms, which are "the result of the interrelations between media technologies and their function within our everyday lives" (Lüders, p. 687). Likewise, people's use of media forms results in different genres. Online newspapers still function as a mass medium just like paper newspapers, yet blogs can be mainly for mass communication (e.g. political campaign tools) or for interpersonal communication (e.g. personal diary). Originally, telephone was conceived to be a mass medium for the public, yet it has been mainly used as a personal medium (e.g. private conversation) or as tailored message-disseminating tools with the flavor of personality (e.g. telemarketing). Instant Messaging and email are used similarly. Though used as interpersonal media, these new media are also used for mass distribution of the same information (e.g. spam). Lüders' distinction between technology, media forms and genre resonates with Silverstone (1994)'s two dimensions of media (technology and text) and Peters' (2010) emphasis on the ways in which new communication technologies are applied and configured, not the inventions of them per se. Also, both media theorists seem to follow Innis's thesis about the bias of communication, because they believe that different modes of media accompany different powers.

Many communication scholars have questioned whether intrinsic differences exist within a dichotomy of mass communication and interpersonal communication because the dichotomy is too simple and the line between these two forms of communication blurs: at best, this binary functions as a heuristic tool for scholarly researches (Beniger, 1987; Jensen, 2010; Menzel, 1971; Peters, 2010; Scannell, 2000; Simonson, 1999, 2003).

Foucault (1978) argues that social valences have been attached to personal communication situations in Western civilization. Defining Western man as a "confessing

animal," (p. 59), he contends "the obligation of confession" as a pivotal element in Western society, in that confession functions as a driving force in the production of the truth discourse. Personal forms of communication had already existed within society, and the history of media tells us that mass communication has not merely replaced interpersonal communication, but adopted face-to-face, context-rich communication.

Peters (2010) provides philosophical and historical critiques of the incompleteness of the dichotomy between mass and interpersonal communication. Borrowing from Peirce, Peters argues signs are circulated and bartered because "the power of a single sign to couple with more than one person is precisely what makes communication possible in the first place" (p. 268). According to him, "all communication is mass communication" (p. 268) in that any communicative activity has the potential to be mass communication, especially considering the possible spillage of communicative act, such as eavesdropping, breaches of confidence and misunderstanding.

According to communication scholars, including Menzel and Peters, the history of user fragmentation goes backward further than the development of digital personal media, and the major purposes behind audience fragmentation include more than market interest.[1] More recently in the 20th century, Menzel (1971) argues that every communication activity can be categorized as either mass or pin-pointed communication. Election campaign speakers, orators on the streets, salesman and missionaries do "quasi-mass communication… intermediate between [characteristics] of mass and interpersonal communication" (p. 407). Those communication agents deliver messages-especially-for-you, yet the information is often "institutionally arranged

[1] Distinguishing mass address, mass delivery and mass accessibility, Peters (2010) finds out the origin of mass communication from the history of religion. He also points out that mass media not only address "all" but also "some" or "a few." Mass media often address all, yet also often say "'to whom it may concern,' acknowledging an imperfect fit between the actual and intended audience" (p. 3). Sometimes mass media are declared "be it known to all present" (p. 3), which is less ambitious because of admitting time and space limitation.

and recognized" (p. 407). Feedbacks, coming up with between-message producers and audience, are imbued with specialization, but they are often mass tailored ones "to each situation and each particular audience," (p. 407) lacking in the same degree of intimacy as in interpersonal communication. Fuzziness within the distinction between these two seemingly different modes of communication has always existed since media came into being. Digital personal media might be new, but the embryo of personalized content with a tint of individualism, which is institutionally manufactured, is an ancient practice. Peters (2010) says, "what seems novel in communication often apes forgotten historic styles" (p. 274): new media studies cannot be separated from the history of media.

After two World Wars, mass communication came to indicate the centralization of the production and dissemination of information (Simonson, 2003). Simonson criticizes the broadcast bias in the field of communication studies, arguing face-to-face communication plays communicative ground for mass communication. As fears of alienation and anonymity increased, and in response to people's feelings of being part of a "lonely crowd," mass media adopted face-to-face communication modes. At this period, communication scholars began to ask whether mass media worsen the problems or not (Ellul, 1964; Fromm, 1941; Riesman, 1953).

Merton's research on Kate Smith during the 1940s (1946), and Horton and Wohl's work on para-social interaction during the 1950s (1956), commonly touch on the subtlety of the transition from interpersonal to mass media. Rather than taking the simple perspective that new media replace old ones, these communication scholars point out where personal and mass forms of communication come to compete, compromise and converge. With the case of marathon broadcasting by Kate Smith, Merton explains how mass media celebrity figures feign "personal concern with the other fellow in order to manipulate him better" (p. 142) and how this blurring of

reality and pretense brings about "pseudo-individualism," a individualism "falsely presented as natural (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944, p. 154). Horton and Wohl (1956) coined the term "para-social relationship," which means "seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer" (p. 374). Just as Merton did, they looked at how mass media figures manipulate sincerity through making imaginary yet intimate bonding and how efficiently sexuality functions to generate "a supposed intimacy." According to Horton and Wohl, "[s]exual suggestiveness is used probably because it is one of the most obvious cues to a supposed intimacy – a catalytic for prompt sociability" (Horton & Wohl, p. 382).

Based on such concepts as "supposed intimacy" and "pseudo individualism," Beniger (1987) points out a persistent dilemma that lies within the shift from face-to-face communication to mass communication, even after the popularization of personalized media such as cable TV and personal computers. Beniger argues that sincerity still matters, yet there is a problem with maintaining. Here, mass media rely on personal communication to render sincerity. According to Beniger, sincerity is an "intervening variable between audience size and the potential of communication to affect attitudes" (p. 361). In other words, content in broadcasting does not matter to the production of sincerity of communication. The smaller the scope of audiences, the more sincere the programs: "[p]erceived sincerity of communication does depend at least in part on the inferred size of the intended audience" (p. 360).

For some communication scholars, like Scannell, the distinction between personal and mass media does not matter, because they are already interdependent. Scannell (2000) conceptualizes two types of media: for-anyone and for-someone media. By "for-anyone" structures, he means mass media. By "for-someone," he indicates personal media. However, with the notion of "for-anyone-as-someone structures," Scannell (2000) blurs the line between

personal and mass media. Scannell argues that broadcasting is one good example of the mixing of these two forms of media structures, and he calls it "for-anyone-as-someone structures." In other words, "for-anyone-as-someone" is an "intermediary structure[s] that mediates between the impersonal for-anyone structure[s] and the personal for-someone structure[s]" (p. 9). Mass media deals with statistical mass yet treat them as if they were individuals.

Borrowing Scannell's notion of "for-anyone-as-someone" structure, Peters (2010) emphasizes "especially for you" as a core element in mass communication. With his distinction between mass address and mass delivery, he points out an irony of mass media. Mass media, especially radio and television, made it almost possible to reach everyone in society, yet mass media stopped addressing all, thus adopting an interpersonal mode of communication. Here, Peters radically reverses the common belief in mass media, which implies mass media address all and are open to all. He points out the all-address and all-access model is rather an exception: "[c]ommunications have probably only tried to deliver their messages to everyone-at-once when they had something to tell or sell to everyone" (pp. 274-275). As professionalized and commercialized institutions, mass media address all and access all, but amateur-driven and non-profit oriented mass media reveal a variety of gaps between access and address. In that sense, what Peters means by saying that "[t]he history of mass communication is less the story of one speaking to all than of few speaking to some" (p. 275) is not the radical reversal of the conceptualization of mass media, but rather broadening conceptualization through historicizing mass media.

In the age of digital technology and personal media, a traditional dichotomy between mass media and interpersonal media almost looks anachronistic. And the destablishment of binary communication modes began prior to the age of digital communication. But the

dichotomy of mass and interpersonal communication is useful, not because it is a clear-cut category, but because it can function as a hermeneutic tool. Despite the arbitrariness of this dichotomy, one can identify general differences between mass and personal media. Peters (2010) provides pragmatic explanations for both modes: "[mass media] produce standardized rather than customized communication, designing content by guesswork and probability… Uncertainty of reception and generality of context are key facts facing the design of mass media content" (p. 268). In other words, one of the major characteristics of personal media is its interactivity between communicative agents, even though not all face-to-face communication is reciprocal or intimate. Hjarvard (2002) argues that electronic media simulate interpersonal communication. Under the scholarly legacy of McLuhan (1952, 1964) and Carey (1989), Hjarvard points out that new media find their roles in the old media, so that new electronic media contain characteristics of previous media.[2] Because "interpersonal communication can be said to constitute a particularly important analogy, a fundamental form or matrix, for the development of technically mediated forms of communication" (p. 228), mass and interpersonal media do not provide radically different forms of communication.

Concern over segmentation already began before the Internet age. Katz (1996) showed his concern that television failed in its role of facilitating participatory democracy, because it took the road to segmentation. Without noticing the upcoming impact of the Internet, Katz's concern lies with the declining presence of political debates on television and the increasing presence of entertainment.

Peters (2010) points outs the revenge of mass media in the age of digital culture. During the 50s, mass society theorists showed the concern over the loss of individuality and alienation in

[2] The major implication of his arguments is that a coexistence of new and old media occurs between electronic and digital media as well as printing and electronic media

media-saturated society. In the 21st century digital media milieu, the function of mass media to provide common interest, which was criticized because of the anonymity of mass society, came to be positively re-discovered. As Peters (2010) puts it, "[i]n the broadcast era, the fear was the loss of individuality in the lonely crowed; in the narrowcast era, the fear is the narcissism of the 'daily me'" (p. 274).

Why YouTube?

This research positions YouTube as an evolutionary medium under the influence of traditional broadcasting, rather than as a revolutionary one discontinuous from media history. YouTube is an Internet based medium whose mode of broadcasting rests on old forms of mass communication, including television, radio, video recorder, mail, telephone (or, teleconference), diary and face-to-face communication. In chapter one, I traced diverse scholarly discourses on technology and the transformation of the nature of audience (from the public to the mass). Applying these theoretical frameworks to YouTube will offer a productive understanding of not only characteristics of UGC media in particular but also those of the Internet in general.

Nineteenth century German biologist Haeckel argues that "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny." In this dissertation, I will examine whether the development of YouTube repeats the history of the Internet, which often receives praise for its libratory potential, two-way interactivity and participation, just as radio, television and even cable did. As the Internet has evolved, its myths have been demystified through complications of hyper commodification, digital divide, copyright, surveillance, net neutrality, information overload and polarization. By exploring the ways in which the initial promises of YouTube have been realized, challenged and compromised, this study aims to provide one understanding of the evolution of the Internet.

With regard to close examination of this particular cultural artifact, I believe fruitful and productive study of media should comprise agent, institution, and text: the triangle of media studies (Peters, 2009). Taken together, three important dimensions in media studies help us to recognize and understand tensions within YouTube, including celebrity culture, institutionalization, personalization and interactivity. The triangle of media studies are not exclusively separate dimensions, but heuristic categories in order to understand media in a holistic way. Chapter two will be devoted to an agent perspective on YouTube. I will draw on economic and legal issues of YouTube in chapter three, and YouTube as text will be explored in chapter four.

From the agent perspective, chapter two will discusses meanings of YouTube to users and socio-cultural influence of YouTube on them. With its encouragement of amateur video production, this new medium seems to have the capability to change the nature of media users, from passive audience to active creators. However, exploring the relationship between amateurs' uses of YouTube and their fascination with celebrity leads to a subtler claim than an argument that YouTube radically changes users' roles in the media environment. I recognize that, thanks to YouTube, fans expand their roles from audience (by watching videos) to distributors (by retransmitting videos) and producers (by making videos): YouTube celebrities including *lonelygirl15* show how versatile YouTube users can be. Viral videos in YouTube facilitate celebrity culture, and fans utilize YouTube to naturalize celebrity culture. However, it is worth noticing that fans' active engagement in celebrity culture works within a macro mechanism of production system, as Dijck (2009) argues, "[t]he growing role of UGC platforms as intermediaries between amateurs and professionals, volunteers and employees, anonymous users and starts, can hardly be conceived apart from 'old' media conglomerates' power to select,

promote and remunerate artistic content. UGC is firmly locked into the commercial dynamics of the mediascape" (p. 53). User-industry relationship seemingly became flexible and open, but in fact it turned into asymmetrical but unforced relationship because ordinary people voluntarily accepted the idea of being famous, which works under the logic of media industry. In that sense, there is a trade-off between user participation in celebrity culture and user submission to dominant culture.

Chapter three closely traces the transformation of YouTube from an institutional perspective. There are two turning points in the short history of YouTube: its public appearance and Google's purchase of it. The transformation of YouTube from personal to public, public to commercial oriented medium seems to mimic the history of the Internet, and the similarities between histories of YouTube and the Internet can be confirmed in terms of censorship, copyright and commercialization. While YouTube's potential for emancipatory power comes from amateurism, user participation and User-Generated Content (UGC), these qualities are exploited and compromised by opposite trends, including institutionalization and Professionally-Generated Content (PGC). YouTube has changed media milieu, in that it opened up the potential of UGC and amateur users' participation, to which mainstream media came to respond. On the other hand, YouTube has been also changed by the traditional broadcasting environment. Rather than emphasizing any one of these dimensions, I will trace complications from the collisions and compromises between broadcasting and narrowcasting.

YouTube is not constituted only by hybridity of old medium (television) and new medium (the Internet), but also by a mixture of broadcasting/for-anyone medium and narrowcasting/for-someone medium. Media convergence not only indicates technological transformation but also points to the changes in which people imagine social networks and define

privateness and publicness. For Scannell (1989), television as a new medium compared with literature and arts serve to bring about private pleasures and experiences into the public sphere. Both analyses of *lonelygirl15* in chapter two and *Kicesie* in chapter four exemplify YouTube as a convergence medium blurring the lines between narrowcasting and broadcasting, the private and the public, and UGC and PGC.

Chapter four is a textual analysis of the *Kicesie* YouTube video series. In order to understand the development of YouTube from a historical perspective, I will emphasize both continuity and discontinuity between YouTube and broadcasting. The continuity comes from YouTube's borrowing of its dominant pattern, format and genre from traditional broadcasting. The discontinuity is constituted by the revolutionary aspect of YouTube. These two patterns co-exist, but the novelty of YouTube in its distinguished nature from traditional communication is a matter of degree, rather than a matter of different quality.

For heuristic purposes, in this dissertation, I often compare and contrast YouTube-related issues with simplified dichotomies such as those of the private and the public, narrowcasting and broadcasting, and liberation and institutionalization. Rather than taking a side, I aim to complicate a causal and linear way of explaining the transformation of new media and thus to gain a dialectical view of the seemingly opposite tensions within YouTube: the liberating potential of an individuals' use of new media and the various institutional constraints on that.

CHAPTER II. CELEBRITY CULTURE ON YOUTUBE

Andy Warhol envisioned a future in which "everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes" (quoted Murphy, 2006). In the age of YouTube, one can be famous in less than 10 minutes. Although one can think that people's desire to be "someone" is the nature of is the nature of human beings, visual-oriented media environments likely induce people to conceive that celebrities are the most admired public figures. Image-saturated society has brought an unprecedented binding between people's imagined perception of celebrities and representation of celebrities. In that sense, the desire to be famous is one of the key concepts to understand the contemporary cultural environment. Many YouTube users post clips not only to broadcast creative videos, but also to attract attention from others.

The focus of this chapter will be on how the obsession with being famous naturalizes asymmetrical but not imposed relationships between ordinary people and industry. This "asymmetrical yet unforced" relationship is hegemonic, not only because the idea of being a celebrity is dominant across the terrain of everyday cultural life (Grossberg, 1996), but also because ordinary people consent to the idea of being famous. Having said that, people are not merely submissive to marketing's illusory presentation of celebrity. In fact, they play active roles both in the consumption and creation of celebrity culture, and culture industries depend on the dual roles of people: submission to celebrity culture and creation of their own fantasy.

In this chapter, I will analyze a particularly important element of YouTube: celebrity culture. Critique of celebrity culture is one of the key points throughout the dissertation; my goal is to debunk the myths of user-participation and interactivity. It is a common myth of YouTube that anyone can be productive and profitable on YouTube. In fact, only a small portion of YouTube users create. Of the small portion of creators, only a few gain fame. And of the

selective YouTube celebrities, just a handful of users make money. It is one thing to equalize self-disclosure with self-expression, yet is another to claim that self-disclosure guarantees self-empowerment (Andrejevic, 2007).

At least in its early development, YouTube was an amateur-driven medium, not just because ordinary people uploaded their clips, but also because people formed milestones for the whole structure of this medium: amateurs are consumers, producers and basic framers of YouTube. In this dissertation, I will differentiate two stages of YouTube: the early developing moment of YouTube as amateur-driven User-Generated Content (UGC) medium and the late stages dominated by institutionalized Professionally-Generated Content (PGC). As YouTube has been growing, PGC has become dominant, and this defining change of YouTube is closely tied to people's fascination with celebrity; my main contention is that the culture industry is not the only culprit of the institutionalization of YouTube. A dynamic understanding of the relationship between individual users and institutional restraints comes from the recognition that people's desire to be famous and their voluntary submission opened the commercial stage of YouTube.

Conceptualizing Celebrity: From Public Figure to YouTube Celebrity

Although the comprehensive histories of celebrity and fame are beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is necessary to sketch out some distinctions and taxonomies of celebrity and fame. The attraction of being famous has a history, but the new media environment in the 21st century makes it easier to identify the start of an age of celebrity. Turner (2004) indicates the close relationship between celebrity and contemporary popular culture, interpreting "celebrity as a symptom of cultural change" (p. 5). He argues that the pervasiveness of the celebrity phenomenon is a pivotal characteristic of contemporary popular culture. This celebrity boom refers to not only how celebrity is cheered by audiences but also how audiences show their

aspiration to be a celebrity. Exploring girl culture, Hopkins (2002) argues that "[m]any girls and young women look to celebrities not just for entertainment but for self-definition, meaning and purpose" (p. 182). Behind this narcissistic self culture resides a system of "exploitation of the public's weakness for celebrity" (Turner, 2004, p. 69) and a vicious belief circle that popularity and the media spotlight mutually enforce each other (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948). Especially in the digital culture, ordinary people come to easily access production tools for their self-expression, which is often imbued with narcissism.

History of Fame: From Star to Celebrity

According to Braudy (1986), a "history of fame" had already started in Roman times, and at the core of western societies lies people's fascination with being famous. He writes that the decline of the feudal system and the birth of individualism facilitated social democratization with the rise of mass communication. However, it was mass-produced and mass-consumed media – such as TV, radio and film – which truly ushered in the age of modern celebrity.

Collins (2008) differentiates fame and celebrity by claiming that celebrity is the commodified form of fame: "Celebrity is the democratization of fame, but more importantly, it is fame *commodified*" (p. 90; italic by Collins). He argues that the idea of fame began before modernity, in that fame is "a precapitalist conception of visibility… designations of the heroic by the ruling class to the 'great men' of royalty, aristocracy, nobility, and the church" (p. 90). In this way, the idea of celebrity came into being in the modern world with "the democratization of the consumption of cultural goods, and the production of secular notions of popular culture" (p. 90).

Critics have located the rise of Hollywood movie stars as the most important moment in the phenomenon of 20th century celebrity (Schickel, 2000). Of course, the movie industry is not the only location of the celebrity phenomenon. Wernick (1991) writes that 20th century western

society is dominated by publicity, promotion and advertisement, which have resulted in a simulated culture. While Wernick's critique against publicity leans toward elitism, Hartley (1999) denies the notion of publicity as the enemy of the public. According to him, the public came into being thanks to publicity, and individual freedom correlates with fame. However, this associating of fame with freedom brings about a "tight ideological connection between the discourses of celebrity and democracy" (Turner, 2004, p. 17). Furthermore, the mere disclosure of private lives must be differentiated from expressing one's voice on real-life issues. Fascination with celebrity is imbued with a misunderstanding that famous people are free from social constraints imposed on them and an illusion that free individuals get new social status through grabbing public attention, regardless of the source of the popularity.

This disparity between individuals' efforts to accomplish socially meaningful work and their showing off as public figures has widened, and consequently what Boorstin (1961) called "pseudo-events," or staged events for the media, became naturalized in media-saturated environment. Although Boorstin originally coined this term to describe how media shape the political realm, pseudo-events in the age of digital media are no longer restricted to the political realm, in that web culture has not merely popularized the celebrity phenomenon but rather secularized the pseudo-event.

Fame is a historical phenomenon, whereas celebrity is a commercialized form of fame, a modern invention in capitalist society. While web celebrities reflect contemporary society's fascination with visual and simulated cultures, it is hard to say the obsession with fame on the web is qualitatively different from the celebrity culture that stretches back before the Internet age. Before discussing types and characteristics of web celebrity in particular, I will turn to a categorization of celebrity.

Categories of Celebrity

I will conceptually differentiate "celebrity" from "star" and "public figure." However, the following taxonomies are guideposts, rather than indicative of an unchangeable reality, in that the distinction between these terms became to blur, especially in web culture. "Celebrity" indicates a person who gets more attention than he or she deserves: for instance, accidental fame or fame for the sake of fame. "Star" refers to the person who gains economic and social status from the entertainment and sports industry. "Public figure" indicates someone who gets attention to a degree he or she deserves through his or her achievement, especially in terms of social valence.

There are numerous categorizations of celebrity, and I will selectively choose some categorizations that are closely related to my research on how amateurs take advantage of the digital technologies to become famous. Monaco (1978) distinguishes three types of celebrity: "hero," "star" and "quasar." "Heroes" are the ones who actually do something valuable and deserve attention. They are often noted for special achievement and excellence. For "stars," the popularity of their status is more important than their professional accomplishment. "Quasar" refers to the one who happens to be famous accidentally and unintentionally. Self-promoted and User-Generated Content (UGC) celebrities in the digital age are located somewhere between "star" and "quasar." Monaco's model shows that the positive nuance of "celebrity" is often accompanied by discourse of individualism, and under his model celebrity is individual, rather than a set of qualities.

In contrast with Monaco's concept of celebrity, Turner (2004) differentiates three qualities in celebrity: commodity, text and cultural process. First, celebrity is a commodity. Similar to Collins (2008) on celebrity as a commercialized form of fame, Turner points out that

celebrity is the mass-produced and consumed commodity coordinated by the culture industry. Second, celebrity is a text, which audiences read and re-interpret. Celebrity as a text brings about a discursive effect. Audiences not only purchase images of celebrity and make their role models out of them (e.g. teenage girls' adoration of pop bands), but also criticize or recreate them (e.g. web bloggers and fan fictions). Third, celebrity is a cultural formation, so the celebrity phenomenon is an on-going social process rather than a fixed property. The status of celebrities changes and so do the types of fans' fascination. Young movie stars are identified and idolized (e.g. the Brat Pack[3] in the '80s movie theaters), often easily forgotten (e.g. some of the Brat Pack after the 80s), but sometimes recycled as the objects of classical taste (e.g. the Brat Pack movies as classics in the 21st century on the web and cable channels).

Though not mutually exclusive, Turner's categorization helps us understand the diverse dimensions of celebrity. One of the major weakness of his model is that it lacks explanation about the source of celebrity quality. Rojek (2001)'s typology deals with the origin of quality in celebrity. According to him, celebrity quality is ascribed, achieved or attributed. The fame of kings and princesses is ascribed by blood. The popularity of sports stars comes from the achievement of their performance. Serial killers like Charles Manson attract attention neither because of bloodline nor efforts, but because of media coverage; in this way, the fame of celebrities is attributed by media. Web celebrities may argue that their popularity originates from their natural quality and the efforts of self-promotion. Although they are often proponents of individualism and market competitiveness, their quality of fame is closer to "being attributed" than "being ascribed" or "being achieved."

[3] The "Brat Pack" is a group of young movie stars in the 1980s, including Demi Moore, Judd Nelson, Molly Ringwald, Rob Lowe, Ally Sheedy and Anthony Michael Hall. They frequently appeared together in the films like *The Breakfast Club, St. Elmo's Fire* and *Pretty in Pink*. The term "Brat Pack" came from a 1985 cover story in *New York Magazine* (Blum, 1985; thebratpacksite.com, 2010).

So far I have looked at the history and categories of celebrity in general. Now, I turn to web celebrity. Borrowing from Rojek (2001) and Collins (2008), I argue that the fame of web celebrities is often attributed rather than achieved, and their images are consumed as a commodity-text that is discursively formed. Although web celebrities capitalize the characteristics of Internet culture, including accessibility, quickness and youth culture, the qualities of their fame are what communication scholars find in the pre-Internet age.

Online Celebrity

Based on Forbes.com's top 25 chart of web celebrity (Ewolt, 2007a, 2007b; Ewolt & Noer, 2009) and TechCult's 100 web celebrity chart (2008), I categorize web celebrity according to the following categories: "The Blogger," "The Entrepreneur-Inventor" and "The Performer." Just like other categorizations in this dissertation, this web celebrity taxonomy is useful as a heuristic tool rather than as a precise distinction for exclusively mutual elements.

"The Bloggers" often aim to broadcast yet narrowcast (or, podcast), in reality. Of diverse types of blogger celebrity, those who deploy the gossip and scandal of other celebrities remind us of what Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) warn against, a vicious circle of social prestige: "If you really matter, you will be at the focus of mass attention and, if you are at the focus of mass attention, then surely you must really matter" (p. 233). Blogging has become an accessible and convenient tool not only for the amateur journalists who muckrake sociopolitical issues but also for those who want to disseminate celebrity-related gossip. Large portions of web celebrities cover entertainment gossip and technology news. Picked up as one of the 100 most influential people in 2006 by *Time* magazine, Matt Drudge turned person-to-person scale gossip into a celebrity gossip website. Ever since his scandal site *The Drudge Report* broke the Monica Lewinski scandal, the site has been frequently cited by other media (Brad, 2008). Ranked no. 1

popular celebrity at Forbes.com two years in row (2007, 2008) and no. 2 at TechCult.com, Mario Lavendeira (a.k.a Perez Hilton)[4] is one of the most well-known web celebrities who capitalizes on celebrity gossip. Perez Hilton has become so popular that he has appeared as a guest-host on the TV show *The View*, and as a guest on a series of specials on VH1 and has even published a book, *Red Carpet Suicide: A Survival Guide on Keeping Up With the Hiltons* (Ewalt, 2009).

Web 2.0 celebrities like Jerry Yang (Yahoo!), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Chad Hurley and Steve Chen (both YouTube) are successful founders of venture companies and creators of viral websites. They are "The Entrepreneur-Inventors." The success stories of these entrepreneurs often read as legends. Of the most frequently quoted of their stories, some discursive frames are commonly found: economy, accessibility and individualism. The web entrepreneurs are praised for their economic successes. Yang, Zuckerberg, Hurley and Chen are talked about in terms of their companies' stock value more often than their technical innovations. Their achievements are measured by technical accessibility rather than their commitment to scientific improvement. The genius of web 2.0 lies in encouraging common users' participation, inviting them and praising the virtue of active consumption of web culture. Here, two individualisms resonate: the genius of individual entrepreneurs and the importance of consumers with pseudo-individuality for the market status quo.

"The Performer" category can be specified in two groups: activists and entertainers. Co-founding the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Creative Commons, and promoting "free culture" on the web, Stanford Law Professor Lawrence Lessig has been fighting against corporate media's strict restrictions on copyright and trademarks. As a lawyer, Lessig challenged the *1998 Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act* on the grounds that the act unconstitutionally protects corporate welfare and decreases public profits by extending copyright

[4] His site title and pseudonym Perez Hilton comes from the socialite Paris Hilton.

terms (Lessig, 2004).[5] As an online activist, on his web page (www.lessig.org/blog), he podcasts the lectures on copyright and experimented with the free download of some of his books, including *Free Culture, Future of Ideas, Code. 2.0*. and *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*

The Italian comedian and activist Beppe Grillo, originally a TV comedian, likes to joke about political issues and found that web gave him more freedom to choose the topics of his show and thus began a blog (BeppeGrillo.it) for political satire. Before entering into the Internet, Thien Thanh Thi Nguyen (a.k.a Tila Tequila) started her career as a model and an actress. She pioneered self-promoting celebrity on the web as the crossroad among diverse careers. Her MySpace received huge attention which led her to host her reality show on MTV, *A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila*.

While categorizing web celebrities, I found several common features among them: sponsorships and connection to offline media (e.g. TV, books and magazine). Through narrowcasting, bloggers can target specific audiences as well as cover topics ignored in the mainstream media. The flipside of narrowcasting is loss of financial independence. Popular blogs enjoy the Internet banner ads and sponsorships from venture capitals or big media. Because their financial sources come from outside, web celebrities have easy access to big and traditional media. The Internet posting in general and blog publishing in particular are similar to print media. It is not rare for popular bloggers to have been professional journalists before they settled on the web, or for them to be invited to write articles in magazines or newspapers. The Italian comedian and activist Beppe Grillo started his career on TV, was banned for his political satire, and found at alternative channel through starting his personal web blog. Considering the Internet as a hybrid medium, it is also not strange that web celebrities are able to easily crisscross media

[5] On January 2003, the Supreme Court upholds the Act, 7-2 (Berkman Center for Internet and Society, 2003).

boundaries. Celebrity gossiping bloggers like Perez Hilton easily find themselves appearing in diverse media windows, including TV, magazines and books. It is not just because the web is influential but also because the Internet has adopted old media, and old media that developed a certain genre (e.g. celebrity gossip show) can easily find useful content from the web (e.g. Hilton as a web celebrity critic).

Some photos and video clips spread so fast and this being "viral" characterizes celebrity culture on YouTube. Viral video, the phenomenon by which short video clips spread quickly like a flu, is not exclusive to YouTube. Viral video has a history, and it is a significant feature of celebrity culture on YouTube. Borrowing from my own categorizations and definitions of web celebrity in particular and celebrity in general, I will focus on YouTube celebrities as stars with commercial potential on the web.

YouTube Celebrity

Discourses on celebrity touch on individualism. Fame often implies individual success, and individualism likely pairs with democracy. The discourses on celebrity work "at the very centre of the culture as it resonates with conceptions of individuality that are the ideological ground of Western culture" (Marshall, 1997, x). In the age of digital revolution, consumerism and individualism are closely related. The level of consumption indicates a measure of individuality, and through consuming activities, individuals become content producers as well as consumers. It is one thing to imagine how new digital media provide room for amateur users to participate in content production, but another to distinguish the potential from the reality: not all contestants win in competition type reality shows, not all Facebook users look cool, and not all YouTube clips go viral.

Celebrity culture is a particularly important element of YouTube. People use YouTube not merely to watch video clips but also to be engaged in the world of fast and easy fame. Celebrity culture on YouTube is emblematic of a "mutual admiration society" based on a vicious circle of illusion of success and mass attention. Although web celebrity is characterized by the easiness and swiftness by which one can gain popularity, fame does not guarantee success. The myth of quick fame on YouTube should be understood as applying to only a set of exceptional cases, including *lonelygirl15,* which I will look at in greater detail. Before I move into investigating YouTube celebrity and a case study of YouTube celebrity, *lonelygirl15*, I will explain how to measure the popularity of YouTube videos and YouTube's basic functions, including views, subscriptions, favorites, responses and discussions. Then, I will briefly deal with the history of viral video on the web.

Measuring YouTube's Popularity

When posting videos, users have to open their accounts, where they can organize their posted videos and track how many times their videos have been watched. A user's account is called "channel" or "site," and it functions like a website, where clips are managed. Individuals or groups own their channels, and when users post clips, they are automatically registered at their channels. Users can freely name the titles of video clips and their channels, yet they should select the characteristics of their channel and the genres of their videos, and then they are categorized in the YouTube system. Each channel has one specific characteristic, and users can select their site's characteristics from such options as "Comedians," "Directors," "Gurus," "Musicians," "Non-Profit," "Partners," "Politicians," "Reporters," "Sponsors" and "YouChoose 08." Characteristics and genres change, and the distinctions sometimes seem fuzzy. For example, "YouChoose08" characteristic temporarily existed for the U.S. Presidential election in 2008.

After the election, this characteristic was gone, but related sites and clips were re-categorized under the "Politicians" section (e.g. BarackObamadotcom and JohnMcCaindotcom). Although users can choose the characteristics of their channels, the genre of an individual clip is categorized by YouTube. Simply said, the channel characteristic indicates the general style of a site, and the genre of a video refers to the type of video clip. Video categories include "Autos & Vehicles," "Comedy," "Education," "Entertainment," "Film & Animation," "Gaming," "Howto & Style," "Music," "News & Politics," "Nonprofits & Activism," "People & Blogs," "Pets & Animals," "Science & Technology," "Sports" and "Travel & Events."

The popularity of YouTube can be measured by diverse criteria: views, subscription, favorites, discussion, response, time period, region, genre and user type. In their survey on YouTube popularity, Burgess and Green (2009a) concentrate on four of YouTube's categories of popularity: "View," "Favorite," "Discussion" and "Response." The number of views indicates both the number of hits received by particular videos and by sites. While this category merely indicates how many times the clip has been watched and the site has been accessed, other categories show a degree of user participation. The site and video hits increase regardless of whether the visitor has an account, but "Favorite," "Discussion" and "Response" functions only work for the users who have their own accounts. Users can put specific videos or sites in their profile with the "Favorite" function. Users can express their thoughts about the videos by leaving messages, which count as "Discussion," and by posting responding videos, which count as response. For example, *lonelygirl15*, one of the most popular YouTube series, began as a video response to a YouTube video, 'The Myth, the Man, the Legend...The Love Square.' "Subscription" is also one of the categories that can measure one's YouTube popularity. The "Subscription" function applies only to a site, not to videos.

The popularity of videos and sites can be tracked down for a particular day, week, month or for all-time.[6] As of March 24th 2010, the all-time most viewed video clip on YouTube is 'Charlie Bit My Finger – Again.' This simple, 55 second video shows one-year-old Charlie biting his older brother's finger, and it has more than 170 million hits. The most viewed channel is Vevo, an online music video website whose videos have been accessed more than 14 billion time in total. Vevo is a joint company owned by Sony, Universal Music Group, EMI and Abu Dhabi Media Company (Abu Dhabi Media Company, 2009). The all-time most subscribed-to channel is *Nigahiga*, a teenager's comedy channel with more than 2 million subscribers.

With diverse categories, the possibility of targeting one's audience is available. The popularity of videos and sites can be specified not only in terms of channel characteristics and video genres, but also in terms of time line (day, week, month and all-time) and region (nations). Even though it is the all-time most subscribed-to channel, *Nigahiga* is the number six most viewed Comedy channel (number one is *failblog*). Esmée Denters' site is the number six all-time most subscribed-to in the Musicians category, and the US President Barack Obama has the most popular Politician channel in terms of both subscription and view. Each country has its own favorite clips, and mostly, they are in its language or created by its people. As of December 27th 2009, all-time most-watched video in Korea is 'Super Mario,' a Korean amateur guitarist's playing of the video game theme song.

Although the dominant genres in the popular clips on YouTube are entertainment oriented (e.g. music videos and comedy skits), "viralness" is the key word rather than a specific

[6] Of course, the charts change. At the time of July 7th 2009, the all-time most view video clip on YouTube was 'Evolution of dance' with more than 120 million hits. This hilarious dance video was the most watched clip ever since YouTube came into being. The most viewed channel is The Universal Music Group whose music videos have been viewed more than 4 billion times in total. The all-time most subscribed-to channel was *Fred*, a teenager's comedy channel with more than one million subscribers. The Universal Music Group channel had the fourth most largest number of subscribers; *Fred* was at the tenth of all-time most view channel list.

genre or characteristic. Users can immediately recognize hot videos through automatically updated ‘most viewed’ or ‘most subscribed-to’ videos announcements. More easily, the front page of YouTube provides a list of the most popular recent videos. Popularity and simultaneity are the elements that shape viral culture on YouTube. As a viral medium, YouTube fame originates from shocking the mass and attracting mass attention, not from aesthetic achievement.

Viral Video

The concept of “viral video” comes from “viral marketing,” a business strategy that “facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message” (Marketingterms.com, 2009). The term viral video is applied to a short video clip that spreads quickly on the web, often attracting attention from marketers because of its advertising effect (Kreiser, 2006). Levy (2008) defines viral video: “video content that gains popularity through email sharing, blogs and other Internet websites” (p. 4). YouTube is the most prominent web site for viral videos, but it is neither exclusive nor original: social networking media including Facebook and Twitter are also symptoms of viral culture and the origins of online viral content reaches back further.

Web developers invented graphic programs, short and funny clips often came to be circulated among web users. CompuServe invented GIF animation in 1987. GIF works as a series of images proceed, and the basic logic is the same as film. In 1998, Canadian artists Deider LaCarte created the short clip *Hamster Dance* featuring GIF animation. It came to gain popularity, and later the *Hampsterdance Christmas* CD was released along with an original website (http://www.hampsterdance.com/musicmerch.htm). The next wave of viral images came with Flash animation. Adobe introduced Flash program in the 1990s, and faster and smoother graphics were welcomed by web users. *Peanut Butter Jelly Time* by Kevin Flynn is one of the popular animations featuring the Flash program (Levy, 2008, pp. 4-5). *Peanut Butter Jelly Time*

was not just viral at that time through emails and person-to-person, but an icon for viral video in pre-YouTube era. Later, the clip was referenced in one of the episodes of *Family Guy*[7] and one of the *Ed* episodes.[8] It was 1996 that the famous *Dancing Baby* was born. Although the clip initially came to birth merely as a software demo, through e-mail attachment it spread widely, leading to its appearance on *Ally McBeal* (Grossman & Dwyer, 2006). From the scholarly perspective, this short history of viral video shows the narrowing gap between niche and mainstream media.

David Bernal's (a.k.a. David Elsewhere) *Robot Dancing* is a case where a pre-YouTube viral video continued on YouTube. In 2001, a 21-year-old Bernal performed "a mixture of 'popping, waving, liquiding, breaking, roboting'" dance at a Korean-American talent show in Los Angeles: it was video-taped by an audience member, distributed online, and millions of people watched it (Grossman & Dwyer, 2006). Ultimately, Bernal came to be invited by and danced in NBC *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, and participated in major company advertisements, including those of Heineken, Volkswagen, and iPod.

YouTube brought a media content synergy effect in that the same content circulates in diverse channels. Clips may originate in traditional broadcast form, yet it is YouTube that develops their popularity. One of the important examples in terms of content circulation is YouTube clips from the NBC skit comedy *Saturday Night Live* (*SNL*). Although taken down due to strict copyright application, more than several *SNL* clips have been posted on YouTube, earning quick and huge attention: for example, *SNL* comedian Tina Fey's impersonations of the 2008 U.S. Presidential election vice president candidate Sarah Palin (2008) and comical rap music videos including 'Lazy Sunday' (2005) and 'Dick in a Box' (2006). With regard to the

[7] The 16th episode from the 4th season, 'The Courtship of Stewie's Father,' originally broadcast in November 20, 2005 (imdb.com).
[8] The 7th episode from the 3rd season, 'The Wedding,' originally broadcast in November 13, 2002 (imdb.com).

YouTube influence on spreading clips, Andy Samberg, one of the co-creators of 'Lazy Sunday' and 'Dick in a Box,' said "I've been recognized more times since the Saturday it aired than since I started on the show" (Itzkoff, 2005).

While major networks have paid considerable attention to the surprising successes of *SNL* clips, they also came to be concerned over copyright and censorship issues in the video service on the web. When *SNL* videos went viral on YouTube, NBC wanted control of them. NBC asked YouTube to take them down and leave the viral clips available only on NBC website[9] (Brigs, 2006). When it was first aired on NBC, 'Dick in a Box' was censored, but when it moved to YouTube, the uncensored version came to available (Steinberg, 2006).

Initially YouTube began as a cultural artifact led by amateurs' experimental spirits. However, the emphases on amateurism and volunteerism have been overlapped with mere popularity, public exposure, the fascination with self-expression and viralness. If one considers how markets eagerly deploy popular imagery of UGC media in their promotions and advertisements, it is too naïve to regard recent celebrity culture mandated by human nature. Amateurs use whatever online resources are available for their own satisfactions and expression, but one should not ignore the social process of shaping celebrity culture without institutional influence.

YouTube Celebrity

So far in this chapter, I have dealt with the brief history of celebrity and the measurement of popular clips and viral video, which are all important to analyze on YouTube. Yet, I believe an integral understanding of UGC culture should be comprised of multi-dimensional approaches to text, agent and institution. The last segment of this chapter will be devoted to the agent

[9] Later, NBC provided *SNL* clips on a video service Hulu, a joint venture between NBC Universal and the News Corporation. Also, users have continued posting *SNL* clips on YouTube, though the videos are often policed and came to be taken down.

perspective on YouTube: the meaning of YouTube to users and the social and cultural influence of YouTube. I will get back to the structural issues of YouTube in chapter three and to YouTube as text in chapter four.

Techno futurists have pointed out the blurring of lines drawn between creators and audiences through the coining of new neologisms such as "prosumer" (Tapscott and Williams, 2006), "produser," "produsage" (Bruns, 2005, 2008) and "social production" (Benkler, 2006). Under this utopian vision of technology, the dual roles of UGC users, content consumers and creators are difficulty to separate. In YouTube, the gap between producers and consumers appears to be narrowing, and so does the distance between ordinary people and celebrity. However, it is worth noticing that the illusion of being celebrities gets stronger with the seemingly narrowed gap between people and celebrities. Actually, the mechanism that triggers people's desire for mass attention widens the gap and the surface value of celebrity stays the same.

YouTube celebrity is microcelebrity: it is 'micro' in that the scale of its fan group is smaller than that of mainstream media celebrity, but it is still 'celebrity.' It is beyond the scope of this study to provide an exhaustive list or study of YouTube celebrity. That said, I will state some general characteristics of YouTube celebrities and then move into celebrity categories as a guidepost for further discussion, while providing relevant examples for each category.

YouTube celebrities are amateur blogger-performers, rather than professional entrepreneur-inventors. YouTube celebrities are bloggers in that they have niche channels through which they post video clips. Especially after Google's purchase of YouTube in 2006, YouTube has been institutionalized and commercialized, and the most popular genre on YouTube is music video, which is PGC (Professionally-Generated Content). Yet, User-

Generated Content (UGC) remains a popular and competitive form. Of UGC clips, entertainment (e.g. songs, comedy, parody and video games) and self-diary are two prominent genres, which often crisscross with each other. For example, such popular original YouTube series as *lonelygirl15, Lisa Nova, HappySlip* adopt diverse genres or formats (interview, diary, confession, skit comedy or music video). *Smosh*, the number-three all-time most-subscribed-to channel on YouTube at the time of March 24th 2010, is a sketch comedy duo comprising Anthony Padilla and Ian Hecox. With *Saturday Night Live* as their role model, they have been creating sketch comedy, parodies and music video since 2005 (Grossman, 2006). Aaron Yonda and Matt Sloan's parody of *Star Wars*, *Chad Vader*, is one of the beloved comedy and parody series on YouTube. With the idea that the brother of the evil character in the *Star Wars* series (Darth Vader) works at a local supermarket, Yonda and Sloan created the series and received huge attention. At the time of October 2007, the series recorded 19 millions hits, and at the time of July 2009, the series is the number 99 all-time favorite YouTube clip and the number 26 favorite series in the comedy genre (Callender, 2007).

With regard to music, record companies apparently use YouTube as a promotion tool and amateur artists use it for a new creative outlet. The double edge of amateurs' using YouTube as a free channel is that once they gain popularity, chances are the major record labels and big name artists will come to show interest in amateur singers. Since 2006, at the age of 18, Esmée Denters began her music career on YouTube as a regular cover-singer (Conniff, 2007). The Dutch amateur singer's YouTube site gained steady attention from audiences, and it was Justin Timberlake, 6 times Grammy winner singer-song writer, who discovered her and signed her up for his label, Tennman, whose parent company is Universal Music.[10] Before Denters was

[10] At the time of July 7th 2009, Esmée Denters' official YouTube channel is the all-time number 40 most subscribed-to site.

discovered by a big label, she covered songs and her music videos were pretty simple, without camera work, special effects or narrative. Once introduced into mainstream channels, her videos transformed from mere singing performance to professionally directed music videos, which fit a MTV style music distribution and the consumption environment.

While some amateur users do not show keen interest to commercialize their own content, others view the popularity of their clips from a different angle. The latter singers' attitudes toward market influence on YouTube is close to an old motto: if you can't beat them, join them. The fact is that not all YouTube clips become viral, but the possibility exists, and this possibility feeds and facilitates YouTube phenomena. *lonelygirl15* is an important case because, as one of the popular series in the early YouTube era, this series constructed YouTube culture and reflected diverse desires behind YouTube phenomena. In other words, *lonelygirl15* is one of the products from YouTube and a mirror of YouTube culture. This series contains many elements that explain YouTube culture, including the amateurs' fascination with mass attention and their active exploitation of the chance to become a celebrity.

Fascination with Being Famous: *lonelygirl15*

In the short history of YouTube, the *lonelygirl15* series was one of the most successful YouTube video clip series. It was a success in multiple ways: viral video, user participation, authenticity, genre experimentation, and online celebrity. With regard to media interest, the series shows genre hybridity, media convergence, and a hyperreal-postmodern experience of blurring the line between reality and fiction.

Out of the total 547 webisodes over three seasons, I will explore just the first 50 videos from season one for the sake of having a deeper analysis. The first season is the most successful in the series. The early shows were especially popular, and selected 50 clips indicate how

successful the show has been. The analyzed videos cover the period from June 16 to October 8, 2006, and during this period the *lonelygirl15* channel was the second most watched on YouTube (Hutcheon, 2006).[11] As of May 12, 2009, of the analyzed 50 clips, 37 clips are within the top 50 most-watched in season one, and 11 clips received more than one million viewings.

The first episode of *lonelygirl15* was posted on June 16, 2006. A young girl introduced herself: her name is Bree, she is a 16-year-old, this is her first video on YouTube. She said that she made this video because she is really boring. Just as if recording for her video diary, Bree talked to the camera about home schooling, her religion, her boyfriend, and her parents. Her monologues were taped to clips of three to five minutes and were posted two or three times a week on YouTube. Bree's video diaries became viral. Lasting 26 months on websites (starting from June 16, 2006 to August 1, 2008), including lonelygirl15.com, MySpace, Rever and YouTube, the total number of webisodes is 547 in three seasons. Of the clips, 20 clips have been watched more than 1 million times, three have had more than 3 million viewings.

The popularity of the series came from user participation, the show's new web genre experiment and scandals about the series' authenticity. Interactivity between video producer and audience lies at the core of *lonelygirl15*. Bree was engaged deeply in the interactive format of the show because she responded to fans' comments directly and quickly, often including them in her videos. Season one, consisting of a total of 153 webisodes, was the most watched of the three seasons, and its end went with Bree character's dropping out the series. Sixty percent of the

[11] In general, the popularity of the *lonelygirl15* came to decrease after the series ended on August 1, 2008. More specifically, at the end of the season, when Bree, the major character of the show, moved out, the viewings dropped significantly. The series still receives a moderate number of hits. As of May 12, 2009, *lonelygirl15* channel is the all-time 40th most viewed and 71st most subscribed-to YouTube series.

season one clips have more than 1000 comments, and 90% of the webisodes have more than 500 (both written and video).[12]

Initially, *lonelygirl15* began as a video response to one YouTube clip, 'The Myth, the Man, the Legend...The Love Square,' which is a mashed-up clip with diverse topics such as history, movies, animations and dinosaurs. The first video posted on YouTube by username 'lonelygirl15' is 'Paytotheorderofofof vs. Dinosaur,' which attracted more than 100 times the views of the original post.[13] Bree often included fans' comments on the series, inviting user participation in the show, which encouraged fan loyalty to the series. *lonelygirl15* was one of the pioneering series on YouTube, and since its hit, similar format-based videos have mushroomed. One of the major attractions of the series was its quality of seeming genuineness: the series was about the teenager Bree's everyday life. *lonelygirl15* touched what audiences want, in that its content (portrayal of ordinary people's common lives) and format (first-person, confession and diary) is not so different from reality shows.

While the representation of a teenage girl's real life was the key attraction, *lonelygirl15* was fiction. Bree is in fact a 19-year-old amateur actress, and her real name is Jessica Rose (Gentile, 2006). The whole series was co-created and co-worked by a semi-amateur director, writer and actress. Bree is a fictional character and *lonelygirl15* is a show adopting strategies of reality show, documentary and drama. Even after Bree's and the show's real identities are revealed, audience's interest did not fade away immediately. Rather, *lonelygirl15* came to record viewings thanks to the spotlight it attained in mainstream media (including *CNN,* the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*), and hardcore users did not care about the show's authenticity as far as they felt empathy towards the main character, Bree. Some audiences were serious about

[12] As of May 6, 2009, 97 clips have more than 1000 comments, and 137 clips have more than 500 comments.
[13] As of May 6, 2009, 'The Myth, the Man, the Legend...The Love Square' recorded 1,507 viewings; lonelygirl15's video response video 'Paytotheorderofofof vs. Dinosaur' was watched 215,447 times.

the show's authenticity, and that made the show popular initially. When doubts about authenticity deepened, some audience members kept insisting on the show's truthfulness, some furiously attacked it, and some argued that the ambiguity of fiction-real distinction is a theme in the series. One of the users commented on this issue: "Real or not, your videos are always interesting to watch. You can never tell whether ANYTHING on YouTube is the truth, so why bother?"[14]

The whole series play with the blurring line between reality and fiction, self-diary and staged show, and true representation of everyday life and exploitation of people's sense of reality. This blurring strategy worked well not only in the content of the series but also in the audiences-creators-text relation. As the series developed, Bree's private life became the object of user interest. The primary theme of the early *lonelygirl15* series was the boredom of a home-schooled 16-year-old girl's everyday life: in the first webisode, Bree tells the audience she made the video because her life is boring; in 'House Arrest,' Bree was grounded by her parents, seemingly believers in a fundamentalist religion. Mostly through comments, fans expressed sympathy for her, and obsessive fans even began to suspect a conspiracy, that Bree is was grounded, but kidnapped and possibly in danger of being killed as a religious scapegoat. At this conspiracy scenario, user responses were largely divided in two parts: that she really was in danger, or that the whole situation was staged. Either for the sake of Bree's safety or for the sake of audiences' curiosity, diehard fans started web investigations.

Before amateurish but serious investigation began, audiences already had been debating on the authenticity of the show with regard to several points: the editing was too smooth for a young teenager to do; Bree often delivered bad dialogue, so she might just be reading a script; and her room looks like a neat movie studio set. It was the *Los Angeles Times* that first

[14] User Kyrani's comment from 'House Arrest,' the 6th most watched webisode from season one.

publicized doubts about the identity of Bree in a mainstream medium. Supporting amateur web sleuths, the *Los Angeles Times* contacted several proactive fans, who found professional touches behind the series. Amateur detectives emailed back and forth with Bree, set up the software to trace emails from a *lonelygirl15* account, and found that her emails came from the office of Creative Artists Agency, a talent agency. Using a similar method, other fans traced Bree's MySpace account and successfully identified the IP address, which was also from the Creative Artists Agency. The fans also found that 'lonelygirl15' was legally protected and copyrighted (Rushfield & Hoffman, 2006b).

As a consequence, Bree came to tell the truth publicly.[15] On September 2006, the creators of the 'show' confessed that Bree's diary was fictional: Bree was in fact a 19-year-old amateur actress and her real name was Jessica Rose (Gentile, 2006). The whole series was created by semi-professional crews, Rose delivered bad lines due to her lack of acting experience, and the location was a rented room from the Creative Artists Agency building, not Rose's real room. Bree was on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, confirming Bree was a fictional character and *lonelygirl15* was a show, a pseudo-self diary series, a false documentary, or a mocumentary. The show was created by a team of three men in their late twenties, co-written and co-directed by Miles Beckett (28, medical school dropout) and Mesh Flinders (26, amateur screen writer), and legally consulted by Greg Goodfried (27, lawyer), whose father submitted a file for the *lonelygirl15* trademark (Rushfield & Hoffman, 2006a).

As Burgess and Green (2009) point out, the crews of the series might have "violated the ideology of authenticity associated with DIY culture" (p. 29). Ironically, while the show touched on the realism of representing a teenage girl's everyday life, the violation of authenticity did not

[15] During the programs, they even hired lawyers to prevent law suits because of public pranks and got funds from companies (Davis, 2006).

seem to hurt the popularity of the show directly. Rather, when the truth was revealed, the *lonelygirl15* series reached the height of its popularity, because of its scandalous dimensions, covered by the mainstream media. Later, the genre of the series changed, from one person's confessional video diary to multi characters' suspense thriller. In general, *lonelygirl15* experimented with contemporary hot genres such as the reality show, the confessional talk show and the mystery thriller. This series contains many postmodern characteristics, including a lack of narrative, negation of integral structure, flexible identity, intertextuality and emphasis on styles and images. The experiments with new media resonate with the show's intentional blurring of the dichotomy between fiction and reality.

Entering the second season, *lonelygirl15* came to lose its early charms. The fall of the show was not due to the 'deception' of producers in creating hyperrealism, which helped the show's going viral. Rather, internally, it was because fans were fed up with the series per se, and externally, similar styles of shows and videos on the web exploded within a few years. The show began as a simple reality show, which was staged yet not clarified as such. Then, audiences actively got involved in two ways: participating in the text of the show and investigating the context around the show. In this sense, *lonelygirl15* is a postmodern experiment of audience as storyteller, and a plausible example of amateur user-professional creator collaboration.

Within the text, fans were engaged in the show by giving comments, which is a crucial element of the show, because fans were encouraged by discussion and communication with creators. Furthermore, audiences' opinions and thoughts are reflected in the show. For instance, in the 'Hiking' webisode, where Bree's love life started to take off, a huge number of comments followed. With regard to developing the love story, the crew members of the show confirmed that they felt support from user comments (Rushfield & Hoffman, 2006b). Another example of

adopting audience comments is 'Purple Muppet' doll, which became one of the repetitively appearing props thanks to fans' positive responses to it.

Outside the text, the fans' proactive investigation added to a new storyline about the show. Audiences created an imaginary connection between *lonelygirl15* and real life crimes (or, suspense drama at the least). Also, the way users investigated the show is also a mystery drama, which is not purely amateurish in that mainstream media (i.e. the *Los Angeles Times*) helped the online sleuths.

Inside and outside, *lonelygirl15* became imbued with suspense and mystery, and it is not coincidental that the show transformed from introspective video diary with a limited number of characters in season one to extroversive suspense thriller with multiple characters in seasons two and three. There are several reasons behind the change in the show: the main actor's dropping out, decreased viewings and genre experiment. Rose's exit meant significant change in the show. She got multiple calls from big media, and as an amateur actress, she had a good reason to quit the small show. When she moved out, the first charm of the show began to fade. The fact that the analyzed 50 webisodes are within the top 100 popular clips of 567 total episodes of *lonelygirl15* shows the importance of the Bree character in the show. Audiences lost interest in other characters' diary style confessions, and the creators' solutions were twofold: continuing sex appeal and changing genre.

Bree's physical attractiveness (mostly fan quoted her cuteness) was no less important than her inner self confession in terms of popularity. In most webisodes, she wore a sleeveless T-shirt and shorts, with simple but bright make up. After Bree's innocent charm was gone, due to real Bree scandals and when Rose dropped out, the show introduced new female characters who were older than Bree. New girl characters often wore similar clothes styles as Bree yet got

involved in sexual situation. The most watched *lonelygirl15* clip, which came from season three, is the 'Sleeping' webisode, where the major female character is sleeping barely dressed. While keeping love story narratives, the show turned into a mystery-suspense drama with such styles as handheld camera, interview, and surveillance camera, which are common tropes in reality shows. Unfortunately, this new experiment did not succeed. The show lost the major storyline, viewings decreased, and without much attention, after 26 months since its first posting, the show ended.

lonelygirl15 was a postmodern experiment, in that genres mixed (genre hybridity) in, converged medium (YouTube is an example of media convergence between television and the Internet), and the consequence of the show is more real than the real: YouTube celebrity in the blurring line between the real and the fictional.

Discussion and Conclusion

Of the many ways for recognizing oneself as a unique individual in contemporary society, I will point out two things: media coverage and consumerism. Although transforming from mass society to niche audience society means a change of the scale and size of society, the illusion of recognizing successful individual through media coverage remains the same. One's confirmation of being individual often depends on media coverage. The more media spotlight one gets, the stronger one may view oneself as a unique individual. Successful people might deserve media coverage, yet all media do not cover the fame that individuals deserve. In their study of the functions of mass media, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) recognize the problem of a "mutual admiration society," a vicious circle of mass attention and success. Media spotlight as an alibi for human existence in the age of digital media has echoes of McLuhan's idea about media as extension of human beings in the age of analog media.

Online video sites like YouTube "have quickly become the global rodeo for talent scouts" (Dijck, 2009, p. 52). For amateurs who want to be professionals, for wannabe actors who want to be stars, YouTube is a new chance. Through receiving public attention, either low-key confession style monologue or parody of drama scenes suggests a certain goal for amateurs – landing on big media. Burgess and Green (2009a) argue that the *lonelygirl15* series supports and subverts the myth of User-Generated Content (UGC) media, in that the videos rely on amateur aesthetics including confession style, yet at the same time the series opened "the possibilities of inauthentic authenticity" as "a part of the cultural repertoire of YouTube" (pp. 28-29). Continuing their popular series, *lonelygirl15* crews dream of being invited to Hollywood, an advertisement agency, or a major television network. There are many cases of young, amateur, home video movie directors coming to earn fame through YouTube distribution and gaining contracts with major networks, cables or commercials. In this sense, YouTube serves as a stepping-stone to the mainstream media. While amateurs use YouTube in order to enter mainstream media, professional actors and directors find new creative outlets in YouTube.

There are many stories of how amateur directors and actors move from being YouTube stars to becoming new faces on traditional media. Big media have scouted amateur directors from YouTube. Twenty-one-year-old amateur director David Lehre's *MySpace: The Movie* was posted on YouTube on January 2006. After earning viral popularity on the web, he signed a contract with skit-oriented television show on Fox (Clark, 2006). Lee Ford and Dan Brooks made a fake Volkswagen commercial for fun in 2005. The commercial became successful, and they were hired by Channel 4 in the U.K., Sci Fi Channel Europe, and McDonalds (Grossman & Dwyer, 2006). The *Where the hell is Matt?* series has been beloved by YouTube users. In the charming and simple music videos, Matt Harding travels around the world and dances. When he

traveled to 39 countries in 2005, he taped his dancing against a background symbolic of each country (Harding, 2008). Harding edited the footage into short music videos just with his dancing. His first video has been watched more than 12,000,000 times. Harding quit his job, found a sponsor ("Stride" gum's Cadbury Adams) and posted new versions: His 2008 dancing video includes 71 countries and has been watched more than 17,000,000 times. In 2009, his dancing shots came to be used on a Visa card commercial.

Michael Buckley was spotlighted as a new Cinderella story in YouTube by mainstream media, including CNN, CBS and the *New York Times* in December 2008 because of his story of making profitable videos on YouTube, a financial success coming from YouTube-user partnership (Stelter, 2008d). Buckley's celebrity gossip show on YouTube, *What the Buck,* is the eighth most subscribed-to channel on YouTube as of January 2009.[16] Having a full time job as a music promoter, Buckley started as YouTube show as a hobby. In 2008, he found his clips viral, joined a partnership with YouTube, and made a six-figure salary. Another successful case is Cory Williams. He wrote a funny rap song about his cat, *The Mean Kitty Song*, which was watched more than 16 million times at the time of January 2009. He earned $ 20,000 a month, which came from multiple sources: YouTube ad revenues, sponsorships and product placements within his video (Stelter, 2008d).

YouTube has been changed from an amateur-oriented virtual village into a professional-driven video site. On the institutionalization of YouTube, Dijck (2009) provides insightful quotes: "The growing role of UGC platforms as intermediaries between amateurs and professionals, volunteers and employees, anonymous users and stars, can hardly be conceived apart from 'old' media conglomerates' power to select, promote and remunerate artistic content… Instead of

[16] As of December 28th 2009, *What the Buck* is the eleventh most subscribed-to channel on YouTube and the sixth at Comedian category.

bringing down the reigning professional leagues, UGC actually boosts the power of media moguls, enhancing their system of star ratings and upward mobility" (p. 53). Newly changed YouTube means an ad-friendly video site and a bridge to celebrity for wannabes.

In chapter two, I looked into the celebrity culture on YouTube, focusing especially on agent relationship between audiences and creators, one of the triangles of media studies. Despite the hype around new celebrities on the web, the brief history of celebrity shows the basic logic behind the vicious circle of fame, and success remains the same in the digital milieu. YouTube may have brought individuals chance to express themselves, but not necessarily the opportunity for self-empowerment. The case of *lonelygirl15* reflects and shapes a series of symptoms in the age of UGC culture: fascination with mass attention, viral video, authenticity, blurring line between real-fiction and interactivity.

At the conclusion of this chapter, I briefly introduced industry-business elements of YouTube culture. My argument is that although web celebrity is characterized by the easiness and swiftness to gain popularity, fame is not the same as success, and fame does not guarantee financial jackpot. It is true that some users succeeded in getting mass attention and having financial rewards. It is likewise true that YouTube adopted a user-YouTube contract system that divides ad fees: In this system, Google and advertising companies showed keen interest. However, the promise of a financial jackpot has not been realized, and chances are few for amateur users earning their living through YouTube postings.

In this chapter, I explored YouTube as a stepping-stone to mass attention becoming part of YouTube culture, a sum of the fascination with fame, viralness, interactivity and realism. In the following chapter, I will analyze the business and politics of YouTube from an institutional perspective, another component in the triangle of media studies. Continuing the discussion from

chapter two, I will also deal with YouTube culture, but the main focus will be on how YouTube culture shapes and reflects institutional elements, including advertising, copyright, politics and expansion of mainstream broadcasting. If chapter two on YouTube culture has leaned toward a discussion of audiences' use of YouTube and the new relationship between creators and audience, chapter three will explore a political economy of YouTube and the dynamics between narrowcasting and broadcasting. In terms of media convergence, chapter two mainly dealt with how amateurs use narrowcasting media as a bridge to mainstream media from an audience-creator relationship level. Chapter three will take a macro-level analysis, looking at the institutional level, and thus the major objects of analysis will be mainstream media's market strategies of adopting narrowcasting media and YouTube's legal issues that tame the new and alternative media environment.

CHAPTER III. INSTITUTIONALIZAION OF YOUTUBE

As a convergence medium between the Internet and TV, YouTube per se has shown a series of contradictions between traditional broadcasting and digital narrowcasting. YouTube cannot be solely thought of as a revolutionary medium because of its being influenced by traditional agents (i.e. network broadcasting and TV audiences), content (i.e. program genre and style) and institutions (i.e. copyright and advertisements).

From the perspective of mainstream broadcasting, YouTube has multiple meanings: rival, novelty or supplement. From the business perspective, especially in terms of copyright infringement, YouTube challenges old media. Although legal and business issues bring about tensions between new media and old media, the new aesthetics and technical aspects of YouTube influence traditional broadcasting. Also, YouTube embraces the rules of the market, including ads and user measurement, which lie at the core of commercial broadcasting. Here, YouTube imitates not only broadcasting with its method of televising content, but also broadcasting as an institution that monetizes through advertisements. In this sense, networks do not die; instead, the old broadcasting institutions transform, adopting web-friendly technologies. As a result, YouTube and broadcasting imitate one another.

YouTube has come to represent what video on the web looks like: short, mostly hilarious, easily accessible, and low quality. The short video clip pattern can also be found in mainstream media websites. However, this does not necessarily mean that new media have influence on old media. Major media companies have responded to YouTube either by launching their own YouTube-like site or by introducing new video service on their own sites. Responding to professional-oriented video services in mainstream media, YouTube responds by offering full-length episodes of television shows.

With regard to co-influence between traditional broadcasting and YouTube, one of main issues is copyright infringement. From a broader context, however, copyright issue is more than a financial and legal conflict: it is a hegemonic tension between an amateur-led, individual-driven alternative mediascape and a professional-led, institution-driven traditional mediascape (Andrejevic, 2009). Advertisers are concerned about the degree to which the YouTube environment is ad-friendly: they do not want their ads next to low-quality home video content.

In this chapter, I will analyze the institutionalization of YouTube. In this regard, I will deal with two conditions for broadcasting: copyright and advertisement. The major implication in the argument that YouTube evolved from an amateur User-Generated Content (UGC) medium to a professional broadcasting channel would be that the brief history of YouTube repeats the historical trajectory of the Internet. In 1995, Al Gore popularized the term the "information superhighway" and Bill Gates presented his vision of a networked learning community. In Europe, a year before Gore and Gates presented their optimistic visions, the European Community (pre-figure of the European Union) described the future of the information society in the Bangemann report. The basic assumptions of this report are that recent information technology development is revolutionary, the coming of the information society is unavoidable, and that the information society will bring about major change in Europe, and it must be fostered by market forces (EC, 1994).

These optimistic predictions turned out, however, to be far from reality, which was that the Internet content was commercialized. Fabos (2004) observed the rise and fall of optimistic vision of the Internet as a place embodying public values. The end results of the commercialization of the Internet is that users are induced to commercial sites, and unpopular

voices are getting more marginalized. With regard to commercialization, I agree with Fabos, and YouTube has been tracing similar tracks as the Internet did.

YouTube and online video service have brought up new patterns of television watching. YouTube has influenced television, but at the same time this new medium imitates the rules of the old media including legalized distribution of broadcasting content and smooth links between content and commercials. Furthermore, the conflicts between old and new media are based on more than economic interest: they are hegemonic tensions resulting from the formation of a new mediascape.

Technical Aspects of YouTube

With regard to technical quality, YouTube's general policy is closer to populism. YouTube wants people to have access as much as possible so that they do not have to wait long to watch videos. This populist attitude brought out low quality clips which were under 10 minutes long, conditions which imply amateurism, convenience and accessibility, rather than professionalism, high quality and gatekeeping. The success of YouTube is rooted not so much in technical innovation and aesthetic achievement as in convenience and accessibility.

Launching a "High Quality" format in March and widescreen, 16:9 in November 2008, YouTube began to take a different approach to the management of clips. Users used to watch video in 320x240 pixels resolution. With the new "High Quality" format, they can watch 480x360 pixels resolution. With widescreen, the player changes to 960 pixels. In addition to improving quality, YouTube added a "theater view" option for longer videos (Stelter, 2008b). Although YouTube clarifies that the individual user's account is limited (1 gigabyte total, 10 minutes per file), new channels have more space than an individual account.

With the "embed" function, people are not only able to watch videos, but also to implant them in their own blogs. After February 2009, when embedding clips, users can choose the size of their clips (four options provided: 425x264, 480x295, 560x340, 640x385) and the frame color (out of nine options).

In terms of storage capacity, YouTube has recently increased its account sizes. Until October 2008, YouTube assigned 1 gigabyte per account, and within that capacity, individual users managed their sites. The limit on individual account size (1 gigabyte) also limited the number of clips and quality of videos, so users had to remove old clips when they uploaded new ones. As of October 2008, YouTube permits limitless posts for users. Big media companies utilize the new limitless post policy by posting full episodes. In April 2009, CBS posted more than 17,000 clips, including 119 full episodes of *MacGyver* (season 1 ~ 5), 90 full episodes of *Beverly Hills 90210* (season 1 ~ 4) and 70 full episodes of *Star Trek* (season 1 ~ 3).

YouTube emphasizes user accessibility rather than technological improvement. In the age of digital media 'revolution,' as Peters (2009) says, "the energy of invention is found not so much in recording or transmitting or building better sensory simulations, but rather in ease, accessibility, and mobility" (p. 10).

Censorship

YouTube has been growing on the border between the private and the public, narrowcasting and broadcasting, and amateurism and professionalism. On the one hand, as one form of narrowcasting, this digital video library personalizes broadcasting. Through YouTube, amateur users can produce and distribute their videos into the cyber world, as opposed to traditional broadcasting where professionals institutionalized and formalized broadcasting. On the other hand, YouTube is still a form of broadcasting in terms of format, not law. In other

words, the way in which YouTube clips are generated, transmitted, recorded, and consumed is similar to the traditional way of broadcasting. As a result, YouTube is becoming institutionalized in two ways: first, through its partnership with major media companies, including Google, big record labels, TV networks, cable channels, and music companies; second, through censorship.

Although YouTube supports a philosophy of free speech, YouTube Community Guideline prohibits certain videos and provides categories for removal: "Sex and Nudity," "Hate Speech," "Shocking and Disgusting," "Dangerous Illegal Acts," "Children," and "Copyright" (YouTube, 2008a). Enforcing this guideline has two stages in that it requires user participation as well as policy execution. Thirteen hours of video are posted every minute, and YouTube does not have enough staff to watch all the videos uploaded. Users themselves, however, can flag inappropriate videos. When videos are flagged, YouTube staff review flagged videos to decide whether or not to remove the controversial clips (Rosen, 2008). Video removal requests sometimes come from foreign governments. For regionally controversial videos, YouTube uses I. P. blocking technology that prevents access to certain videos in certain regions (Rosen, 2008).

Concerns with Terrorism

With regard to terrorism, the conservatives criticize YouTube, yet for different reasons: either lack of censorship or too much censorship. Under these contradictory criticisms lies the fear of terrorism.

In 2008, U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman demanded YouTube remove terrorist-group-related clips (Lieberman, 2008). As the Senate's Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee chairman, Lieberman wanted Google to censor what he thought were jihadist videos. YouTube declined his request because of the flag function in YouTube (Google, 2008) and because of YouTube's basic philosophy: "YouTube encourages free speech and defends

everyone's right to express unpopular points of view" (YouTube, 2007). At the same time, right wing bloggers from 'Operation YouTube Smackdown' flag videos, asking YouTube to take down the problematic material (Rosen, 2008). By physically controlling the network, the government directly managed access to YouTube. In May 2007, the US Defense Department blocked soldiers from accessing YouTube for security reason and bandwidth congestion (Botti, 2008; Ephron, 2008).

While the Senator Lieberman and the Defense Department argue the importance of restriction on freedom of expression, some conservatives point out liberal bias of YouTube. It was Michelle Malkin who raised the issue of liberalism in YouTube. Malkin is a Fox Channel contributor and the founder of HotAir.com, "the first conservative Internet broadcast" starting in 2006 (PRWeb, 2006). In her clip *First, They Came*, she responded to the Danish anti-Mohammad cartoons. The video shows the victims of jihadist terrorism, and the dates and locations of various acts of terrorism with the subtitles "And First, They Came…" and "Who's next?" With the reasons of inappropriateness, YouTube removed not only the *First, They Came* clip, but also Malkin's response clip; she was dissatisfied with YouTube's explanation for taking them down (Rosen, 2008). In November 2008, two years later, the clip came back, and Malkin says it is because of the *New York Times'* report on Google's gatekeeping (Malkin, 2008).

Basically, YouTube invites users' voluntary filtering of inappropriate clips through the flag function. If users think clips are inappropriate, they can flag them. Then, YouTube staff members review them and see whether these video cross the line. In the case of repeatedly breaking the YouTube Community Guidelines, staff disable a user's account (Metro, 2008). Also, there are not only government enforced regulations on YouTube, but some governments have also blocked the site.

Geopolitics and Regional Censorship

Censorship occurs differently from country to country. In Western democratic societies, the major target of Internet filtering is sexually oriented material. YouTube has been blocked for varying periods of time in many governments for diverse reasons, including anti-government, religion and cultural difference. The most aggressive censorship systems have developed in authoritarian governments such as China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Syria (Markoff, 2009).

Blocking web sites is one of the common strategies of the Internet access control in developing countries. In Armenia, YouTube was blocked during the state of emergency resulting from the post-election protest after March 2008 (Vartanian, 2008). The shut down was due to the YouTube clips depicting disputed election irregularities. The Iranian government censors strictly, and when one enters "women" as a search keyword in websites including YouTube and Facebook, the page leads to the following message: "Dear Subscriber, access to this site is not possible" (Markoff, 2009). At Internet cafes in China, users find some sites, including sometimes YouTube, are blocked (Stone & Helft, 2009). Temporarily, the Chinese government has blocked YouTube due to politically sensitive clips. For two weeks in October 2007, Chinese authorities blocked YouTube because they found clips on politically sensitive subjects to be objectionable (Cho, 2008; Moonlight, 2007; One2Voice, 2008). In March 2008, with regard to foreign journalists' coverage of the Tibetan protests against China, the Chinese government blocked video and Internet reports, and YouTube faced temporary blackouts (*China Tries to Thwart News Reports from Tibet*, 2008). A year later, again, Chinese government blocked YouTube because of videos containing Chinese officers beating Tibetans. While the Chinese government

insisted the video was not authentic, the Tibetan government in exile denies that the video was fabricated (Helft, 2009).[17]

In March 2007, Turk Telecom issued ban against YouTube due to clips allegedly accusing the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of homosexuality (Hines, 2007). The controversial video was taken down voluntarily by the original uploader, so YouTube asked the Turk government to reconsider its ban against YouTube. Yet, similar offending videos frequently came on YouTube, and the Turkish found the clips to be insulting to Atatürk and 'Turkishness.' The Turkish government asked YouTube to block access to any anti-Turkishness clip throughout the world, and YouTube refused for fear of limiting freedom of speech and expression. The unsolved dispute left the Turkey government continuing to block access to YouTube in Turkey as of November 2008 (Rosen, 2008).

For both Turkey and Thailand, it is a serious offense to insult their founding fathers. In 2007, the Thai government temporarily blocked access to YouTube for anyone with a Thai I.P. address, because of one American user's spoof on its King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Fuller, 2007). At that time, the Thai government found 20 offensive videos, asking Google to remove them on the condition of unblocking access to YouTube (Rosen, 2009). In 2009, the Thai government blocked 2,300 web sites containing material insulting to its king (Mydans, 2009). Issues of insult are not limited to defamation of individual figures. Both the Indonesia and Parkistan governments blocked YouTube due to *Fitna*, a controversial Dutch film. Made by a politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali and a film director Theo van Gogh, the film is anti-Koran and blasphemous (Reuter, 2008a, b), to both of these governments at least.

[17] Not all the China regions were blocked. In Beijing YouTube was still accessible, and so was in Hong Kong, the autonomous region of China.

Restriction on YouTube does not necessarily mean blocking access to the site. Starting from April 1st 2009, when web users in South Korea post videos or leave comments, their real names have to be verified by the government, according to a new Information Communication law (*Seoul Finance*, 2009, March 30). The real name registration makes it easier for the Korean government to police YouTube users, because when users register their real names they have to provide their social security number, too. Just watching or reading web materials does not require registration, but posting articles, leaving comments or uploading videos requires real name registration. South Korea is the only nation in the world where Internet users are required to provide their real names and social security numbers before registering for the Internet services, including portals (e.g. Naver, which is a more popular search engine than Google in Korea).

The new Information Communication Act in Korea is contradictory to the general registration procedure of Internet services as well as to YouTube's basic philosophy. It is a common policy that users can freely use services and create their accounts with a nickname, password and email address. This real name verification is a first case for YouTube: no governments have previously required this verification. Because YouTube "encourage free speech and defend everyone's right to express unpopular points of view," as indicated in the YouTube Community Guideline, Google Korea, who operated YouTube Korea, tried to decline the Korean government's request for real name verification. However, the YouTube user registration process that is universally applied came to be compromised when YouTube Korea accepted $ 800,000 in development funds from the Korean government. Real name verification is expected to function mainly as a political surveillance tool. In August 2008, the Korea Government had a warranty for seizure on Google Korea because of the information it allowed

to be posted on one of Korea's media mogul scandals, but Google Korea did not provide any information because they did not have any user information (Koo, 2009).[18] This real name registration brought up issues and complications. Ten days after announcing its submission to the Korean government policy, YouTube chose not to require YouTube users in South Korea to use their real names when they register (Lee, 2009).

Discussion

To say that the Internet is a free space one thing, and to find how cyberspace is regulated is another. The ultimate decision of what is being watched often lies with service providers and search engines including Google, Yahoo, Facebook and even eBay (Rosen, 2008). YouTube Gatekeeping starts with user participation (users' voluntary flagging the controversial clips) but it is several YouTube staff members who decide whether the clips be removed.

In addition to the Korean government, some governments such as Turkey and Thailand are contradictory with not only YouTube's free speech philosophy but also its ideas of democracy. Turkish scholars have shown concern that the Turkish government's placement of severe restrictions on the Internet, including YouTube, "could face charges at the European Courts of Human Rights for violating the freedom of expression" (Karabat, 2008). The US House of Representatives introduced a bill called the Global Online Freedom Act of 2007, whose rationale is "[t]o promote freedom of expression on the Internet, to protect United States businesses from coercion to participate in repression by authoritarian foreign governments, and for other purposes" (The Library of Congress, 2007).

[18] This anti-democratic registration process comes from the Korean government's concern for users' critiques of their policies. Throughout 2008, the Korean government has been criticized for a series of issues, such as limiting human rights and for the lack of transparency in its national policy (e.g. US beef import decision). Citizens often debated the issues online, and the debates led to offline demonstrations in many parts of Korea, which the Korean government feared, and so it decided to pursue suppressive and almost totalitarian strategies to calm down the situation. In this sense, YouTube played a role in citizens' reports and debate.

Disputes over offending videos on YouTube involve old tensions of democracy (freedom of expression vs. regulation) and region (global vs. local). Although YouTube allows the free and creative trading of clips between users, limitations on the scope of expression are not only presented as its basic principles (e.g. the YouTube Community Guideline) but also required to have more specific legal institutions (e.g. the Global Online Freedom Act of 2007). In addition to users' voluntary flagging and legal enforcement, another framework for keeping the Internet healthy is expected from industry and a third party, such as 'the Global Network Initiative, the set of voluntary principles for protecting free expression and privacy' which was endorsed in October 2008 by Google and the Center for Democracy and Technology (Rosen, 2008).

Copyright

Rather than competing with each other, narrowcasting YouTube and broadcasting television utilize each other. Media convergence come about because people use YouTube as a stepping-stone to mainstream media, and the mainstream media use YouTube to promote their programs. *Nobody's Watching*, a failed network television program pilot gained popularity through YouTube (Steinberg, 2006). The skyrocketing popularity of *Saturday Night Live*'s (*SNL*) digital short clip series (e.g. 'Lazy Sunday' and 'Dick in the Box') would not have been possible without YouTube. Another example of media convergence is the "webisode," which is a three to five-minute episode of TV shows for web showing only. In the summer of 2006, ten webisodes of the NBC sitcom *The Office* and the Sci Fi Channel show *Battlestar Galactica* (both under NBC Universal production) respectively were shown on their official site (www.nbc.com) twice a week (Owen, 2006). Because of the contract with YouTube, those clips were also available on YouTube.

However, as the deal expired on October 2006, webisodes were cleared from YouTube. They became available exclusively on the NBC and Sci Fi channel websites; they will play for free with ads (Delaney, Smith & Barnes, 2006). Since *SNL* videos fit online video environment well (short, hilarious, full of parodies), NBC maintains a skits archive, but does not make all *SNL* clips available. This is a dilemma of the *SNL* video storehouse: NBC does not want their copyrighted programs to be exploited, yet not all episodes of *SNL* are profitable. Though it does not have 'Lazy Sunday,' YouTube's databases of *SNL* are getting bigger and richer everyday.

After being purchased by Google, YouTube introduced ad-effective tools, including YouTube Video Identification (Video ID) for copyright holders and YouTube insight for video uploaders. In response to pressure from media companies, in October 2007 YouTube introduced a content management tool, Video ID, which helps copyright holders (mostly media companies) find copyright infringing materials and claim their rights. Infringing videos can be tracked by using Video ID. Copyright owners have choices "whether to block, promote, or even – if a copyright holder chooses to partner with [YouTube] – create revenue from them, with minimal friction" (YouTube, 2007). In other words, the industry can claim the videos and remove them. Or, rather than removing the clips, the industry can put ads in the clips and share the revenue with YouTube (Stelter, 2008a). In regard to this ad revenue sharing model, the industry divides. Media conglomerates show hesitation to this model and Video ID. Time Warners and the News Corporation acknowledge the model, but do not accept it. NBC Universal and Walt Disney opt for their own video sites (Stelter, 2008a). However, middle size companies, such as video developers, use Video ID as a promotion tool by inviting users. In promoting the new game *Spore*, Electronic Arts provided the free demo *Spore Creatures,* with which users submitted their

own designs of characters for the game. Using Video ID, Electric Arts found popular user videos and share in the ad revenue on them (Stelter, 2008a).

However, not all media companies were satisfied with the deal with YouTube. The Warner Music Group plays the role of defending strict copyright infringement. In December 2008, the Warner Music Group demanded all their music videos be taken down from YouTube: the infringing videos included user-generated clips that used the songs copyrighted by Warner. Music is important to short skit videos and music video is one of the famous, or probably the most popular genres on YouTube. As of January 23, 2009, 86 out of the top 100 all-time popular YouTube clips are music videos, which mostly are copyrighted and provided by major music labels, or user-generated clips with music. Before Google's purchasing of YouTube in 2006, big record companies did not make an issue of free use of their copyrighted songs in YouTube. The main reason was YouTube was such a small venture group that even if it was sued and had to pay, young founders could not afford to pay much. Copyright issue on YouTube was on the table, not only because the illegal use of songs skyrocketed, but because companies found the appropriate target, the one who can pay, Google.

Media moguls want from YouTube more than re-transmission of their music video: they claim the copyrights even in amateur users' singing of their songs or use of portions of their songs in home videos. Many YouTube users expressed their frustration when their singing clips were taken down or muted or even their accounts were closed. Background music is also a target of big record labels, and they might argue that strict copyright law exists not because amateurs make money out of using copyright-protected songs, but because the songs are used and counted. However, most amateur users' singing of and use of songs can be protected under fair use, in that their purpose is noncommercial and the clips include their original material: their voices and

interpretations. Furthermore, the strict application of copyright has a chilling effect, as one YouTube user puts it, "[p]eople are somewhat intimidated by the possibility of being sued by one of the music companies" (Arango, 2009).

With regard to network and cable shows, the media industry's pressure on YouTube to apply a strict copyright infringement policy has been increasing. In February 2007, Viacom (the owner of CBS, MTV, Comedy Central and Nickelodeon) asked YouTube to remove more than 100,000 unauthorized clips (1.2 billion streams; stream refers to viewing) belonging to Viacom: from the MTV popular animation show *South Park* to Nickelodeon's *SpongeBob SquarePants* (Lee, 2007).

As of 2006, major record companies including Universal Music, Sony BMG, EMI and the Warner Music Group reached a deal with YouTube. Under this deal, the record companies receive a per-stream fee for their videos on YouTube and share advertisement revenue with YouTube (Stelter, 2008e; Leeds, 2006). However, Warner Music concluded that the deal was not beneficial enough. Of $ 639 million, Warner's digital revenue in 2008, less than 1 percent was generated by YouTube's ads and fees (Stelter, 2008d).

Corporations claim for respect of copyright on YouTube and demand YouTube delete the clips they own. Media companies around the world (Japan, France and Spain) claimed their rights and asked YouTube to take down their clips. In fall 2006, the Japanese Society for Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers asked YouTube to take down 30,000 copyrighted videos (Lee, 2007). After YouTube takes down copyrighted clips, in general, the charges are dropped. But some media companies wanted to finalize the case in court. Italian media group Mediaset sued YouTube for copyright infringement, asking for $500 million in damages *(Video Age International*, 2008). Before Google's purchase of YouTube, copyright issues had been framed

as the collision between greedy media moguls and freedom fighter YouTube. After the purchase, the debate turned in a little bit different direction. The copyright issue came to involve an economic interest conflict between big media groups. After PRS for Music, a British group that collects royalties, and Google did not reach an agreement, YouTube blocked music videos for British YouTube users (Arango, 2009).

Another problem of copyright on YouTube is that amateurs do not claim their copyrights. Major media studios protect themselves with severe application of copyright laws, which do not protect amateur users' rights over their own videos. This imbalance in the application of copyright law may be defended as based on the volunteerism of amateurs, but a more persuasive explanation would be the indifference of media groups toward individual rights, or more specifically, the exploitation of self-expression on YouTube.

On the one hand, broadcast networks use YouTube as a window to promote their programs. In this sense, experimental webisodes in YouTube are nothing but one type of well-made and well-financed professional ad. On the other hand, webisode experiments show a certain tendency wherein old media interact with new media and they both evolve, rather than one displacing the other. Media convergence does not occur in one way. Big media adopt critiques and adapt to a new media environment. Of the many ways in which the media industries adopt the practices of YouTube, I will explain two things: how media industries use YouTube as a new economic resource, and how they use YouTube as a new promotion tool.

Advertisement Revenue

If the pre-Google era of YouTube is characterized by low-quality videos in an ad-free atmosphere, the post-Google purchase stage is characterized by high-quality videos in an ad-friendly environment. Because of YouTube's popularity, industries have shown deep interest in

monetizing YouTube. In October 2006, when Google, Inc. announced that it had reached a deal to acquire YouTube for $ 1.65 billion, optimism about the business of YouTube as financial jackpot co-existed with pessimism about the economic potential of this new medium. At the same time, the founders of YouTube did not welcome the ideas of inducing users to watch ads. However, Google's purchase of YouTube led its philosophy in a different direction.

After being purchased by Google, YouTube has adopted a new e-commerce model; it puts banner ad in videos or in YouTube pages and shares the revenue with the copyright holders of the videos. The basic idea of selling banner ads is to play the ads during the streaming of videos (Sorkin, 2006). At the bottom of the video, there are transparent banner ads (Mindlin, 2008). Based on the number of views that the video receives, the ad revenue is split between service provider (YouTube) and content provider (copyright owners) (Stelter, 2008d).

Although the banner strategy has not shown clear success, Google introduced a new program in which users can use a "click to buy" icon within a banner ad to purchase digital music files from Apple iTunes or Amazon.com (Helft, 2009). When users watch music videos from major record labels, they not only automatically watch banner ads but also notice the "click to buy" icon easily. This new e-commerce model is possible thanks to YouTube's Content ID system, through which owners' original sources can be found and thus copyright owners can request YouTube to take down unauthorized clips.

With new technologies enabling a severe restriction of amateurs' video use without permission from copyright owners, as of March 2009, YouTube made money by selling banner ads, "Featured Videos" and "Promoted Videos." Both "Featured Videos" and "Promoted Videos" are sponsored videos. The difference is that "Featured Videos" work like a traditional ad page and "Promoted Videos" are based on new methods of selling key words. Beginning in 2008,

Google began to sell YouTube homepage space. Users can buy "Featured Videos" section, which is located on the YouTube front page. Users can set their budget, and for just that amount of money, their videos are displayed on the front page of YouTube (Clifford, 2008).

Another monetizing source in YouTube is "Promoted Videos." YouTube sells key words, which YouTube's parent company, Google, has in its main site. This method does not deal with banners, but it works like the Google ads, displaying text on the side. In November 2008, YouTube began letting users promote their videos by bidding on keywords. Users choose which videos they want to promote through the YouTube search tool and choose which key words they want to target. Then, YouTube uses the same technique Google uses: "users place bid for the key in an automated online auction, as well as set spending budgets" (Sandoval, 2008). Whenever people type the key words in the YouTube search function, related videos come to be displayed next to the search results because the words have been sold to the highest-bidding advertiser. In the "YouTube Promoted Video Overview" clip, a product manager of YouTube says: "YouTube democratized the broadcast experience and now we're democratizing the promotion and advertising experience as well." As of November 11 2008, when I typed 'Battle at Kruger,' the 36th most watched clip at the time, into YouTube's search engine, I found the promotional clip of *Animal Crossing: City Folk*, a Nintendo Wii game trailer next to 'Battle at Kruger' video. The game has wilderness background with animal characters, and thus the content I want and the ad presented are smoothly linked. This linkage between content and advertisement is new application of one of the marketing strategies of magazines, "complementary copy": stories that go along with ads (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2007).

YouTube's economic potential looks so promising enough that the YouTube partnership has been growing. However, only 3 percent of all YouTube clips are supported by advertising,

presumably due to still problematic copyright issues. Of these, profitable partners are far less than 3 percent (Stelter, 2008d).

Promotion Tool

In the early development of YouTube, around 2006 and 2007, this new video site looked like a threat to media companies, especially in terms of copyright. However, when YouTube became a unit of Google, media moguls' concern about an anarchic mediascape, all-illegal video watching on YouTube, seemed to be softened. In 2008, major networks began not only posting their shows on YouTube, but also providing video services in their websites. Media companies came to regard YouTube not as a rival but as a new channel to re-transmit their programs and a new source of advertising revenue.

Recognizing the potential of YouTube as a fast distribution route, media companies sought to adopt the distribution practice of YouTube. MGM began its partnership with YouTube on November 2008. With ads on the videos, MGM posted decade-old television shows (e.g. *American Gladiators*) and full-length movies (e.g. *The Magnificent Seven* and *Legally Blonde*) on YouTube.[19] Lions Gate also opened shop on YouTube. The deal was done between Lions Gate and Google in July 2008 (Wallenstein, 2008). Lions Gate already had a channel on YouTube, but their clips were mostly trailers. In their new channel, users can watch several short clips of Lions Gate movies. For example, at the time of October 2008, one could watch short clips of *Saw 5* which were going to open in theater at the end of that month. Other clips from *3:10 to Yuma* and *Good Luck Chuck*, all Lions Gate-produced, were available, and the site also linked to Lions Gate online shop. With regard to copyright, Lions Gate's philosophy is a bit flexible, different from big groups, in that it did not request YouTube to remove unauthorized

[19] A year later, MGM seemed to pull out of its YouTube experiment. Its YouTube site remained, yet there were only 35 short trailers without any feature-length film.

clips, but asked that the YouTube users who post videos without permission can not be allowed to share in the ad revenue (Stelter, 2008a).

YouTube launched a user-friendly free video analytics tool, called YouTube Insight, in March 2008. Anyone who posts video clips can freely check when and where clips are being watched. According to YouTube (2008b), "uploaders can see how often their videos are viewed in different geographic regions, as well as how popular they are relative to all videos in that market over a given period of time." YouTube Insight can be used as a market research tool. Movie studios can make different versions of trailers, based on data from YouTube Insight on regional differences of movie genre choice, and run different trailers in different states: Music companies can post songs, check the most responsive regions, and arrange tour schedules (Clifford, 2008).

Major networks adopted online video services for the sake of program promotion and the recovery of lost audiences, especially those who prefer watching shows on the web. NBC, CBS and ABC began to provide web streaming video service from 2007. As of March 2008, Walt Disney's television unit made a deal with YouTube to share Disney-owned programs, especially recent ABC shows including *Lost* and *Desperate Housewives* (Stelter, 2009c). On their main sites, audiences can watch the past several episodes of the networks popular shows. For the sake of intense promotion, such as in case of *Lost*, all past season episodes are available.[20] Previously, major networks provided full-length episodes, yet they were mostly old shows, such as *Star Trek*, *MacGyver* and *Beverly Hills 90125* (Rodgers, 2009b). The episodes on the networks' websites contain commercials, which users cannot skip. Although interruptions occur the same way in TV

[20] As of January 2010, ABC announced the show's upcoming season as the final, and the past five seasons' full episodes are available on abc.com, hulu.com and its partnership Internet Movie Data Base (imdb.com). These web streaming services are limited to the United States. One cannot watch the shows on the web, unless using the US internet service.

(pre-program ads, post-program ads, and several within the shows), only one commercial (mostly 15-30 seconds length) intervenes.

Network video service and YouTube collide, but they co-exist. Major broadcast companies not only adopt YouTube's main idea, streaming video service, but also use YouTube as another content distribution channel. What broadcasting networks mainly borrow from YouTube is the idea of convenience and ease of accessibility, rather than technical advancement. Old media adopt new media's format, but at the same time, the former apply traditional frameworks into the latter. Copyright laws have been strictly applied and advertising became a part of YouTube's atmosphere. Complications as well as solutions between new media and old media come from their mutual interdependence. YouTube appeared threatening to the traditional structure of broadcasting. As a consequence, the idea and practice of YouTube have been adopted by major networks.

The old and the new imitate each other, rather than the new replacing the old or the old suffocating the new with institutional powers. YouTube opened up the opportunity for User-Generated Content (UGC) videos and basically welcomed any type of video. As major media groups came to engage in YouTube, Professionally-Generated Content (PGC) videos became the dominant format. Changes in the online video realm occur in two ways: YouTube became ad-friendly, and networks began to emphasize online video streaming. Although YouTube creators resisted the idea of commercialization, as YouTube matured, the pressure to provide stable revenue led to diverse e-Commerce practices, including banner ads, and the selling of key words and web space. YouTube inspired online video service, and traditional broadcasting adopts this strategy. However, media companies changed the atmosphere of online video streaming to fit

their interests by pressuring YouTube to become an ad-friendly space and by providing PGC exclusive video streaming services on their web sites.

From User-Generated Content (UGC) to Professionally-Generated Content (PGC)

Big media have adopted YouTube strategies, and solved technical issues that YouTube had, such as the length of files, revenue, and video quality. As online video services were getting more popular, the media industry came to recognize two potentially advantageous characteristics of streaming video service: retransmission channels and interactivity-based advertisements.

Industry has a keen interest in shaping the interactive media environment because user participation helps create the stability of loyal audiences. Problems occur when user participation and interactive media do not work to create predictable market. Media companies catch on to YouTube's potential as a new distribution window and source of advertisement revenue. However, the unpredictable program schedule and interrupted program flows block industry investment on YouTube.

Emphasizing PGC (Professionally-Generated Content), network video service does not follow User-Generated Content (UGC)'s core philosophies, which are amateurism and populism. What the media industry wants for YouTube is to change into a more PGC-oriented source: an ad-friendly media environment that link content and advertisement smoothly. Initially, industry was concerned with the copyright issues of YouTube, but once Google's purchase of YouTube and stricter legal application followed, media companies began to think about profitable uses of online video services. Networks formalize online video service with providing the same commercial interruption watching atmosphere. With institutional touches, users came to watch online videos similarly as they watch TV: They are watching copyright protected PGC with commercial interruptions.

Hulu and Other Professional Video Websites

Despite its dominance in online streaming video service, YouTube is neither the first nor the only web video service. Founded in August 2007, Hulu (hulu.com) began as a joint venture between the News Corporation and NBC Universal, becoming a strong contender to YouTube. As of October 2008, Hulu was the sixth most popular online video site in the United States. Hulu's ratings were higher than those of the CNN, MTV and ESPN websites (Stelter, 2008c). In 2008, the estimated advertising revenue of YouTube was $100 million, while that of Hulu was $70 million, yet in 2009, it was estimated that Hulu would tie with YouTube (Hefflinger, 2008).

In terms of popularity, Hulu still couldn't be a rival to YouTube. Within the United States in September 2008, there were 83 million unique viewers for YouTube, compared to Hulu's 6 million (Bradshaw & Garrahan, 2008).[21] Market analysis suggests the number of YouTube viewers is equal to that of all the cable and satellite subscribers (Graham, 2009). With regard to the number of video streams in March 2009, Hulu is in the second place with 348 million, outnumbering the third-ranked Yahoo (231 million), the fourth Fox (207 million) and the sixth ABC (176 million) (*USA Today*, 2009). However, compared with YouTube's 5.5 billion streams, Hulu is far behind. One of the major reasons that Hulu is behind YouTube is that Hulu does not provide international services.

Although Hulu cannot compete with YouTube in terms of popularity, it differentiates its programming from YouTube in two ways: high quality video and Professionally-Generated Content (PGC) (Graham, 2008). With regard to technical aspects, Hulu videos have an aesthetically pleasing interface because of its higher resolution and bit-rate. With regard to content, in agreement with mainstream channels (including NBC and Fox and cable networks

[21] Due to lack of standard measurement, different institutions provide different numbers. As of August 2008, ComScore analyzed YouTube users at 330 million, compared to 3.3 million for Hulu (*USA Today*, 2009).

including Comedy Central, USA Network, Bravo and G4), Hulu posts full-length episodes of popular shows. As of January 2010, popular network shows including Fox's *The Simpsons* (the most recent 6 episodes) and NBC's *The Office* (the most recent 6 episodes) are available at Hulu, and such past shows as Fox's *Arrested Development* are available in their entirety. Hulu began as an ad-friendly outlet, and it allows users to watch shows with commercial interruptions.

The reason why major industry became more interested in investing in Hulu is its concrete advertisement model. During 2008, YouTube garnered 200 million dollars, which is more than the 90 million dollars generated by Hulu. However, while UGC are still dominant on YouTube, and only 3 % of all clips provide advertisement profit, 70% of all the videos on Hulu created profits (Wie, 2009). From a business perspective, Hulu has become a serious contender to YouTube. ABC Enterprise considered negotiating a deal with either Hulu or YouTube and accepted Hulu as a partner in May 2009. The Disney-ABC Television Group made a deal with Hulu and announced it would add its shows (e.g. *Lost* and *Desperate Housewives*) to Hulu.[22]

Compared with YouTube, technical quality and better PGC are Hulu's strengths. Its weaknesses are less popularity, geographical limitation and lack of user-participation. First, although Hulu is one of the popular video sites, it still trails behind YouTube at a discernible margin. YouTube video viewership represents almost half of all Internet video watching in the United States (Stelter, 2008b). Second, Hulu video service is limited to the United States. Hulu videos are presented free only for those who use US Internet service. Third, Hulu does not provide user posting, comment or response functions. Limited user interactivity on Hulu weakens user participation from involvement in content creation into mere consumption of content.

[22] In exchange, Disney will have 28% stake in hulu, which is lower than NBC Universal's and Fox Corporation's (Stone & Stelter, 2009). On YouTube the Disney-ABC Television Group produced videos are available, yet only in small segments such as ESPN sports highlights and television show trailers.

Another issue with regard to Hulu is its synergy strategy or multi-platform brand, using diverse media outlets to promote products. Hulu provides one of the largest free video selections from a collection of over 50 broadcasting networks. Hulu has syndications with such websites as MSN, AOL, MySpace, Amazon and Internet Movie Database (IMDB). Users apparently have diverse channels, but provided content is not exclusive to a specific channel. All the episodes of *Lost* are available on Hulu, IMDB and abc.com, and this multi-platform brand strategy applies to many other shows, including *Beverly Hills 90210.*

The Hulu case shows what media moguls are interested in Internet video service. They want promotional channels for their shows in an ad-friendly environment. Hulu might provide convenience and accessibility, but it does not provide program and genre diversity. YouTube's influence on mainstream media can be found on Hulu, but of all YouTube's characteristics, broadcasting networks adopt just a few in a selective way. Streaming service came to be recognized by the mainstream media as another retransmission channel but not a new realm of content creation-distribution.

Online Video Service

Contrary to networks' initial concerns about online video service's impact on ratings of television shows, only 8 percent of the television-watching audience watches TV shows solely through the Internet. While YouTube opened up the chance of watching TV shows on the web, the reality is far from being that YouTube seriously threatens broadcasting networks. Rather, traditional broadcastings have been embracing online video streaming and implanting it in their milieu.

It was ABC that launched the first major network video service in 2006. According to ABC's research in January 2008, free online video service is effective in that "the one-ad-per-

segment format resulted in a 54 percent ad recall rate" (Stelter, 2009c). As of fall 2008, NBC and CBS also began web streaming service: for new shows, 4~6 recent episodes are available, and for selected classic shows, more than one full season is available. For example, as of April 20th 2009, of the total five seasons of *Miami Vice*, the first through fourth season episodes (90 full-length episodes) are available on NBC.com. In addition to this, the same amount of episodes of *Miami Vice* are also available on Hulu and Internet Movie Database (IMDB), which have contract with NBC.

For the major networks, video streaming service provides a great opportunity for the promotion of their programs. According to NBC, 7 out of 10 viewers decided to be routine audiences for shows after watching the clips available online. NBC's online launching of the second season of *30 Rock* is a strong case of web video service as a promotion tool. In fall 2007, one week before the first episode was broadcast on the network, online users could watch it at NBC.com, Hulu and IMDB. Fox and CBS seemed hesitant to adopt web video service at first, but entering 2008 they began to provide old TV shows (such as the entire series of *Arrested Development* on Fox[23] and the first 2 seasons of *Dynasty* on CBS), as well as new ones, including Fox's *House* and *Fringe* and CBS's *CSI* series and *Survivor*.[24]

With regard to video services on the web, major networks pursue two different goals: making online video libraries and finding multi-distribution routes. CBS-owned shows are available in diverse online channels including the CBS main site, Hulu and TV.Com. Also, in January 2009, CBS made deals with other program sources including PBS, Sony and MGM to

[23] As of November 2008, the entire series of *Arrested Development* was available. Although as of April 2009, the videos were taken down from Fox.com, the entire series still was available at IMDB and Hulu. When *My So-Called Life*, ABC's critically acclaimed which yet struggled with ratings, came to be on the DVD market in October 2007, ABC posted one episode per week. From fall 2007 to spring 2008, the full season of the show was played on the web.

[24] As of April 20th 2009, on the CBS website, the 9th season episodes of *CSI* (a total of 20 episodes), the 7th season of *CSI: Miami*, the 5th season of *CSI: New York* and 18th season of *Survivor* (18 episodes) are available. On the Fox website, 5 recent episodes of *House M.D.* and *Fringe* each are available.

make online video libraries. Among video streaming services, there are slight differences in terms of video quality and number of episodes. For instance, although TV.com only provide 5 recent full episodes of *CSI* in normal quality, the main CBS site and Hulu each provide 10 episodes, yet with two better-quality options (480p and 720p). CBS shows and CBS-owned Showtime shows, such as *Dexter*, are available at TV.com and on the CBS main site (Stelter, 2009a).

Compared with Hulu, network website video streaming services provide better quality video and more choices. Compared with YouTube, however, PGC (Professionally-Generated Content)-oriented services share similar weaknesses: less popularity, geographical limitation and lack of user-participation. Network video service and Hulu place more emphasis on distribution and consumption rather than creation, and many PGC-oriented video services profess the function of video archives. However, considering the selectivity of their focus on popular shows, instability and short history of the video archive, the promise of online video library requires close verification.

Media Convergence

Online video services raised issues not only about convenience and accessibility of visual content but also about the futuristic optimisms towards User-Generated Content (UGC) culture, alternative distribution channels and online video libraries. UGC culture persists despite the media industry's efforts to tame UGC culture with Professionally-Generated Content (PGC). Traditional broadcast companies welcome streaming service as a tool for retransmitting videos only if they are PGC and harmonize with institutionalized mediascape. Despite its potential, the future of online video libraries does not look completely promising, considering such issues as

the need for a business model, fast technological innovations, copyright complications, politics and cultural gaps.

With slight differences in the number of shows, technical quality and source variety, video streaming services on the web provide PGC. The general qualities of these services can be summarized as “professionalization,” “commercialization,” “ad-friendly environment,” “imitating traditional broadcasting” and “online video library.” Thanks to technological innovations, YouTube provides a limitless capacity for posts that induces users to post clips in high quality. Increased storage room and better quality expand the potential of YouTube for both industry and users. For networks and cable, YouTube became new financial revenue and another program retransmission channel. For individuals, YouTube offers an online video library. Ironically, however, technological advancement does not guarantee the neutral development of YouTube. People can overly emphasize the potential YouTube has as a free online video archive by underestimating institutional pressures towards including ads and respecting copyright. Increasing the number of PGC videos does not automatically kill amateurism, in that users still can post UGC clips. Yet, dominance of PGC marginalizes UGC content. On YouTube, PGC and UGC videos co-exist, but old customers of YouTube since its beginning would recognize the increasing dominance of sponsored and copyright protected videos. Consequently, chances are that sponsored clips outnumber UGC materials, and furthermore, in addition to copyright and advertisement issues, what concerns industry is the adaptation to the new realm of online videos.

The evolution of YouTube from amateur-driven medium to professional-dominant channel coexists with the market expansion of the TV industry into the web. Networks and cable were challenged by the new mediascape and entered this new realm in order to protect their materials and to tame new territory by reinforcing traditional rules of the game. There are several

reasons that induce TV networks and distributors to begin online video service: new advertising revenue, protection of copyrighted materials, the challenge presented by YouTube and control of the mediascape (Andrejevic, 2009).

From a media convergence perspective, the development of YouTube makes for a particularly interesting case of bridging traditional broadcasting and customized narrowcasting. The Internet's new innovation, YouTube, benchmarks traditional mass communication (broadcasting) which adapts to new media environment (the Internet). While the television industry embraces video streaming technology for the purpose of distributing their content, technological innovations bridging broadcasting and the Internet threaten the broadcast industry. Such gadgets as the Apple TV set-top box, Boxee and Roku, make it possible to move web videos from the computer to the television. The basic idea is to connect online streaming video content to TV sets with a cable, set-top box or computer program (Ensha, 2009). In the post-broadcast era, with new digital gadgets and TV watching practices, audiences can opt out the inflexible network time schedule (broadcasting schedule) and opt into new technologies that induce flexible watching (narrowcasting practice). Then, at the moment of watching, people choose to view their shows on the big screen (traditional TV sets).

Although YouTube was a pioneer in the history of web video library, which influenced its followers, it also adopted various characteristics of its followers. In April 2009, YouTube redesigned itself in order to emphasize streaming professional content. Market analysts expected the market revenue would be similar between YouTube and Hulu, despite the gap between history and access numbers. Before April 2009, on its homepage, YouTube listed four big categories: "Home," "Video," "Channel" and "Community." Only the "Video" section was more specifically categorized by genre, such as news and politics, entertainment, movies, music,

animals etc. In the re-designed homepage, YouTube takes different criteria including “Movies,” “Music,” “Show,” and “Video.” Of them, the “Video” option is the only UGC clip category, qualitatively differentiated from other professional safe categories, which repeat traditional distinction between media (Rodgers, 2009a). The meanings of the newly designed YouTube are multiple: separation of brand-safe clips from UGC, traditional genre making, more strict application of copyright protection and the facilitation of an ad-friendly environment.

The story of YouTube is nothing but a short history of media and their influence. First, the Internet imitates broadcasting (YouTube), next, TV fights back (Hulu and network websites), then the computer strikes back again (Apple TV set-top box and Boxee), and in this way the imitation of old and new media continues (upgraded version of YouTube and its adoption of Hulu-style video storage).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the transformation of YouTube from a business and economic perspective. My major argument is that the institutionalization of YouTube is accompanied by the complication of YouTube’s culture and its meanings. Just as YouTube did not revolutionize the media milieu but constituted an evolution of that milieu, institutions’ influence is compromised and blocked. In the following section, I will look at other institutional issues that will shape the future development of YouTube in greater detail.

Bias of YouTube

According to Innis (1949), every medium has a bias. When YouTube was in its early and impressionable stages and still shaping itself, YouTube has shown both time bias and space bias. Developing Innis’ idea of the bias of media, Peters (2008) argues that media have three dimensions: recording (time), transmitting (space), and organizing (power). As a recording

device, online video service recollects the past, collects the present, and thus imagines a future full of visual memories; YouTube has a time bias. As a transmitting medium, YouTube expands the monopoly of broadcasting from the television screen to PCs, laptops and even mobile phones; YouTube has a space bias. Two different biases coexist and confront each other within this online video service. The brief history of YouTube reveals the repetitive pattern of the identity construction process within media.

Other than space and time biases, as YouTube has become mature, other conflicts and compromises have occurred. YouTube has been transforming from a personal to a public medium and from a public to a commercial medium, and this change has caused increasing complications in its characteristics. YouTube started as a personal medium for exchanging home videos between friends and family. Quickly after its launching, YouTube became a medium that reminds us of the public sphere, in that anyone can speak up on any issue with their own created videos. If the viral popularity changed the original character of YouTube, transforming it into a public medium, Google's purchase of YouTube marked a second turn in the short history of YouTube. As YouTube has evolved from commercial-free to ad-friendly status, it increasingly adopts more technical improvements and commercial practices. The institutionalization of YouTube ushered into a new stage of YouTube, making it a more ad-friendly and commercialized medium that was increasingly dominated by Professionally-Generated Content (PGC), which was inseparable from the onset of legal restrictions and commercialization.

With two key instances in YouTube, viral popularity and Google's purchase, I will categorize the three stages of YouTube: its first stage as amateur-driven home video exchange site; its second stage as an open medium in the public mediascape; and the third as the commercialized medium. These are not mutually exclusive and, despite increasing its

commercial dimension, YouTube still remains a site of struggle over the meanings of amateurism, professionalism, publicness, commercialism, consumption and creation: home videos, celebrity wannabe's low budget gigs and PGC co-exist.

Content abundance does not always guarantee diversity or freedom to choose. Rather, it requires an efficient filtering process. On the surface, audiences have more channels and videos. Yet, chances are that people often find repetition and the retransmission of similar programs. Viral videos show the explosion of temporary popularity on a global level (space-biased), yet it needs to be seen whether they inherit any cultural importance (time-biased). As Sunstein (2006) points out, the characteristics of the Internet have relevance to YouTube, where videos spread like "cybercascades" and audiences can be more polarized, rather than culturally diverse. The issue of proper choice reminds us of the myths and reality of diversity in the age of the multichannel, which presumably began with cable. In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan (2007) finds that the dominant portion of what we eat in the age of factory agriculture consists of processed corn, despite the seeming abundance of food diversity (Pollan, 2007). In the same way, despite the apparent diversity of channels and programs, audiences are not likely given a proper level of choices and variety.

Creative Outlet in the Post-Broadcast Era

Although the future of YouTube appears to be framed with such key phrases as commercialization and severe copyright protection, YouTube still has potential as the media space of the non-profit community, amateurs and independent artists. While networks treat YouTube as a guinea pig for distribution routes, YouTube spares room for alternative content distributors. Ideally speaking, anyone can produce video clips, but it does not mean anyone should and will. Within the sea of low-quality productions or almost byte waste "Loser-

Generated Content" (Petersen, 2008), some talented and experienced directors jump in with own experiments. Also, struggling with their ratings in mainstream media, already professional directors and producers turn their eyes to online video services.

Some independent film and documentary makers came to find more opportunities to reach audiences on YouTube. Independent movie distributor Magnolia is one of the companies that take advantage of the potential of YouTube. Magnolia's 100 minute-long, Academy-Award nominated movie *No End in Sight*, a political documentary about the US occupation of Iraq, has been posted on YouTube (Bloom, 2008). Director Wayne Wang's 2007 new movie, *The Princess of Nebraska*, first premiered on YouTube. The movie's topic (abortion) and independent styles resulted in the movie's limited opening both in the US and worldwide. For the movie distributor Magnolia, this premiere meant a pioneering experiment with a new creative outlet, a new distribution route for their films, and a promotion tool for the same director's companion film's (*A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*) upcoming theatrical premiere in 2008. Although the full-length clips were only available temporarily,[25] it is worth noticing how YouTube potential has been actually verified by independent film makers.

For activist documentary directors like Greenwald, YouTube shortens the time gap between production and distribution, allowing more outlets for documentary creation. Using one of the many technical characteristics of YouTube, short clip prevalence, Greenwald split the whole project into parts and released these parts as soon as they were completed (Stelter, 2009b). Dealing with such political issues as the 2008 US Presidential election, the Afghanistan war and biases in the Fox News Channel, Greenwald's YouTube channel has been capitalizing on this

[25] In fall 2008, the clips mentioned in the paragraphs were all available in full-length format. When I returned in January 2010, they are all gone. Segments can still be found, but they are presumably posted by copyright-ignorant users.

new medium as an efficient creative window and earning popularity (it was the 84th most viewed site in the "Director" category as of April 21, 2009).

Not only independent film makers, but also mainstream producers experimented with YouTube as a new creative outlet. Marshall Herskovitz became a pioneer who found the middle ground between major broadcasting and small narrowcasting media. He is the critically acclaimed and popular movie director of *Last Samurai* and *Blood Diamond,* but after he had two television dramas in a row cancelled at ABC (*My So-Called Life* and *Once and Again*), he had difficulty in pursuing *Quarterlife*, his drama project on the lives of twenty-something in social-networking site culture. Without enough sponsorship from major broadcasting and cable networks, Herskovitz found a way to proceed with his project on the web. Premiering November 11, 2007, webisodes (five-to-ten-minute original Web series) of *Quarterlife* were posted every Sunday and Thursday on Quarterlife.com, MySpace, and later on YouTube. Right after professionals like Herskovitz found alternative outlets for creation and distribution on the web, mainstream media channels called back narrowcasting content. In spring 2008, networks suffered from a lack of content because of the writers' strike, and thanks to this, Herskovitz could find a spot for his show on NBC. Originally, *Quarterlife* was planned as the hour long drama, yet in MySpace and YouTube, Herskovitz compromised and split hours into six parts, each one less than ten minutes long and ending with a cliffhanger. A total 36 webisodes were produced; returning to a major network, the director re-edited and combined the segments into six full-length episodes (43 minutes long, the standard length for a full episode of a drama program).

In an interview, Herskovitz described the *Quarterlife* case as a victory in two ways. First, the Internet experiment worked on a television platform. Second, and more importantly, creators

earned 100 percent ownership and creative control over a network (Herskovitz, 2008). However, all did not go smoothly, and the show became "reallocated" due to underrating (Lotz, 2007). Premiering on a 10 pm spot on Sunday night, one of the most unpromising timeslots in network's time schedule, the pilot's ratings hit the ground. Consequently, the show moved to the NBC Universal-owned cable channel Bravo, which delivered the rest of the show not in a weekly format, but as a one-time special: the remaining five episodes were delivered in a one-night marathon.

The rating failure of the show on network might look ironic, considering the show's early success on the web. On the first day of the show's launching, there were more than 100,000 viewings, and later the counts went over 450,000 in two days. However, the gap between broadcasting and narrowcasting is still huge. While *Roommates*, a show featuring young, pretty girl in bikinis washing cars, is one of the biggest hit webisodes on MySpace, it has never reached one million views per episode, while a failed television shows gets four million (Herskovitz, 2008).

Online video services can function as a tool for new distribution routes and experimentation of program schedule. Both individual creators and networks use video portals as new distribution outlets. Herskovitz found the channel for his show on MySpace and YouTube; Networks use online video services as tools for ubiquitous watching. Although it ended as a failure in terms of rating, *Quarterlife*'s launching on the web constitutes a rare and significant case of bridging broadcasting and narrowcasting.

Major studios also use online video services as their niche targeting channels. Beginning in 2007, the NBC and the Sci-Fi channels experimented with webisodes (*The Office* and *Battlestar Galactica*). TheWB.com (TheWB), the online version of The WB television network,

has been working harder to develop more web exclusive shows than any other network.[26] Modeled on Hulu, TheWB is ad-supported and geared toward young women audiences, 62 percent of its visitors are female (Consoli, 2009). As of May 2009, the site provided not only former WB-aired shows, including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel* and *Gilmore Girls* but also web-exclusive series such as *Rich Girl, Poor Girl* and *Rockville, CA*. Gary Auerbach, the producer of the hit MTV reality show *Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County*, created *Rich Girl, Poor Girl*, which has ranked among the top 100 programs in the teenage section on iTunes since it premiered on October 2008 (Consoli, 2009). Premiering on March 17, 2009 on TheWB, 4 minute long episodes of the online only show *Rockville, CA* have been posted every week. As of April 20, 2009, 8 episodes of this show are available (*TheWB.com*, 2010). Josh Schwartz, the producer of network hits *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl*, created this semi-documentary show on young rock fans, mixing reality TV and fictional drama styles. Schwartz realizes the potential of the online video service as a new creative outlet, and that the especially short length makes it easier to provide cliffhangers: plot devices put main characters in a corner in order to ensure audiences' return (Cava, 2009). Premiering on May 1st 2009 on the MTV website, the web-based semi-reality show *$5 Cover* features real-life up-and-coming musicians' lives in Memphis. Craig Brewer, the producer of *$5 Cover* and the director of the Academy-Award winning movie *Hustle and Flow*[27], utilizes "bite-size" or "snack" culture, allowing "instant entertainment" on the web (Miller, 2007). He says, "[t]he online world is not a meal culture, it's a snack culture… It can't

[26] When WB was closed in September 2006, the CW Network (a joint of CBS Corporation and Warner Bros. Entertainment) opened, and Warner Bros. relaunched TheWB on April 28, 2008.

[27] In the 2006 Academy-Awards *Hustle and Flow* won "Best Achievement in the category of Music Written for Motion Pictures Original Song" for its main theme "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp." Jordan Houston, Cedric Coleman and Paul Beauregard received Oscar Trophies. Also, Terrence Howard, who plays the main character, was nominated for the "Best Actor" (Internet Movie Database; http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0410097/awards).

be longer than three minutes; it has to be all about comedy; and make sure you have a hot girl" (Cava, 2009).

Industry

Traditional broadcasting and online video service have influenced each other. While YouTube inscribes its own characteristics onto mainstream media, it also adopts old media's formats and genres. New media technology develops, yet new innovations compromise traditional media's interest. Old media embrace new innovation, yet this does not mean the old die and the new replace them. Traditional media persist in new forms, and digital media develop through a series of tensions with electronic media.

Media conglomerates' strategies for taming YouTube involve more than a strict application of copyright law: they care about media milieu where content and advertisement flow smoothly. Wasko and Erickson (2009) argue that "user-generated content is not as desirable or valuable as professional media content from major companies, unless it can somehow be manipulated to make a profit for media companies and Google, but certainly not for the individual user" (p. 383). Network and cable companies want every viewing to be sold, and advertisers every viewing to be counted. From a profitability perspective, media companies prefer Professionally-Generated Content (PGC) videos, yet dominant portions of YouTube clips have been created, re-interpreted and mashed-up by amateur users who do not care about creating an ad-friendly milieu in YouTube. Advertisers prefer smooth transition between the content and advertisement, and they have found "that user-created videos of pet pratfalls and oddball skits are largely incompatible with commercials for cars and other products" (Stone & Barnes, 2008).

The tension between User-Generated Content (UGC) and Professionally-Generated Content (PGC) is also found in the geographical availability of clips. Originally UGC-driven YouTube was accessible globally. As of February 2009, 59 % of YouTube users are from the United States, Europe and Japan (Stone & Helft, 2009). Most PGC-only video sites, including Hulu, major US network sites (e.g. nbc.com, abc.com and cbs.com), Veoh and IMDB, restrict the availability of their clips to residents in the United States. The US-residents only watching policy is deeply based on profitability. The cost of providing bandwidth in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America is expensive and the advertising rates in these places are low. In this scenario, audiences get benefits from globally transmitted programs, but market earns relatively meager ad revenue (Stone & Helft, 2009). After providing high-quality video options, YouTube had to endure the cost of delivering billions of videos.

The PGC-oriented portal's limited video accessibility led to another information gap, net neutrality on the global level: for instance, limited accessibility to online video service in underdeveloped countries. YouTube suggested a middle ground between global access and US-only availability. YouTube restricts bandwidth in developing countries and provides a slower access to lower-quality videos in order to manage costs (Stone & Helft, 2009). The vision of YouTube as open communication and free video library has a lineage within techno-futurism. Yet sheer reality of online video services has already confirmed limited video usage in the PGC version of YouTube, as is suggested by YouTube's unequal global service. In the case of severe restrictions on video service, it is one thing for audiences to lose the chance to watch PGC entertainment, but it is another for global citizens to have difficulty in using YouTube as an alternative channel to deliver marginalized voices, or for amateur movie makers to miss a creative window.

Limits of Online Video Libraries

While technical innovation expanded the capacity of YouTube as an online video library, images of the Internet appeared in literature before the Internet came into being. Prefiguring the world of hypertext, Borges suggested the idea of online digital libraries in his short story, 'The Library of Babel' (1941): "From those incontrovertible premises, the librarian deduced that the Library is "total" – perfect, complete, and whole —… that is, all that is able to be expressed, in every language… There was no personal problem no world problem, whose eloquent solution did not exist" (p. 115). Borges's image of a total library is comparable to Wikipedia, a UGC encyclopedia on the web, whose problem is "that it only works in practice. In theory, it can never work" (Cohen, 2008).

With optimistic visions of the information society and superhighway driven by entrepreneurs (e.g. Bill Gates) or government institutions (e.g. Al Gore and the European Community), discussions of digital libraries and information infrastructures blossomed during the last decade of the 20th century (Borgman, 2000). The project of online and digital libraries, nonetheless, met with complications including funding, government assistance, copyright laws and the diminishing roles of physical books and libraries (House et al., 2003). Furthermore, with regard to video libraries, several problems exist: institutions still think digital libraries require institutional guidelines, that libraries are used mainly for scholarly purposes, and that libraries require traditional ways of indexing and storing texts (Hughes, 2004).

Online video services changed the status of video libraries. Technologically, the concern about storage capacity became less important. The dominant users are ordinary people, rather than scholars, and its popularity depends on profane or vernacular (entertainment and killing time), rather than sacred or academic (intellect and wisdom) interest. The Internet becomes a

model of a virtual, total and omnipresent library as Borges imagines in "The Library in Babel," and YouTube becomes a model of an omnipresent online video library (Cohen, 2008; Sassón-Henry, 2007).

YouTube might have improved technologically, but just as doubts about the Internet as a total library continue, questions about YouTube as a stable video storage remain. Users sometimes take down clips, either for the convenience of managing clips or because of external pressure. It is not an unusual experience for users to realize that the videos they watched are gone. When I did research on the *Kicesie* video site from 2007 to 2009, I found some old clips were taken down, while some new ones were added. As of February 9th, 2007, 'Female porn' was the ninth most watched clip on her site, but this clip was not available at the time of April 14th 2009. The reliability of YouTube as a stable online library is weakened by severe application of copyright as well as user's whim. Legal complications haunt online video services, while advertising issues limit the genre of clips on YouTube.

In online video services, too-much is as problematic as too-little. Redundancy of the same materials in different video services does not help the completion of the online video library. One particular strength of PGC (Professionally-Generated Content) driven services like Hulu, Veoh and IMDB is the convenience of watching top-rating shows from diverse sources, rather than technical improvement or genre diversity. Convenience, accessibility and mere quantity do not lead to an online video library, which remains a dream compared with the sheer reality of repetitively re-transmitted PGC dominance of online video portals. It is partially true that YouTube provides room for alternative creative outlets. However, amateurism-based YouTube has been changed into an ad-friendly and commercialized realm and thus amateur UGC are on the verge of being marginalized.

Except for some web exclusive content (i.e. TheWB produced webisodes), PGC-only portals are geared toward the ubiquitous watching of the same content and similar genres, rather than towards an atmosphere in which users create their own programs. Multiple video portals have been filled with the same content, or at best similar genres of PGC. In analog culture, the fear was of content malnutrition, given the limited storage capacity; in digital culture, the fear is of information overflow and redundancy in the limitless storage capacity. From the broadcast to the narrowcast era, number of channels and information capacity has increased, but the lack of worthwhile content has also ensued.

In theory, one can post whatever one wants on the web. The Internet in general contains all possible information on earth, and YouTube in particular stores any available visual material. In practice, one might be able to post videos, yet whether they can persist is another issue. Culturally and religiously sensitive clips have been requested to be taken down (e.g. the Turkish founder); political censorship blocks user participation (e.g. South Korea and China); copyright enforcement keeps amateur users from singing and an increasing ad-friendly atmosphere marginalizes UGC clips. From the perspective of technical development, Borges' idea of the 'The Library of Babel' might come true, yet pure potential does not change culture: humans and institutions have deterred actualization of the idea of the perfect archive. In theory, YouTube can be an ideal video library; in practice, YouTube was tamed into a commercialized and PGC-dominated retransmission channel.

Amateur audiences will continue posting and watching UGC clips (family videos, informal lectures and confessional-format public diaries) as long as the idea of an online video portal exists. UGC culture will not fade away, just as past UGC culture, such as the counterculture and alternative media movement, has persisted. However, the dominant picture of

the UGC culture does not seem to go along with what the YouTube slogan says, "Broadcast Yourself" for multiple reasons. First, YouTube has too many clips to let one's voice broadcast properly. Accessibility and chance to broadcast do not necessarily lead to delivery (Peters, 2010). Second, the commercialization of YouTube intensifies YouTube's identity as an ad-friendly mediascape (Andrejevic, 2009). Advertisements function as stamps for quality videos, and consequently UGC without ads may face the question from viewers of whether it is worth watching. Third, though UGC will survive, chances are that ubiquitous PGC will overshadow UGC, marginalizing individuals' creations.

With regard to institutionalization process, to borrow Haeckel's quote, "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"; my argument is that a short history of YouTube repeats a history of the Internet. YouTube has evolved from personal to public to commercial. At the personal medium stage, its goal is not fixed and the medium is not popular enough to last. Later, there will come a breaking point. With increasing popularity, amateurs get actively involved in the new medium, and the notion of UGC comes to be persuasive. When media conglomerates invest in a rising medium, institutionalization begins in the forms of commercialization and legalization. The road to institutionalization is common in digital media: to UGC media in particular, and to the Internet in general.

In sum, YouTube should be understood as one of the consequences of the evolution, rather than the revolution, of the Internet culture. As YouTube grew older, the relations between narrowcasting and broadcasting became more complicated. Online video sites provided alternative ways of consuming and producing visuals, yet traditional broadcasting stroke back with institutional strategies, including copyright protection and advertisement. With regard to the social influence of YouTube, Wasko and Erickson (2009) point out a fundamental trade-off

between user satisfaction with the YouTube experience and industry's prosperity. YouTube represents the co-existence of the old and new systems. The Dominant portion of videos in online video sites comes from mainstream media, and users borrow not only content to consume but also formats in order to produce their clips. The influence is not one-way. For major content providers, including broadcasting networks, video sharing sites function as a promotion tool, and for advertising companies, online video services open up new ad revenue.

CHAPTER IV. DIALECTIC OF NEW BROADCASTING

While the intellectual architecture of the personalization of mass media was long in the making, User-Generated Content (UGC) on the web has had its moment from the early ’90s through the present day. UGC refers to media content in which amateur users actively participate; examples are found in blogs, YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr, Twitter, and social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook. At the core of UGC lies the importance of individuals; this emphasis on individuals is accompanied by the increasing popularity of the online video format where amateur users can play the diverse roles of producer, distributor and audience. Users of blogs and social networking sites not only adopt the style of personal conversation, but also re-construct the meanings of broadcasting.

In this project, I argue that continuity exists between broadcasting and YouTube. The continuity is that both media use conversation, a personal communication mode, to create intimate but virtual bonding with an anonymous audience. Contrary to celebratory discourse on the novelty of YouTube, this new medium owes greatly to old media. On the level of common sense, UGC in general and YouTube specifically have been welcomed as revolutionary media. *Time* magazine’s selection of ‘You’ as the person of the year in 2006 points out the social valence of this personalized medium (Grossman, 2007). In spite of popular hype that YouTube is a new and revolutionary medium, online users emulate and reproduce the logic of broadcasting. Conversation is supposed to be a private and close form of communication for self-reflexivity, but when broadcast it becomes a public and open form of communication for self-revelation, cultivating popularity. This dissertation will deal with how the online digital environment adopts a conversational style of communication and will explore how mass media generally utilize the conditions of interpersonal communication.

In order to explain how YouTube simulates broadcasting, I will analyze the popular *Kicesie* sex education videos on YouTube. Due to the diversity of genre and styles of YouTube clips, such as short films, parodies, music video and home videos, this series can neither represent all UGC clips nor provide a general example of YouTube. However, its conversation format is characteristic of UGC media. More specifically, my emphasis will be on how "Kicesie," the main character of the series, exploits the feelings of intimacy, naturalness, and the notion of interactivity, which lead to popularity and business opportunities. Following her success on YouTube, Kicesie sold DVDs based on her series, earning popularity and money by selling intimacy. Kicesie wants to be the online Ruth Westheimer, a sex therapist and cultural icon of the '80s, or an online Dr. Drew, from *Loveline*, a radio talk show and MTV show (Jesella, 2008). In that sense, some YouTube cases not only reproduce the logic of broadcasting formats but also adopt its commercial strategies.

Online UGC Media in Transition

Through UGC media, audiences can not only be active interpreters of cultural products, but also producers of media content. One of the basic assumptions underlying UGC is amateurism, implying anyone like "you" could be an active participant on the Internet. Founded in February 2005, YouTube started as a private medium for exchanging videos between family and friends; then it entered the public realm.

YouTube is still growing on the borderline between the private and the public, narrowcasting and broadcasting, amateurism and professionalism. On the one hand, as one form of narrowcasting, this digital video library personalizes broadcasting. Through YouTube, amateur users can produce and distribute their videos on the web, as opposed to traditional broadcasting where professionals institutionalize and formalize broadcasting. In that sense,

YouTube is a less institutionalized and less formalized form of broadcasting. However, YouTube is still a form of broadcasting because the way in which YouTube clips are generated, transmitted, recorded, and consumed resemble the traditional methods of broadcasting. As I argued in chapter three, YouTube has been institutionalized in two ways: its adoption of an ad-friendly atmosphere and its adherence to strict copyright law.

One particular characteristic of the institutionalization of YouTube is the increasing dominance of Professionally-Generated Content (PGC). Between amateur-created UGC and traditional broadcasting-based PGC, one can find diverse categories of video genres. Sung, Kim and Lee (2007) categorize UGC clips based on the degree of user creativity in production: User-Created Content (UCC), User-Recreated Content (URC), User-Modified Content (UMC), and User-Transmitted Content (UTC).[28] User-Created Content (UCC) refers to original clips that users create: for instance, home videos, self-recorded monologues or confessional speeches. User-Recreated Content (URC) indicates the clips that users recreate by deconstructing mass media sources. This type does not borrow original video: it borrows an idea and represents it. The 'Live Action Simpsons' clip is a real-action version of the intro sequence of the popular TV animation series *The Simpsons.* Using the same intro music, the uploader followed the same sequence order and style as the animation, but changed the genre from animation to real-life drama. In URC clips, users show a certain level of creativity, in that they reinterpret themes and recreate genres. The reinterpretation of content and recreation of formats are hard to find in User-Modified Content (UMC). The difference between URC and UMC lies in the degree to which re-creators' ideas depend upon their sources. More specifically, UMC producers merely play with the visuals and sound. They match different content (e.g. the visuals of a TV show with songs

[28] Korean scholars and web users prefer the UCC (User-Created Content) to UGC, and thus for Sung, Kim and Lee, User-Generated Content is one of the subcategories of UCC.

not used in the show). For instance, "Crank Dat Soulja Boy Spongebob" is a mashup (containing edited material from more than one source) music video that matches visual clips (edited from the animated TV show *Spongebob Squarepants*) with audio (from the song "Crank Dat" by Soulja Boy). The majority of the digital UGC is UTC, in which users merely re-transmit music video, parts of a TV show, or news coverage.

Sung, Kim and Lee's categorization provides two terms to describe the production and consumption of YouTube clips: creativity and retransmission. Of them, I will focus on creativity-driven clips, and especially the ones with a conversational mode of communication. The conversation format is dominant and popular in UGC, and by adopting an interpersonal communication strategy, UGC participates in both personal and mass media. I will analyze the creativity-driven and conversation-based YouTube clip series, *Kicesie*, which delivers advice on everyday sex life. Before entering analysis, it is necessary to map out theories on discourses of sex, the shift of interpersonal to mass communication, and the blurring of the lines between personal and mass media. These theories will provide deeper illustration of the tensions between the private and the public or personal and mass media. These tensions would show that there is more continuity between broadcasting and UGC than what utopian discourses claim.

Personalization of Mass Media and "Deploying Sincerity"[29]

In this section, I will explore several theories that show how an interpersonal communication format is inseparable from mass media. As important communication formats, interpersonal modes of communication, including conversation and confession, are deeply inscribed in the modes of mass communication, blurring the lines between personal and mass communication.

[29] Beniger, J. (1987). Personalization of mass media and the growth of pseudo-community. *Communication Research, 14*, 356-359.

In his *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1* (1978), Michel Foucault points out that social valences are found in personal communication situations. According to him, in Western history discourses on sex became public, useful, and scientific. Defining contemporary Western society as a "confessing society" and Western man as a "confessing animal," (p. 59), Foucault argues "the obligation of confession" is ingrained in Western society, and it plays a driving force for producing truth discourse on sex. Historically, confession about sex played the role of "the general standard governing the production of the true discourse on sex" (p. 63). This personal form of communication already had a social valence. As mass media developed, they did not simply replace face-to-face communication, but adopted interpersonal modes of communication, such as confession and conversation, as a societal control mechanism. That is, the intimate characteristic of friendly conversation is utilized for deploying sincerity (Beniger, 1987).

Historical and social crises from the early to the mid-twentieth century required communication scholars to provide proper answers. After two World Wars and their threats of communism and fascism, communication scholars came to emphasize propaganda research, leading to the birth of objective social science. At the same time, fears of mass society and industrialization, including alienation and loss of an inner self led communication scholars to think about how mass media adopted old media styles (Ellul, 1964; Fromm, 1941; Riesman, 1953).

Pointing to Kate Smith's war bonding radio marathon program as an example, Merton (1946) argues that out media celebrity feign personal intimacy in pseudo-environments as pseudo-individuals (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944). It is Horton and Wohl (1956) who advocate the theory of para-social interaction in which sincerity is feigned through imaginary bonding.

The distinction between personal and mass communication is meaningful as a hermeneutic tool, not as a clear-cut classification of media. Foucault already noticed the close link between them, pointing out that the personal mode of communication (confession) and an intimate topic (sex) can shape the reproduction of social norms and rules. Similarly, communication scholars' common interest lies in how to understand the convergence of mass and interpersonal communication. Though their cases come from broadcasting, their insights on media convergence are still applicable to the digital culture, where interpersonal forms of communication still remain the mechanism of producing sincere stories. Through a case study of *Kicesie*, I will explore how narrowcasting simulates traditional broadcasting.

UGC within UGC: *Kicesie* Sex Education

Sex Education on YouTube

Broadcasting and YouTube both use the conversational mode of communication to exploit sincerity. I analyzed digital UGC clips on YouTube, which I selected according to three criteria. The clips 1) utilize a conversational mode, 2) are produced by amateurs who are not sponsored by any institution or company, and 3) were popular during 2007 and 2008.

Premiering in October 2006, *Kicesie* is a sex educational clip series hosted by a 22 year-old woman. Using only her pseudonym, "Kicesie,"[30] she introduces herself as someone who grew up in "a very conservative Christian environment" ("What Defines Pornography?") in Louisiana, and who lived as a college student majoring in psychology with hopes of becoming a sex therapist. She characterizes her sex education series as non-professional videos for her peers. *Kicesie* was within the top 100 YouTube videos in terms of the number of subscribers during my research period, from December 2007 through September 2008, and within the top 10 in "Guru"

[30] Kicesie has a blog in MySpace, under the same nickname.

groups.[31] At the time of September 30th 2008, 63 clips of the *Kicesie* series were available on YouTube. Of them, I analyzed the top 20 most watched clips (Table 1). After analyzing the videos and user comments, I found three characteristics repeated across this sex education series: sexuality, naturalness, and interactivity. Sometimes these elements are interdependent, and they commonly facilitate the simplicity of the messages and Kicesie's intimate invitation to participating.

Sexuality and Intimacy

In their analysis on para-social relationships in broadcasting, Horton and Wohl (1956) argue that sexuality is the topic which most increases intimacy between broadcasters and audiences. The persona of the shows can increase sociability between spectators and the celebrity figures. *Kicesie* constructs an intimate atmosphere in her delivery, through her clothing (short tops, shorts, and rainbow-color stockings) and body gestures (pointing, tossing her hair, and rolling her eyes).

Kicesie's sex education is not professional, and she openly admits it. Her amateurism is found in the way she constructs intimacy. She presents herself as a sex object, which is a detriment to her position as an objective educator. Kicesie clarifies in the homepage of her YouTube channel that she is an amateur sex educator, not looking for a personal relationship ("NOT interested in dating you if you send a sexually inappropriate message to me you will be blocked immediately"), but at the same time she invites her audience to bond with her by using her physical attractiveness. She usually wears short tops with low necklines, which often show a lot of cleavage (picture 1).

[31] YouTube categorizes users. In January 2008, the category included "Directors," "Gurus," "Musicians," "Non-profit (organization)," "Partners," "Sponsors," and "YouChoose 08."

Figure 1. An Image of Kicesie's Short Top and Cleavage from "A Woman's Fantasy"

In her 2nd most popular clip, *"*Best Sex Ever*,"* Kicesie's body image fits the topic well. In a relaxed position on a sofa, she invites her audience to join her survey. She is wearing shorts and rainbow-color stockings and often pointing her fingers to the camera at her audience. Her invitations are multiple – to comment in the comments section, to engage in sex talk, or to view her bodily attractiveness.

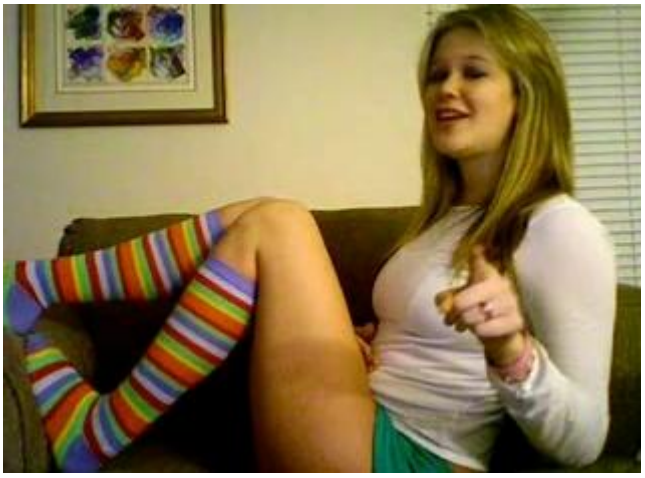

Figure 2. Kicesie Pointing at the Screen from "Best Sex Ever!"

Tossing her long blonde hair, Kicesie starts the opening scene of her most watched video, "Oral," saying "Oral sex!... Cunnilingus!... Fellatio!" (which sounds no less seductive than her greeting at opening scene of "Best Sex Ever!": "Hey there, my sex people!"). At each word, she moves her eyes from one side to the other seductively (picture 3). By acting coy, she allows herself to be a sexual object, which compromises her integrity. In addition to making playful body gestures, she also plays with words. In the early part of the same episode, she says "I've got a lot of emails from you guys, all sorts of questions about oral sex... most of them… is some sorts of problems… some are *big* problems, some are *small*…" (italics added by writer).

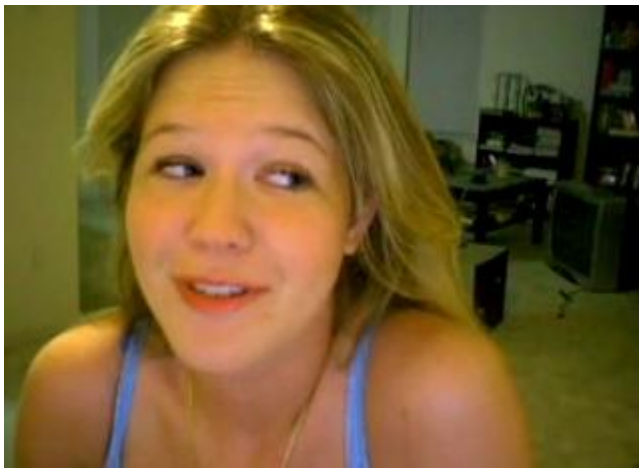

Figure 3. Kicesie from "Oral Sex"

Kicesie deals with sensual topics more explicitly than traditional broadcasting. Nonetheless, the bodily exposure on *Kicesie* is not as explicit as that seen on network programs which recommend "viewer discretion." More importantly, sexuality is used to strengthen the intimate atmosphere of the show. In a bit more carefree manner, Kicesie's flirting with her virtual fans simulates the way broadcasting celebrities try to initiate friendly bonding with invisible audiences.

Naturalness and Simplicity: Deploying Sincerity

Borrowing from Merton (1946), Beniger (1987) argues that broadcasters link simplicity and sincerity. According to Beniger, the birth of such media formats as "the specialized magazine, targeted mass mailing, neighborhood-edition newspaper, and phone-in radio show" (p. 353) indicates the growing importance of the association between being unsophisticated and being genuine. Even though his cases are from before the Internet age, his insights can be used to explain how the notion of being an individual works in the development of new media.

Just as many amateur YouTubers do, Kicesie uses homely places, including her own residence, as the settings of her videos. She emphasizes her role as amateur sex therapist through her speech (content) and the settings (style). With regard to content, she repeatedly says to her audience, especially at the beginnings and the endings of the clips, that she is not professional, only a college psychology major who wants to be a real sex therapist. With regard to settings, the background lacks fancy decoration. Kicesie does not rely on scripts. She acts as if she is having a small chat in a coffee shop with friends.

Sometimes she sounds as if she is improvising and looks spontaneous in some minor unexpected situations. At the beginning of "Sex Stories – Open Marriages," Kicesie apologies the audience for the messy room, saying they mess is due to her recent Christmas shopping (picture 4). Interestingly, until she mentioned it, her room did not look especially messy; it looked the same as it looked in other clips. The room is small, and it is not easy to spot something messy in the tiny YouTube screen, which has a moderate resolution, that is broadcasting quality.

Figure 4. Messy Room from "Sex Stories - Open Marriages"

Kicesie chats a bit about the crowds shopping and about her family, before starting her lecture of the day. In the middle of her lecture, she suddenly stops talking ("…hold on!"). The scene is cut, and then continues with her apology "…there's some people talking outside my door…that's kind of odd" (picture 5). Again, due to the sound quality of YouTube, without her announcement about the noise, it would be easy for the audience to notice.

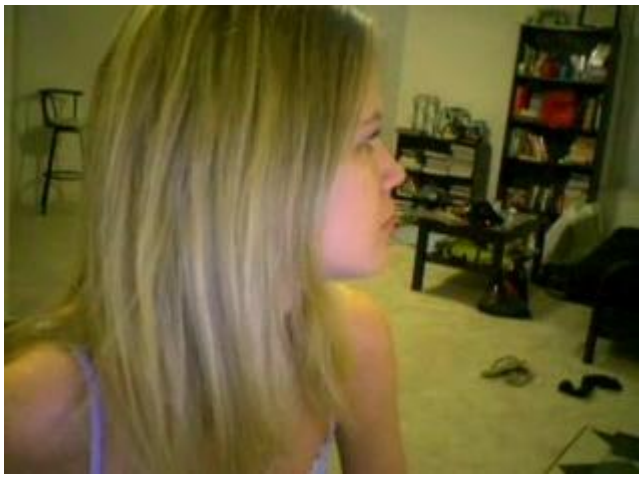

Figure 5. Kicesie Listening to Noises Outside from "Sex Stories - Open Marriages"

Kicesie publicizes the private by creating intimacy through her revelation of circumstantial details. In "Advanced Sex Ed – Female Orgasm Disorder," Kicesie's cat suddenly crosses the living room. Kicesie turns around, explaining that it was her cat (picture 6). Again, this cat interference helps her to introduce her pet, a part of her private life. Kicesie does not ignore that interference. Rather, she uses it as an opportunity to create realism in the clip. Although she does not talk about her own sex, her delivery (e.g. non-verbal communications including gestures) is filled with sexual energy. She might not talk about her sex life, but the whole atmosphere of the show creates an intimacy evocative of sex.

Figure 6. The Cat in "Advanced Sex Ed – Female Orgasm Disorder"

The lack of cinematic techniques such editing, camera, lighting, sound and music fits the naturalness of the setting. Kicesie barely uses editing or camera movement. Other than some photos and subtitles, she hardly uses any previously recorded clips. A few cuttings between scenes occur, yet the camera stays still (it is probably a webcam built into her computer). The lighting is natural. With few exceptions, the audience does not hear any music or sound effects.

Kicesie's presentation of personal space and natural atmosphere provide the feeling of familiarity and closeness, which make it easier for audiences to be involved in the scenes. Yet, there are similarities between YouTube and broadcasting, in terms of their methods for deploying sincerity. In her all-day live radio war bond drive, Kate Smith put forth a public image, which led her fans to "trust her because she belongs to their own stratum" (Merton, 1946, p. 158), and consequently appealed to altruism and patriotism successfully. Humbly acknowledging herself as a peer, not a professional therapist, Kicesie wins over her fans without explicit persuasiveness. Both Smith and Kicesie both pursue simplicity, equating it with genuineness and credibility. The problem is that the importance of self-criticism and the complexities of any situation can be easily ignored by the simplicity. According to Merton (1946), "[a]dmiration for the 'spontaneous' and 'natural' tends to select favorable examples and turns a very blind eye to the less attractive phenomena" (p. 157).

Throughout the series, Kicesie invites her audiences to participate in her sex talk programs. She is suggestive with her sexuality, and she establishes natural atmosphere through publicizing her private space. In some videos, nevertheless, when she becomes heavily dependent on users' participation (e.g. comments and video posting), the meanings of intimacy and interactivity take a different turn. *Kicesie*'s style remains friendly and natural, yet her role becomes less personal and the role of the audience becomes bigger: Interactivity indicates users are conversing with each other, rather than engaging directly with Kicesie. Here, two assumed features of YouTube, personal and interactive, need to be re-defined, in that the intimate medium appears to become less personal, and interactivity leads to either endless lists of information or discussions without conclusion. Users could equate merely giving and receiving feedbacks with interactivity, but they likely do not care about the consequences or purposes of feedbacks.

Interactivity and Participation

The genius of Web 2.0, which relies on interconnectivity and social networking (O'Reilly, 2005), lies in its humility. Rather than claiming the Internet is a panacea for any communicative problem, Web 2.0 proponents foreground the incompleteness of knowledge production on the Internet. Coining the term "collective intelligence/knowledge," Lévy (1994) says, "no one knows everything, everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity" (pp. 13-14). The consequence is that users contribute to a collective body of knowledge. Kicesie simulates Web 2.0's genius. She admits her lack of professional knowledge or experiences, and allows her viewers to teach each other. She invites audiences to participate in her clips and praises. In "Advanced sex ed - Female orgasmic disorders" video, she says:

> if you guys have suggestions, email me. I will maybe read some of you guys suggestions, in the next video. Speaking of that, I have no idea of what's gonna be the next topic in this advanced sex ed series. So, email me your ideas, please! And I am gonna through them, and I am gonna pick some for series. And I will give you credits.

Though Kicesie's videos are already user-generated by herself, she builds up the content with audiences' questions, suggestions and ideas. Her 1st, 2nd and 9th most watched clips are good examples of user-generated content within UGC medium. The most popular clip, "Advanced Sex Ed – Oral Sex – Viewer Request," as shown in the title, comes from an audience member's interest in the topic. Based on her fans' request, she delivered this episode, which became the biggest success in the series. It is on a sensational subject, and this episode contains explicit sexual content.[32] Furthermore, the fact that the main character of the series is responsive to fans' curiosity is another fundamental factor leading to this popularity of the clip.

[32] She talks about three big issues: taste, touch and sight. For instance, on taste, she says, "if you get a flavor lube, it has absolutely no sugar in it"; on touch "… if [man's semen] has particularly bad taste to you, you really have two options, either have him let, you know, right before he is about to cum, finish it in your hands. Or, you can have him

In both the 2nd ("Best sex ever!") and the 18th ("What defines pornography?") most-watched clips, Kicesie conducts a survey, rather than gives a lecture. Throughout the series, she mixes her lecture with audience contributions, such as requests and questions. However, the big difference between these two clips and others is that "Best sex ever!" And "What defines pornography?" merely throw out the questions for YouTube users to answer. In the former, the prompt is to "leave your best sex ever in the comments section," and in the latter she invites her fans to provide 1) their definition of pornography, 2) criteria of good/healthy/therapeutic pornography, and 3) examples of bad/unhealthy/non-therapeutic pornography. In the latter, she even reminds users to identify their gender and age.

Not only in terms of quantity of participation (e.g. the number of comments), but also in terms of its quality (e.g. users' frank confessions about their private lives), her open survey was a success. Despite the limitations on their degree of sexual explicitness, the comments for "Best sex ever!" contain specifics about time, place, age and the relationship with the partner:

> The best sex that I ever had was with my 3rd girlfriend. I was about 19 maybe 20 years old. We went out to the woods, under a train trestle. We were really getting into each other, and having the time of our lives. Then a train started to cross the trestle. Between the sound of the train, and the rumble of the train passing, it was a really great feeling (SoundstarRadio)

If "Best sex ever!" was responded to with a number of descriptive, personal and fragmented experiences, "Porn" received comments on more serious topics, more detailed arguments, and even initiated discussions between users. Some people post multiple comments, in a chain of questions and answers. A few very enthusiastic audience members left more than 10 comments (i.e., The MathGuy, frafor, etc):

---

cum in your mouth, you know, immediately, spit it out" if it hits wrong place in your mouth"; on touch "enjoy giving, and enjoy receiving."

> I'm pro sexual liberation, but I view porn as a kind of mental slavery, and it also becomes an addiction for some. When you communicate better with a DVD or magazine than you do with people, I think that it becomeas [sic] unhealthy. I can't really comment on erotica, because i'm [sic] unsure of the distinction between erotica and porn. But my main point is that human interaction is what we should all be aiming for (OreosAndMaryjane).

Several comments deal with social topics, ethics, laws and media effects on society. Although the level of description is not academic, participants at least avoid name-calling and swearing:

> I am a 36-year-old male. My response was quite long, so I will post in several consecutive comments. 1) My personal opinion on what defines porn is anything that is produced explicitly to depict and focus on sex and sexually related acts while not serving any scientific purpose to educate. I know that this leaves grey areas as to what could be considered "educational", however like the Supreme Court, I have difficulty defining a more specific set of guidelines as to what is and is not porn (Snuf13).[33]

Kicesie frequently responds to her audience member's questions and ideas, yet it is the conversations between users that facilitate the communicative functions on the message board:

> Just like mainstream media has an impact on "people should look like this". Porn could have such an impact too. Guy's [sic] could fear that there penis isn't big enough or there not macho enough etc, etc. While women could think there [sic] breast are not big enough etc, etc. I suppose this could lead people into being afraid of sex, I don't know (recklessHattrick).

To the user "recklessHattrick"s comments on Internet pornography, a somewhat naïve notion of media effects, "kmswenson" responded with the flexible approach to the issue:

[33] Snuf13 post two more comments, answering questions 2 and 3, each.

> Male, 20, I understand where you're coming from on this, but I'm seeing more porn that have women who are bigger, whether its breasts or just weight. And I've also seen a lot of porns with men who have small dicks. In this day and age, anything goes. I don't really think it would push people away from having sex. But then again, I don't know (kmswenson).

Although "recklessHattrick"—"kmswenson"'s discussion is still a way from scholarly debates on media effects, the many conversations between users resemble what Habermas (1989) calls the public sphere. He identifies accessibility, openness and rationality as the three conditions of the public sphere, and defines it as a site where critical debate is possible. Most Internet message boards fit two of the conditions, accessibility and openness, but not all messages are logical. Likewise, the dominant portion of the conversations in Kicesie's site's message board are far from being coherent and focused arguments; however, some posts show YouTube's potential as a public sphere.

Kicesie uses intimacy in her videos to facilitate audience participation. In these UGC within UGC, Kicesie lets people talk, converse, and confess. Her role is to open the sphere for talking, not to fill it up with her own lecture, from which she separates her private life: she separates her online character Kicesie from her actual self. She cultivates intimacy, and her gestures and conversational skills are inviting. Not only does she not mediate the content, but also she keeps her distance from the discussion. Kicesie manufactures an intimate atmosphere, in which she is not actively engaged. Kicesie takes on the role of judge at best, or that of a passerby at worst. If "[t]he confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement" (Foucault, 1978, p. 61), the main character of this clip series does not confess: she speaks yet avoids being the subject of confession. These UGC within UGC include a gap between the intimacy Kicesie manipulates as a celebrity figure and the impersonality she

maintains as a natural person. The invitation to be interactive helps audiences disclose themselves voluntarily, but it is problematic to say this self-presentation leads to critical self-reflexivity.

Discussion and Conclusion

In analyzing the *Kicesie* series in this chapter, I used intimacy and sociability interchangeably, but it is sociability that Kicesie actually deployed. Naming her audiences "sex people," Kicesie gave lectures on sex to them. *Kicesie* created emotional bond but kept a certain distance between her and audiences. By contrast Bree in *lonelygirl15* pursued a more intimate direction in a confessional mode of communication than Kicesie's lecture mode of communication. Bree's and Kicesie's approaches might be slightly different, but they both aimed to be online celebrities and to earn through gaining viral fame.

There has been much discourse on user-content interactive media as a completely new form of communication. However, my analysis of YouTube clips demonstrates some similarities between broadcasting and YouTube. Broadcasting borrows a personal communication mode, conversation, which helps disguise the impersonal nature of mass media. YouTube repeats the same logic. Claiming herself to be an amateur sex therapist, Kicesie invented an online video sex talk program; this invention owes much to broadcasting. Kicesie simulates the way in which celebrity figures in broadcasting invite audiences. She also follows their commercial strategy – using multiple windows. Gaining a contract with the Alexander Institute, whose specialty is sex education DVDs,[34] she began selling the DVDs based on her YouTube series (picture 7), and she even posted, "Sexual Techniques" as the ad for her DVD on YouTube (picture 8), which is the

[34] Some of the Alexander Institute DVD titles are: *101 Advanced Sexual Positions for Lovers, Great Sex forMen Over 50," "Great Sex for Women Over 50," and "What Men & Women Want Gift Set"* (lovingsex.com).

8th most-watched clip in her series. Fame often leads to fortune, and her strategies may lead her to be a new Dr. Drew or Ruth Westheimer.

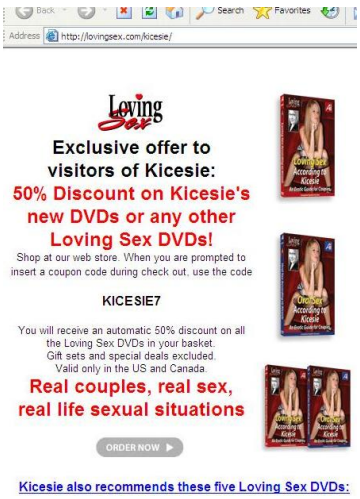

Figure 7. Kicesie's DVDs on Sale from lovingsex.com (2008)

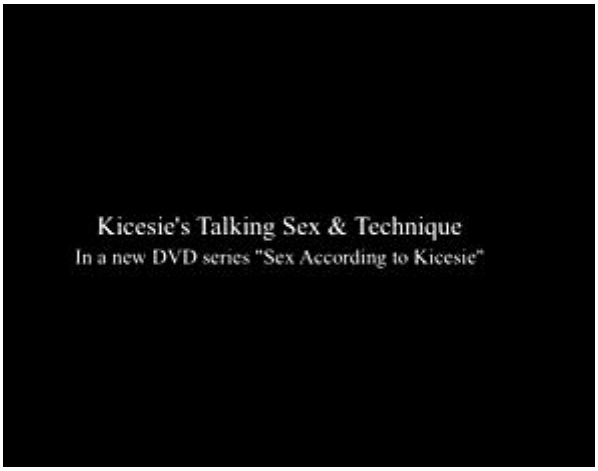

Figure 8. DVD Ad from "Sexual Techniques"

In addition to the continuity between traditional broadcasting and YouTube, I would also like to point out that how video producers use the notion of interactivity to encourage audiences to participate. What makes *Kicesie* different from mainstream broadcasting is Kicesie's open

acceptance of her amateurism. With "self-proclaimed mediocrity," Kicesie not only successfully invites her fans to participate but also takes care of her possible errors "with the aid of audience research, 'program doctors'" (Horton and Wohl, 1956, p. 378). The fans of *Kicesie* clips save the effort of doing audience research by their voluntarily participating in her survey, which is moreover used as content for her clips (as comments and requests for forthcoming topics). Consequently, she uses her audiences' "free labor."

In the digital economy, according to Terranova (2000), diverse forms of online activities by non-professional and unpaid web users (e.g. amateur web designs, chats, tastes and public opinion) are exploited by industry. This amateur user's labor is unpaid and exploited, but users contribute their "free labor" willingly. Free labor on the web shows how cultural consumption translates into productive activities for web content producers; it has become common in digital UGC media. One can argue it is cultural industries and corporate groups that exploit free user labor, yet in an age in which the line between producer and consumer is blurring, the situation becomes more complicated. Amateur users utilize each other's labor freely, and *Kicesie* is an example of this. Analyzing the fan sites of reality TV shows, Andrejevic (2008) points out two functions of audience free labor: building product loyalty and market research. With their recaps, critiques and fan fiction, fans make shows interesting to themselves and provide instant feedback to producers. It is one thing to say that fans' maniacal love for cultural texts results from their interactivity, but another to say that user interactivity is productive because it allows producers to interact with consumers without coast. When consumption becomes productive labor (Terranova), interactivity means nothing but "the ability to off-load some market research labor onto viewers" (Andrejevic, p. 24). One of the strengths of *Kicesie*'s sex education is its self-generating, automatic process of UGC. By encouraging her fans' interactivity with her clips,

Kicesie naturalizes her utilization of user labor as fan participation. She lets users generate content in the user-generated content medium. This invitation to user participation begins with a belief in the value of active audiences on the web and ends in exploiting the labor of users.

In sum, I have two major arguments in this chapter: the continuity between broadcasting and YouTube, and *Kicesie*'s genius in linking the notion of interactivity and the user labor. Whether these arguments can be generalized will be another topic to be explored, especially considering the expanding number of clips, diverse styles, and quickly changing trends on YouTube. However, it is worth noticing that the conversation format is characteristic of other popular styles on YouTube. I believe this continuity issue can be productively applied to the "video blogs" and social networking sites. Furthermore, the close link between interactivity and online digital laboring should suggest to us an alternative theoretical perspective on the relationship of cultural production and consumption in general. More specifically, the idea of online interactivity that cultivates users' free labor can be a critical tool by which we reconsider the naïve belief in active users via the notion of "prosumer" (producer + consumer), which is one of the hype concepts in cyberculture.

Table 1. 20 Most Watched *Kicesie* Clips*

Rank	Title	Number of clicks	Number of comments	Length	Date posted
1	Oral Sex	46,544,520	229	12:03	04/02/07
2	Best Sex Ever!	21,321,577	266	04:34	07/08/07
3	Great Oral Sex for Men	2,450,487	529	02:40	03/27/08
4	Advanced Sex Ed – Female Orgasmic Disorders	2,022,713	168	13:59	12/04/06
5	Variety Sex (LGBQT Part 2)	1,981,184	314	06:04	10/11/07
6	A Woman's Fantasy	1,629,168	696	05:17	11/17/07
7	Great Oral Sex for Women	1,397,925	456	02:38	04/12/08
8	Sexual Techniques	1,376,337	188	01:02	12/11/07
9	G Marks the Spot	1,310,484	471	07:36	06/16/08
10	Virginity Part 2	1,270,512	920	09:24	07/18/07
11	Mini Sex Ed - G-Spot, Experienced Women, Anal Sex	1,184,292	21	06:40	06/11/07
12	Mini Sex Ed - Low Desire Disorder & Penis Size	1,158,829	47	12:12	06/06/07
13	Incandescent	1,115,830	905	00:36	06/04/08
14	To My Terrorist: on rape	936,488	1,813	05:00	11/18/06
15	Why Do You Talk About Sex??	822,348	460	09:55	10/26/07
16	Weird Sex	582,710	0**	05:32	03/06/08
17	23 Girl Salute	581,447	575	06:04	09/29/08
18	What Defines Pornography?	455,582	835	07:42	08/04/07
19	Where are the Parents?? Part 2	451,936	315	05:17	09/13/07
20	Elaborating on Sexual Techniques	423,866	259	04:56	12/13/07
25	Sex Series - Open Marriages***	347,021	125	07:47	12/16/06

* As of October 12th, 2008

** Comments are not available

*** Added for the sake of analysis

CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION: CRITIQUE OF THE PROMISE OF INTERACTIVITY

Starting with a theoretical discussion on technology and the transformation of audiences, I analyzed YouTube, aiming to elaborate the dialectic of new media technology: the tension between liberating potential and institutional constraints. I argued the trajectory of new media technology is conditioned by market and political interests, rather than by the desires of amateur users alone. The relationship between amateur users and professional creators are two-way. While individual use of new media can inspire the shaping of technical frameworks on the macro level, the market adoption of amateurs' ideas often induces further innovations on the individual level.

This dissertation examined YouTube from agent, institution and text perspectives, and each perspective illustrates tensions and conflicts between the personal and the public, individual users and institutions, amateurism and professionalism, narrowcasting and broadcasting and User-Generated Content (UGC) and Professionally-Generated Content (PGC). Through a critical analysis of complications found in the development of YouTube, I demystified the understandings of YouTube as a democratizing and interactive UGC medium.

As discussed in the chapters two and four, amateur users take advantage of the convenience and accessibility of YouTube, and in consequence they have a chance to engage deeply in the media content production-distribution-consumption-feedback system. One may relate this technical innovation with the change in the nature of media users, from passive audiences to active creators. The myth of the active user, however, is inseparable from celebrity culture. Self-expression on the web is often imbued with a fascination with being famous, and this is not the same as user empowerment. With regard to the virtual community, YouTube has a community feature in that users share videos and thoughts, but the major pattern of this

community function has changed from being truly communal to being a promotion tool. Amateurism in UGC came to be compromised when the line between UGC and PGC started to blur. *lonelygirl15* may be a case of narrowcasting's invasion into broadcasting, but this is one of the outsourcing examples from industry's perspective. From a techno-futuristic perspective (Jenkins, 2006, 2008; Tapscott & Williams, 2006), YouTube makes audiences into interactive media users; however, that interactivity is composed of active consumption in the realm of disposable celebrity. In that sense, compromised UGC culture likely means the loss of user autonomy and submission to dominant culture.

Conceptually opposite to Professionally-Generated Content (PGC), the notion of UGC has been deployed by traditional media for the purpose of inviting people into the consumption landscape. Any user activity per se, along with its result, may be counted as UGC, but when user activities are exploited in institutional practices and routines and thus turned into cybernetic commodities (economically value-added information about users), the meaning of UGC as the pure creation of amateurs comes to lose its validity.

Throughout this dissertation, I examined the institutional constraints on individual use of YouTube. At the same time, however, I tried not to be pessimistic on the possibilities of new media technologies. Before I draw on the critiques of the promise of YouTube and demystify the myths of YouTube, I will point out several potentials of YouTube, not from techno futuristic perspectives, but from my own understanding of UGC culture.

Potentials of YouTube

With the "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" metaphor, while I argued that the development of YouTube repeated the evolution of the Internet, it is worth noticing the limit of applying this metaphor into contemporary digital culture. Considering the brief history of

YouTube (five years old at the time of this study), it is hasty to conclude that YouTube has been institutionalized the same way as the Internet has been. In addition to this, despite various institutional constraints on individual use of YouTube, YouTube still can be a creative outlet for individuals.

YouTube is used as alternative news channels for independent journalism. Activist documentary directors like Greenwald used YouTube to shorten the time gap between production and distribution, allowing more outlets for documentary creation. Splitting the whole project into small parts, Greenwald released them as soon as they were completed. Also, as a political device, YouTube served as a 'watch dog' during the 2006 US election. One of the scandalous moments in the 2006 US election was Republican Senator George Allen of Virginia's 'Macaca' comment (Heffernan, 2008). His democratic opponent James Webb's volunteers videotaped Allen's campaigns. In one of his campaigns, Allen spotted one of Webb's volunteers, who is of Indian descent. Allen exhorted the crowd to welcome 'Macaca,' which in some parts of the world is a racial epithet derived from a term for a type of monkey. The senator's insult was videotaped, and posted on YouTube, igniting a firestorm. Allen lost in the election, and many media including the *New York Times* (Rich, 2006), CBS (Budoff, 2007) and *Times* (Sullivan, 2007) referenced the circulation of his 'Macaca' comment on YouTube as one of major factors leading to his loss.

In addition to serving as an outlet for alternative journalism and documentary, YouTube is an alternative creative outlet not only for amateurs who experiment with new genres like parody and mash-ups but also for professional artists. Critically acclaimed but ratings-challenged television drama producer and director Marshall Herskovitz found the middle ground between major broadcasting and small narrowcasting media partially on YouTube. Without enough

sponsorship, Herskovitz initially proceeded with his project, *Quarterlife*, on the web including YouTube, but later he found a spot for his show on major network. Herskovitz's case shows that the Internet experiment worked on a television platform, and that suggested that the outlets can help creators to wrest ownership of their projects and creative control from networks.

Expectations about the various potentials of YouTube lead to the emphasis on interactivity, which is one of the key words in the story of YouTube. Throughout this dissertation, I pointed out the close relationship between interactivity and YouTube, analyzing how amateur users like *lonelygirl15* and *Kicesie* utilize user interactivity. However, the conceptualization of interactivity and its theoretical implications have not been deeply dealt with in the previous chapters. In this final chapter, I will examine the theoretical importance of interactivity and demystify the hype around YouTube, especially the myths of community and active user. Then, I will wrap up my dissertation with a discussion about the limits of interactivity in YouTube.

Dialectic of Interactivity

The development of interactivity is key to the history of communication theories. The birth of cybernetic theory during the 50s and the 60s, the rise and development of active audience theories during the 70s and the 80s, and the recent popularity of user participation and interactive media show one theoretical trajectory in the field of communication studies during the 20th century and the early 21st century.

Media history shows that user participation has always been part of every invention of media technology, and interactivity involves more than simple feedback between sender and receiver. Within social scientific approaches, the term interactivity has been operationalized. Downes and McMillan (2000) explain interactivity on six dimensions: the direction of communication, time flexibility, sense of place, level of control, responsiveness, and perceived

purpose of communication. According to Kiousis (2002), “interactivity is both a media and psychological factor that varies across communication technology, communication contexts, and people’s perception” (p, 355).

While social scientific approaches tend to analyze interactivity with psychological variables on a micro level, the question of for whom interactivity works still remains. From a techno futuristic viewpoint, an increased user feedback mechanism will lead to the democratization of media environment. As Jenkins (2006) says, interactivity means “the ways that new technologies have been designed to be more responsive to consumer feedback” (2006, p. 133). He points to the video game as an example of interactivity, because gamers exchange information with the computer or the other players. However, video game interactivity is mainly conditioned by game developers’ design. Video games are ostensibly open-ended, yet the degree of player freedom is limited.

Although techno futurists emphasize the potentially revolutionary and empowering potential of interactivity in digital culture, historical and critical approaches point out that notion of the active audience has a history. According to Andrejevic (2007, 2008), an interactivity as self-expression accompanies a market strategy in the digital economy that leads to the homogenization of mass society. Contrary to techno futurists such as Jenkins (2006) and Burgess and Green (2009a, 2009b), who emphasize interactivity as a technological turning point in the history of media, historical and critical approaches suggest repetitive discursive characteristics that lie behind the development of new media.

Furthermore, techno futurism and the critical approach interpret interactivity differently. Comparing interactivity and participation, Jenkins (2006) contends that participation is a more open-ended dimension of interactivity. According to him, user participation indicates a widening

degree of freedom for individuals and is democratic: "Participation is more open-ended, less under the control of media producers and more under the control of media consumers" (p. 133). In critical approaches, however, interactivity is a double-edge sword. The liberating power of interactivity lies in user empowerment at the production stages, rather than in the pure increase of feedback itself: mere participation does not guarantee the emancipatory dimension of interactivity. The limited understanding of interactivity as a potentially subversive and revolutionary mechanism is found in market strategies and the myths of cyberspace.

In chapters two and four, I examined how amateurs voluntarily use the participatory functions of YouTube. In chapter three, my focus was on the institutionalization of YouTube, rather than the use of interactivity. In what follows, I will demystify the notion of interactivity in YouTube from an institutional perspective, focusing especially on the community myth and user empowerment thesis.

Myth of Interactivity (1): Community

One of the key phrases in YouTube promotion is "community-based UGC medium." Focusing on the communal aspects of YouTube, Brouwers et al. (2008) examine the influence of user collaboration on content production and user interactivity. Under the section entitled "Community," YouTube users can form groups with specific themes, upload videos and invite people to post clips.[35]

Introducing the term "virtual community," Rheingold (1993) explains the meanings of it on an individual level: all connectivity, mobility, multi-tasking and long-range relationships. With regard to the social dimension, Rheingold states that the roles of connections, access to and sharing of information are getting more important than before and that societies are more closely

[35] As of February 2009, there were 129 communities on YouTube, such as 'YouTube Symphony Orchestra,' 'Change Democracy' and 'Nintendo game contest.' But community has different meanings in each case.

connected through mutual support and bonding experiences. YouTube's self-explanatory "community" likely fulfills individual needs within the virtual community, but not a social dimension. The major difference between Rheingold's vision of the virtual community and YouTube's vision of that community is that the former emphasizes the bonding experience based on mutual support, but the latter does not.

Dijck (2009) categorizes three types of community: "communal," "taste" and "brand." According to him, "['communal community'] strongly connotes the inclination of users to belong to a (real-life) group and be involved in a common cause" (p. 45). Dijck points out that some "communal communities" and grassroots movements have similar functions, yet "communal community" is rarer than "taste" or "brand community" in YouTube. YouTube sketch comedian HappySlip proposed a gathering for YouTube users offline, calling for a "7.7.7" meeting in New York City on July 7th, 2007. In 2008, YouTube had a big concert with YouTube celebrities as well as mainstream celebrities. People with similar tastes for cultural products (including music, movies, dramas and games) engage YouTube as a "taste community" and use YouTube for fast and easy references. Also, Arvidsson (2005) coined the term "brand community" to apply to people who purchase the same products, and thus this community is "the hybrid name to tout consumer products offered as cultural resources" (Dijck, 2009, p.45).

Of the YouTube communities, one particularly interesting category would be "contest community." A "contest community" is based on similar "tastes" for cultural products and likings for certain "brands" among users, who resemble "consumer groups or entertainment platforms" (Dijck, 2009, p. 45). The "contest community" category includes communities formed around short film festivals, new product promotions and even auditions. In order to encourage users to join contests, sponsors offer prizes.

Launching 'Make Our Video' contest, the indie record company Matador offered $1,000 to the person who could produce the best music video, 'Nocturnal House,' one of the new songs of Pretty Girls Make Graves (Jardin, 2006; Matador Records, 2006; Siklos, 2006). In 2007, sponsored by HP, 'YouTube Project: Direct' was launched. It was a short film festival, and the winner was invited to the 2009 Sundance film festival, which partially supported YouTube's festival (Aune, 2008). In competing for the $3,000 prize offered by the *Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party* Wii videogame contest, participants posted promotional clips that included the phrase "Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party." The Japanese chewing gum company Lotte presented a dance competition for Fit, its new brand of gum. The company posted commercial songs, model dancing clips and guidelines for dancing. Lotte encouraged customers to make their own dancing clips in accompaniment to commercial songs and post them on YouTube (Lotte, 2009). Winners were to be chosen based on the number of viewings each clip received.[36]

In the promotional clips, UGC videos save company the time and money it would to make commercials and to advertise new products. The user-generated clips in the contests are free, not because anyone can watch without paying fees, but because sponsors get free labor from users (Andrejevic, 2008; Terranova, 2000). The meaning of the contest as social-networking is limited to brand promotion. Users' main interests in the contests are fame and prizes, rather than forming a community based on continuous intimacy.

Of course, there have been non-commercial oriented contests. Google-sponsored 'YouTube Symphony Orchestra' hosted the first online orchestra audition. It was a classical music version of *American Idol* on YouTube. Amateur musicians could join the audition by

[36] The first winner got 100 million yen (12,000 dollars), the second got 30 million (3,600 dollars), the third got 20 million (2,400 dollars); each winter also received 365 packs of Fit gum. As of May 5, 2009, Lotte's Fit contest YouTube channel is the 49th most subscribed-to sponsored one worldwide and was the most subscribed-to sponsor channel on Japan YouTube throughout the contest period.

posting videos of themselves playing *Internet Symphony No. 1, Eroica*, and panels consisting of the Berlin Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestra judged them. The winners of this collaborative virtual audition performed at Carnegie Hall in April 2009 (Wakin, 2009). Another example of non-commercial sponsored communities is 'Democracy Change,' whose submission rule was simpler than 'YouTube Symphony Orchestra': users post a short clip containing the phrase "Democracy is…" Sponsored by the US Department of State, the contest selected seven winners from different world regions (including the Western Hemisphere, Europe, Middle East/North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, East Asia Pacific) and gave them the chance to have a free trip to Washington, D.C., New York and Hollywood.

This dissertation does not aim to downplay the importance of non-commercial communities on YouTube. Nonetheless, it is certainly the case that the majority of YouTube communities are commercially oriented, whether for contest or promotion. With regard to partnership, some partners are major media companies (e.g. BMG, CBS and Universal Music), whose video clips mainly reflect the contents of their banner ads (Stelter, 2008d). Through the prizes they offer, sponsored communities get more attention than individual and truly free channels. When considering mushrooming user participation, it is worth noticing the role of market sponsorship, which is emblematic of the institutionalization of YouTube.

Myth of Interactivity (2): User Empowerment

According to Tapscott and Williams (2006), we live in the "age of participation" (p. 11), and YouTube is participatory in that anyone can post, spread and modify content. While techno futurists uphold UGC by underlining its democratic, revolutionary and liberating dimensions, merely participating in the media production-distribution-consumption system does not automatically guarantee a fundamental transformation of the media milieu. The genius of digital

personalized media lies in its potential to transform audiences into producers, but users' expanding roles are not equivalent to their social empowerment.

Recently, a growing number of companies have induced consumers to get involved in the co-creation of their commodity, brand, market strategy and experience (Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody, 2008). Scholars have pointed out the increasing importance of co-creation between consumers and companies with such notions as "creative consumption" (von Hippel, 2001), "prosumer," "mass collaboration," "peer production" (Tapscott and Williams, 2006), "produsage" (Bruns, 2008) and "social production" (Benkler, 2006). In order to encourage customers to co-operate, companies use not only monetary motives but also an "ethical economy," whose value depends on consumers' capacity for self-realization through aesthetic achievement, helping others, building up community or showing off talent (Arvidsson, 2008).

Among the predominant discourses on consumer co-creation is the emphasis on user interactivity and participation. YouTube is participatory in that anyone can post, spread and modify content, and it is interactive in that "YouTube provokes responses. Indeed, the most valuable content on YouTube is content which inspires other users to talk back, reframing and repurposing materials, coming at them from many different angles" (Jenkins, 2008).

Based on Herz's (2005) idea of "harnessing the hive," Bruns (2005, 2007, 2009) coined and developed such terms as "produsers" and "produsage" for Web 2.0. According to Jenkins (2006), "[a]udiences, empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media, are demanding the right to participate within the culture" (p. 42). Winograd and Hais (2008) argue that YouTube initiated a fundamental change in political policies. More ambitiously, Levinson (2009) argues that YouTube is an "international information liberator… resist[ing] authorities" (pp. 82-83). Negating such traditional

dichotomies as professional-amateur, entrepreneur-amateur, and market-nonmarket, Burgess and Green (2009b) and Lange (2009) define YouTube as a grassroots, co-creative and participatory medium. According to the techno futuristic perspective, YouTube empowers people by allowing for their production and distribution of content.

However, this user empowerment thesis is problematic, and throughout the dissertation, I debunked myths of user empowerment from diverse angles. In this conclusion, I will provide critiques of each myth in greater detail.

First, Self-Expression is a Form of Self-Commodification

From a critical political economy perspective, self-expression is also a form of self-commodification. Traditional culture industries produce three types of commodity: message, audience and ratings (Meehan, 1984, 1986; Smythe, 1981; Websters, Phalen & Lichty, 2000). In the age of hypercommercialism, a new commodity came into being: "cybernetic commodity" (Mosco, 1989). As the line between content and advertisement begins to blur, what audiences generate is not only content but also "cybernetic commodity": demographic, psychological and biometric information about users, especially about their consuming behavior (Andrejevic, 2007).

Second, Mere Participation is Not the Same as Power Sharing.

Techno futurists proclaim that interactivity and participation guarantee power sharing between consumers and producers, yet this thesis functions as a myth of the active user that blinds people the flow of information. That is, mere participation in content production system is misleadingly equated with individuals' control over the media production system. As Andrejevic (2007) puts it, "[t]he equation of feedback with power sharing is not a novel artifact of the new media era: it is the extension of the ideology of marketplace democracy into the digital age" (p. 21). The possible consequence of this user empowerment thesis as a market ideology is that it

induces audiences to think they are savvy. Combined with obsession with "me" in the Web 2.0 culture, the emphasis on the do-it-yourself attitude echoes with "neolieberal ethos of the jackpot economy" where anyone can participate yet just a few succeed (Ross, 2009).

Third, YouTube Users Might be Active, but not Critical.

Throughout the 20th century, communication scholars warned of the irony of active audience thesis. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1949) differentiated between knowing and acting, and Livingstone and Lunt (1994) compared and contrasted active and critical users: the former are merely savvy and the latter are able to examine and analyze the relationships between agent, text, and institution. Through the notion of "narcotizing dysfunction," Lazarsfeld and Merton criticize the couch potato phenomenon: being informed is not the same as doing. Their idea resembles Habermas's (1962) insight on the refeudalization of society: the culture-consuming public lacks political involvement. Lazarsfeld and Merton's notion of "narcotizing dysfunction" also resonates with Riesman's (1953) notion of the "inside dopester," who consumes politics but does not act; he "may be one who has concluded (with good reason) that since he can do nothing to change politics, he can only understand it" (p. 181). According to Gitlin (1990), savviness is "the dominant form of political consciousness in a formally open but fundamentally depoliticized society…. transmut[ing] the desire to participate into spectacle," and consequently audiences are easily deceived by "an eerie politics of half-truth, deceit, and evasion" (pp. 21-23). The communication scholars' concerns about the user empowerment thesis are still applicable in the era of digital media, because people often confuse consuming and acting. Selective consumption of cultural commodities may give people a feeling of satisfaction, a comfort in being smart. The reality, however, is likely that though consumers might not be misled, they still just stay inept. They know, but they don't act.

Fourth, the User Empowerment Thesis is Nothing New.

The YouTube empowerment thesis is questionable, and the active audience thesis is nothing new. Even before the rise of the information society during the 60s and the 70s and the age of the Internet, starting from the 80s, communication scholars have theorized the notion of an active audience. Emphasis on new participatory culture presumes a dichotomy of active and passive audience, which is "a historical fallacy" because "audiences were never solely defined in terms of passive spectatorship," and media history has shown that audiences were always actively engaged with media content (Dijck, 2009, p.43). If YouTube users are working in content production, so are the audiences from the past who were participating through call-ins, games, talk shows and reality shows. If YouTube users in the digital era are creative and productive in that they make and post videos, so are home video and home movie users since the 1980s in that they also contribute to media content production (Moran, 2002; Dijck, 2007a).

However, pure involvement and power sharing are different. While one particular strength of Web 2.0 is its potential to transform passive audiences into active producers, what YouTube promises seem to matter more than what it guarantees. Users may be producers, but in UGC culture, the most faithful audiences are the producers themselves. Here is an irony: audiences can create content whose most devoted audiences are themselves. What YouTube generates is active and savvy media consumers, rather than critical users who can penetrate the relationship of agents-text-institution in YouTube. Livingstone and Lunt (1994) compare and contrast active and critical users. Active users provide detailed but referential interpretation of texts and receive messages without questioning it. What techno futurists evaluate highly resembles an active user, rather than a critical user who knows how to provide insights on the underlying messages of the texts and the logic of the market.

Limits of Interactivity

YouTube provides the potential for any user to contribute content, but that does not mean that anyone should. Moreover, despite the potential, dominant users remain consumers. The British newspaper *The Guardian* provided interesting data on the degree of interactivity in YouTube. As of 2006, about 100,000 views were recorded and 6,500 clips posted per month. Less than 1% of all YouTube users actually make videos. And this is not just the case with YouTube. With regard to Wikipedia, another UGC medium, more than half of all the content had been created approximately 1 % of the users (Arthur, 2006).

People may have the opportunity to make their voices heard, but their messages are not necessarily heard. The misconception of about the possibility of broadcasting in YouTube originates in a confusion between address, availability and access of message (Peters, 2010). YouTube is often granted an optimistic vision of prosumers or prosuage, but the reality is that individuals watch what they create, not that everyone watches other posters' works attentively. The opportunity of content production is available, but it does not guarantee a whole-hearted reception.

One of my major arguments in this dissertation is that a dialectical tension between liberating potential and institutional power throughout the development of YouTube. Amateurism in YouTube came to be compromised by professionalism and commercialization, yet traditional media also came to be influenced by the strategies of YouTube. In chapter three, I aimed to confirm this thesis on the Internet in particular and media in general through the case of YouTube. Google has been monetizing YouTube, and just like any other traditional media, when YouTube became bigger and more popularized, it went through an institutionalization processes including commercialization and legalization. From a political economy perspective, Wakso and

Erickson (2009) point out that Google "continue[d] to tout YouTube's user focused reputation, yet has embraced various strategies to privilege corporate partners or established media companies" (p. 384). While new media become institutionalized, mainstream media also adapted to the logic of YouTube.

Instead of picking one side, either institutional force or individual liberation, I explored how the tension between the two elements works dialectically in the transformation of YouTube. In chapter four, through a textual analysis of the *Kicesie* amateur sex therapy case, I found out amateurs use the potential of YouTube as alternative narrowcasting and consequently become engaged in institutionalization.

UGC seems opposite to PGC, but as far as UGC production is based on PGC strategies, the notion of interactivity is easily compromised. Techno futurists would proclaim that participation leads to interactivity in a digital media environment, yet it is problematic to equate merely watching clips with participation. There are multi-levels of activities with YouTube, such as creating videos, commenting, responding with new videos and watching. Of these diverse forms of activity, it is worth noticing that the dominant form is watching, pure consumption of videos.

YouTube presents itself as an interactive medium. Posting means more than expression, because it calls for answering, questioning, conversing and networking in written language and visual discourse. Interactivity is instrumental in UGC culture, where users can be both producers and audiences. However, considering at how YouTube users actually communicate with each other, the notion of YouTube as an interactive medium resembles a new myth.

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