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E-Seminar 47  
Participation motivation of YouTube users: A practice approach

by  
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Below are my reflections on the paper “Participating in YouTubing practice: towards a practice perspective to understand user participation motivations”. I have written them in form of a set of questions that came to my mind when I tried to understand the argument of the article and assess its relevance in current media studies debates. I am looking forward to the discussion.

best, Ursula

Comments: “Participation in YouTubing”

The paper examines people’s motivations to upload videos on YouTube. How do social networks and habitual practices influence people’s online behavior? The research context is Australian You Tube users. Two methods come into play. Firstly, the author set up a “research oriented YouTube channel” to observe what people do on YouTube. Secondly, he conducted 23 interviews with people, who posted videos on YouTube in the past, to find out what prompted them to upload their first video. He finds that film uploading (1) complements other activities of sharing, (2) that social actors follow the encouragement of peers or bosses, and (3) it helps people cope with loneliness in times of personal crises. The author concludes that video sharing follows on from complex social negotiations, and is not simply the result of an individual decision by a rationally calculating actor.

When I first read the paper, I wondered about the target audience of the article. The author appears convinced that most media studies scholars subscribe to a rational choice model and assume that all “human action is purposeful, autonomous, proactive and pragmatic”. We know from sociology and anthropology that social worlds, including media worlds are much

more complicated. Today there exists a host of sophisticated internet studies (e.g. Daniel Miller, John Postill, and many more) that explore complex communication practices in a media saturated world. The author does little to take their arguments – about the social embeddedness of decision making, the relation between online and offline activity, the way affordances of technologies, personal taste and negotiated relations influence media usage – into account and thus overstates the originality of his findings, namely that people’s activities are socially embedded.

The author characterizes his study as “participant observation”. However, it appears that the findings are all drawn from 23 interviews, in which users provide their own interpretations of their actions and narrate their personal memories. Qualitative research requires the collection of substantial contextual data, so that any particular case study can be understood and interpreted in relation to its position within a broader social field that drives it, shapes its meaning and establishes its social relevance. When I read that the author set up a “research oriented YouTube channel” for participant observation, I expected that the article would include some auto-ethnography. However, we learn nothing about YouTube as social platform, or the author’s activities and observations as participant in this virtual community. What did the author do and experience? What did he observe? Did his observations influence the selection of interview topics or direct him to particular informants? Background on YouTube as social environment and the way people become active members might have helped to provide context for interpretation and thus supported a more in-depth account of YouTube as a place for dense human interaction.

The author adopts a social practice approach and seeks to analyze YouTube engagement as part of a flow of practice. Some of these practices are reflected others are habitual. Considering this aim, it is surprising that he singles out one particular moment – uploading of first YouTube video – as key moment that best describes the motivation for participation and determines the character of YouTube participation. This assumption contradicts earlier statements that we must consider the flow of everyday life if we wish to understand the motivation and changing character (?) of YouTube practice. The author quotes Nick Couldry to remind us that practice analysis when taken seriously “leads to the ‘death’ of consumers and users by viewing them more as social actors carrying out basic social practices in everyday life”. If the author wishes to follow this line of argument, why does he equate YouTubing with uploading one video? An analysis of practice will need to establish a broader context within which the uploading, watching, commenting, ignoring, noticing of videos is related to social negotiations in the online and offline world. The notion of participant observation implies following these flows and engaging with users, as both actors and consumers.

I think the paper touches on a very important subject. And it creates interesting and important links between offline and online world. From my point of view it has the potential to tell us more about how using YouTube is embedded in a broader social context of negotiating social relations. In order to make the paper more convincing I would suggest providing more “thick description” of media activity (and if possible media related activity). Furthermore I think the author should engage more explicitly with the recent sociological and anthropology debate on media practices and state how he is contributing to this vibrant debate.

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**Johnny Jie Gu** (jie.gu@cuc.edu.cn)

Dear Professor Ursula

Many many thanks for your thoughtful and helpful comments on my research. Actually, I have realized that my research has some limitations and I am now trying to improve it.

My original intention is to count my research as a motivation study. When doing my own stuff, I did realize that many scholars had argued that social actions are contextually shaped. Indeed, the uniqueness of practice theory is its aim of locating social actions in concrete practices. It aims to explain social actions through the integral development of social practices, which are composed of a range of constitutive elements. I think my research has failed to embody this tenet. I think the next step is to focus on the dynamics between the change of individual behaviours and the overall development of YouTubing practice.

As to the research method, I can no more agree with your suggestion of "thick description". And I find that a thick description of internet users' activities, which mainly take place behind the screen, is not that easy. Maybe the method of diary would be more helpful. Do you agree with it? And recently, I think that action research is the most suitable method for a study working with practice theories. Auto-ethnography has once been considered. But I finally quit it as I want to put more emphasis on generalization. So I carried out my own YouTubing practice and had gained many personal reflections. My final solution was to turn my reflections and experiences into interview questions, which were expected to inspire people's real thoughts on their YouTubing activities.

Focusing on the very moment of first video uploading intends to observe how people transfer between different social practices. I also want to have a look at the relations between YouTubing practice and other social practices which people have been involved with. But I realize that at this stage my examination is too descriptive. I might need more data to examine how the relations between different practices can affect the patterns of people's YouTubing participation.

In the other parts of my research, I did apply a longitudinal analysis of people's YouTubing behaviours. Unfortunately, I did not include it into this paper.

Looking forward to further comments and discussions!

Best Regards

Johnny Jie Gu

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**Ursula Rao** (ursula.rao@uni-leipzig.de)

Dear all,

I am sorry, it seems the different colors did not come through in my last email. Thus it is difficult to know which is my text and which text was written by Johnny. I am resending the text indicating the author.

Best,  
Ursula

URSULA thank you for your reply. I hope you do not mind if I share your reply and my comments with the community. Since this is part of an e-seminar.

*JOHNNY My original intention is to count my research as a motivation study. When doing my own stuff, I did realize that many scholars had argued that social actions are contextually shaped. Indeed, the uniqueness of practice theory is its aim of locating social actions in concrete practices. It aims to explain social actions through the integral development of social practices, which are composed of a range of constitutive elements. I think my research has failed to embody this tenet. I think the next step is to focus on the dynamics between the change of individual behaviours and the overall development of YouTubing practice.*

URSULA I agree that more work needs to be done in this field. I recently read: Madianou, M. and D. Miller (2013). "Polymedia: Towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16(2): 169-187.

And thought the text was a particularly good example of how to relate offline and online experience in an ethnographic elaboration of media practice.

*JOHNNY As to the research method, I can no more agree with your suggestion of "thick description". And I find that a thick description of internet users' activities, which mainly take place behind the screen, is not that easy. Maybe the method of diary would be more helpful. Do you agree with it?*

URSULA Diary is definitely a possibility. I personally liked your idea to observe yourself and begin to frame questions following your own experiences, passion etc. When I worked with journalists and tried to understand how they develop interview questions, how they frame their texts, etc. I found it initially very difficult, because they were simply doing it and not reflecting on it. There was nothing I could observe in the classical sense. So I began doing my own interviews and writing texts for the newspaper – and always got it wrong. They started correcting me and we began a dialogue that taught me how they frame, perceive and structure their work. I believe a similar approach could be used in the You Tube environment. You could share with people how and why you share a video, and when and how, and then ask them, whether they do the same?

URSULA I am sure there are others here on the net who have more experience with media research and can give you more suggestions.

*JOHNNY And recently, I think that action research is the most suitable method for a study working with practice theories. Auto-ethnography has once been considered. But I finally quit it as I want to put more emphasis on generalization.*

Auto ethnography can be a road to generalization. Self-observation allows you to form hypotheses which you can bring to the field, use them to observe, test and probe other people's behavior.

*JOHNNY So I carried out my own YouTubing practice and had gained many personal reflections. My final solution was to turn my reflections and experiences into interview questions, which were expected to inspire people's real thoughts on their YouTubing*

activities.

URSULA Do explain this in your text.

*JOHNNY Focusing on the very moment of first video uploading intends to observe how people transfer between different social practices. I also want to have a look at the relations between YouTubing practice and other social practices which people have been involved with. But I realize that at this stage my examination is too descriptive. I might need more data to examine how the relations between different practices can affect the patterns of people's YouTubing participation.*

URSULA More data is always great. However, you might also want to explain why you think the moment of “first uploading” is significant. My comment related to the misfit between theory and data. You state that you want to study flow, and then select one moment. I was not saying that studying this moment is not a good idea. The question is: why study it? What do we learn from this first moment? (we clearly cannot learn flow, however, we might learn something else about how people move across a new threshold. I think it is important. Again self-observation can help. I notice in my own behavior that I might resist a new medium for very long, however, once I embrace it, it is as if it was always part of me and my practice. I find this particularly pronounced in a media environment and have often wondered whether other people show similar a behavior. It was interesting what you had to say about persuasion. I would have liked to hear more about how people get persuaded to do something new, something they have never done before. When I read your paper I thought, it would be great if he would dwell on this moment, explore it, describe it, rather than simply state types. I wanted to hear something about the way people experience moving across this threshold and how it impacts their lives.

Warm regards, Ursula

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**Stephen M. Lyon** (s.m.lyon@durham.ac.uk)

Dear All,

It's interesting to read a paper which attempts to locate motivations outside the “practitioner” in this way. I think, in general, that Johnny is correct to look for the social and cultural constraints on individual motivations. Clearly, there are patterns through which individuals move and which seem hardly shaped by them at all. Though to the individual decision maker it may appear that they are in control, when one steps back and looks at the range of decisions that are actually made, it's clear that something outside the individual is impacting the choice of realistic decisions.

I am not sure that I am convinced by practice theory, though. It sometimes seems to me to be trivialising individuals by locating the unit of analysis on the practice rather than the individual people. It reminds me of Talal Asad and Fredrik Barth's debates on Swat political actions. In Barth's classic 1959 monograph, he framed politics among Swat “Pathans” (he used this outsiders' term for the Pukhtuns) as the accumulation of individual strategic decision making. There was lots of jockeying for position and advantage. In other work he applied a game theoretical model to try and formalise individual decisions to generate the larger social patterns. Asad, as I'm sure most of you know very well, was extremely critical

of the extent to which Barth neglected the very real structural constraints on the kinds of choices that are available to individuals. Poor landless residents of the Swat Valley, for example, don't get to make the same choices as the landowning Khans. Barth replied to this in the early 1980s by saying, among other things, that Asad was right that there are structural constraints, but the structural constraints can't explain how they came to be; whereas the individual decisions are, in effect, what produce the structural constraints. I know this is now an old debate and some of you may be groaning at my re-hashing stuff we all had to learn as undergraduates (apologies!), but when I read practice theory, I am reminded of Barth's comments and wonder whether it really is useful to pursue practice theory in this way. Johnny is right to say that people, or rather practitioners, flow through practices and we need to understand those practices, but just like the culture concept, there is a point where I think it's actually impossible to make sense of these larger social entities without resorting to the constituent elements that produce them – in other words, individual decisions and actions.

Having said that, I must now admit to being full of admiration for Johnny's study. I think this must be one of the most challenging things to try and do ethnographically. With some other social media, like Facebook for example, there seem to be diverse channels of communication going on which we can tap into (assuming people are ok with us poking around the FB pages!). But Youtube strikes me as perhaps more informationally deprived than some of the others. It's therefore really impressive that he's managed to generate interesting data about Youtubing.

Finally, I did have an actual question, but Ursula beat me to it: why focus on the first moment if the emphasis is on process?

Best,  
Steve

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**Michael Waltinger** (waltinger@thinkbeyondborders.org)

Dear all,

First of all, I would also like to thank Johnny for an interesting contribution on a timely (n)ethnographic topic!

I'd like to contribute to the discussion with a rather short thought only that is linked to employing "practice theory" and the focus on individuals and their behaviour in Johnny's study. I've used quotation marks here since, at least to my understanding, practice theory is not a coherent strand of social theory, but rather an umbrella-term that gives shelter to a variety of theorists (e.g. Elias, Bourdieu, Giddens – many more) which of course share some common ground: namely, focussing on individuals practices (methodological individualism) while, at the same time, trying to not overstate the latter, but also leave room for and invite the exploration of contexts (methodological holism) in a broad sense. In my understanding, practice theory tries to "marry" these two strands together (see e.g. the different contributions in Postill, Bräuchler (eds.) (2010): *Theorising Media and Practice*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn).

Maybe it could be worth to also explicitly take into account these very contexts (i.e. the biographical, structural and/or resource aspects of everyday life)? I can speak from my

humble doctoral researcher's point of view only (i.e. not having decades of field research experience and researched in very many different projects), but at least in my ongoing ethnographic doctoral research on the everyday usage of mobile phones in a community in Nairobi (Kenya), one thing became quite clear to me: What people do with phones, and what not, is probably as much influenced by personal choices, practices, rituals, and so forth, as it is by structure; i.e. the very life contexts of people and what these structurally inscribe in or impose on them.

Just a thought?

All the best and many thanks again,  
Michael

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**John Postill** (jrpostill@gmail.com)

I find YouTube to be a fascinating platform which seems to have had a very strong run since it was launched almost 10 years ago, so it's good to read some of the research on it (for some reason, it seems to have attracted much less interest than Facebook).

I'd be interested to hear more from Johnny - and others on this list - about how people use YouTube to learn or perfect a practice, which I suspect is a potentially very rich research area from a practice-theoretical perspective. Just the other day I was talking to a US artist who used YouTube tutorials to perfect his batik technique; I myself now know how to drive in Melbourne thanks to a YouTube tutorial on the city's (in)famous 'hook turn' (you first turn left to go right, don't ask me why); Henry Jenkins has written about how surfers show off and spread innovative techniques via this platform, etc.

Ethnographically it also strikes me as a powerful, but seldom talked about, addition to our technological repertoire. For instance, whilst waiting for my Indonesian research visa I 'visited' prospective sites in Indonesia remotely, incl. a walk around Surabaya with its celebrated mayor, courtesy of a news organisation who'd posted an interview with her on YouTube.

Finally, and this goes for most web platforms nowadays, isn't YouTube so entangled with other platforms that we can't really study it without studying its wider social media environs? i.e. many of us often access YouTube via other social media sites.

John

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**Johnny Jie Gu** (johnnygubbi@hotmail.com)

Dear List

Thanks very much for all your insightful thoughts on my paper! I have read through Michael, Steve and John's comments and they inspired my thoughts as follows:

1) Practice theories, especially Schatzki's framework, actually aim to find a middle way between individuals and structures. But this ambition does bring many difficulties for

researchers when they working with practice theories. If we talk too much about contextual and structural factors, it seems we fall into the trap of wholism again. However, during the research, investigations into individuals also cannot be avoided. As Steve said, contextual strains are to some extent produced by individuals. But if we rely too much on individuals, we are running into another risk.

Indeed, I now realize that Schatzki's approach actually expects a processual study which focuses on the dynamics between the structures of practices and the initiations of individuals. In other words, how individuals and other structural elements jointly drive the development of a social practice, which in turn shapes individuals in an unconscious way. It is a 'production and reproduction' issue. The task of social researchers is to follow this developing process and see how multifarious factors take effect as a whole and further identify which factors play a key role.

This is just my humble thought, albeit that I have to admit that my research has not fully demonstrated this idea. Although I focus on the very moment of the first video uploading, my original intention was to turn this moment into a process in which I aim to explore many details and follow the whole process of the first video uploading. Now, due to the limitation of the research method, it seems that this objective has not been fully realized.

2) I can no more agree with John that YouTube is an ideal research object for using practice theories. Indeed, what is unique with practice theories is its inclusion of some new parameters, such as competence and tools. These factors seem to be not very influential in some new media services. But YouTube is different. In this paper, I did not talk too much about these two elements. But I firmly believe that practice theories has great potentials for studying new media, which nowadays increasingly involves these elements which have been under emphasized in the old media age.

Best Regards  
Johnny Jie Gu

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**Xi Cui** (tocuixi@hotmail.com)

Dear All,

I am very intrigued by this paper and the list's discussions. I would like to offer some of my reflection/interpretation of Johnny's arguments.

First of all, I believe the practice orientation undoubtedly helps mitigate an important gap in the studies of media technologies, what, maybe, I would like to call the "contextual discontinuity." Johnny identified the problem of "methodological individualism" and tries to bring the continuity of everyday practice into the picture by contextualizing the Youtubing practice.

With this said, I agree with Prof. Rao that many media scholars on the cultural studies side have addressed this issue with ethnographic studies such as Miller, Wallis, etc. I feel the first three of the four types still fall into an individualistic perspective, concentrating on the spatial continuity of personal ongoing practices from other social spaces into the cyberspace; the spatial continuity of a person's social practices from other social spaces into the cyberspace; a



temporal continuity of certain routinized practices. Therefore, I think what Johnny identified and refuted is rather a problem of the psychological (both behavioral and cognitive) tradition under which Uses and Gratifications and TAM fall. The fourth type he identified in the paper does address social continuity where a practice gets diffused horizontally.

If my interpretation above is appropriate, I feel the fourth type, "YouTubing practice hardly intersects with other practices," maybe can be better worded and framed as social continuity where there's a transindividual intersection of practice spaces. Indeed, Johnny used the word "trans-individual" and interpreted this fourth type as such at the beginning of the Discussion and Conclusion section.

Secondly, I, myself, am interested in media rituals. Therefore I also tend to reflect on this paper within my "routine" framework. For any social practice that has tenacious spatial or temporal continuity, it's usually because there's a serious social meaning associated with it (Durkheim's serious life), hence a ritual, different from a habit. While at the same time, I'm well aware that often times people do not actively process that meaning cognitively when they practice certain rituals what Johnny cited as the concept of "intelligibility". I hope colleagues on the list could point me to some literature that better addresses this simultaneous existence of serious meaning (maybe on the socio-cultural level) and the lack of being consciously realized by the practitioners.

Thirdly, with my limited knowledge and audacious interpretation, I think the practice perspective and Johnny's argument could provide a possible cultural interpretation to the theories such as Diffusion of Innovation and even two-step flow. Maybe there are already many out there.

I thoroughly enjoyed the paper and the list's contribution. Thanks for continually putting together wonderful e-seminars.

Best,  
Xi Cui

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**Julian Hopkins** (julian.hopkins@monash.edu)

Dear Johnny and All,

I'd to thank Johnny for his interesting paper, and apologise for not being able to give a more complete contribution in terms of analytical feedback. However, I have just a couple of questions.

1. I'm surprised that there is no mention of Bourdieu at all, given the emphasis on practice. It seems that some of the points would be directly relevant - such as the non-conscious/unconscious adoption of practices. Is there any reason for not including Bourdieu?
2. When I read "It reminds us that new media user motivations should be treated not so much as the result of a rational and pragmatic choice but as the result of a tacit understanding," and "human acts can be solutions to constraints and requirements which are enforced upon them," I wonder what role is Johnny allowing for the material constraints that technologies place upon actions?

In particular, I am thinking of the concept of “affordances”. Hutchby argues that “affordances are not just functional but also relational aspects of an object’s material presence in the world. Affordances are **\*functional\*** in the sense that they are enabling, as well as constraining, factors in a given organism’s attempt to engage in some activity” (2001: 448; original emphasis).

In other words, the practices that people adopt upon using YouTube are, in my opinion, likely to be significantly influenced by the way in which the technology/software is constructed. This software is also to be understood as strongly socioculturally formed.

Another relevant paper here is Bucher (2013) who looks at Facebook and proposes: “the concept of **\*algorithmic friendship\*** as a way of understanding the ways in which algorithms and software have become active participants in our networked lives and information ecosystems, forming the ways in which users are made to relate to self and others.” (2013: 480-1; original emphasis).

3. Finally, just in case you haven't seen it, you may want to look at Burgess and Green (2009).

Thanks,

Julian

Bourdieu, P. 1993. The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature (ed R. Johnson). London: Polity Press.

Bucher, T. 2013. The Friendship Assemblage: Investigating Programmed Sociality on Facebook. Television & New Media 14, 479-493 (available on-line: <http://tvn.sagepub.com/content/14/6/479.abstract>, accessed 5 October 2013).

Burgess, J. & J. Green 2009. YouTube: online video and participatory culture. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity.

Hutchby, I. 2001. Technologies, Texts and Affordances. Sociology 35, 441-456.

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Scott MacLeod (helianth@gmail.com)

John and MediaAnthropologists,

Thanks and agreed.

The ways that Google + group video Hangouts are creating a specific new kind of Youtube videos - in facilitating live real time 10 people (plus its million person Q&A tool) group video and text chat which is then easily saved to and streamed from Youtube - is also fascinating ethnographically.

For planning purposes, MIT OCW-centric, wiki, CC World University and School plans to hold classes in Google + Hangouts, with graduate student instructors teaching to these MIT

faculty - <http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/audio-video-courses/> - for free, online, accrediting C.C. university degrees, first in English and then in U.N. and large languages.

Google + Hangouts facilitate face-to-face real time interactivity, and Youtube videos will be able to record this for future learning purposes.

Scott

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**Alex Fattal** (alfattal@gmail.com)

Dear MediaAnthro List,

This is a fascinating discussion about the multiple, under-explored lines of research that online video presents. Although it's a bit tangential to the issue of learning and perfecting practices I wanted to share an article that I have recently published in the current issue of **\*American Ethnologist\***. The piece is called "Hostile Remixes on YouTube: A New Constraint on Pro-FARC Counterpublics in Colombia" and combines a circulation analysis with long-term ethnographic fieldwork. You can download it sans firewall from my academia page: <https://harvard.academia.edu/AlexFattal/Papers>

Cheers,  
Alex

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**Dr. Strangelove** (Michael@Strangelove.com)

Greetings,

For a look at various amateur networked digital video practices on YouTube see my Watching YouTube: Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People <[http://www.amazon.ca/Watching-YouTube-Extraordinary-Videos-Ordinary/dp/1442610670/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1282142473&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.ca/Watching-YouTube-Extraordinary-Videos-Ordinary/dp/1442610670/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1282142473&sr=8-1)> (UTP 2010). For a scholarly bibliography of research on YouTube (out of date but hundreds of entries) e-mail [Michael@Strangelove.com](mailto:Michael@Strangelove.com) and request the YouTube Biblio.

I am using YouTube to help me "perfect" the practice of teaching/lecturing and to create a more visual/video learning resource for my students via [strangelove.com](http://www.strangelove.com) <<http://www.strangelove.com/>>. Far from perfect. Perhaps this is an understudied area of amateur video practices -- the self-representational practices <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTadiYKn8-E>> of the common garden variety academic.

Thank you Johnny for the stimulating article.

Dr. Strangelove

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**Johnny Jie Gu** (johnnygubbi@hotmail.com)

Dear Julian and List

Thanks a lot for all your helpful comments!

1) Bourdieu is definitely the most important practice person. Actually, I talk about him in my phd thesis. Giddens is another person which we cannot avoid when talking about practices. My study is actually based on Schatzki, who develops a practice framework different from the one of Giddens and Bourdieu. I agree with your suggestion that Bourdieu should be included when talking about unconscious adoption of practices in the discussion section.

2) YouTubing practice is indeed shaped by software and technologies. The concept of "affordance" is new to me and it seems quite relevant to my study. I actually use a bit of Latour in the discussion of the role of YouTube technologies. Now I am thinking how to relate the "affordance" to Latour's ideas.

Best Regards  
Johnny Jie Gu

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**Johnny Jie Gu** (johnnygubbi@hotmail.com)

Dear Strangelove, Alex and Scott

Thanks a lot for your recommendations!

All these new materials have greatly broaden my outlook on YouTubing practice, which is always developing and expanding. I am thinking including these new patterns of YouTubing practice into my ongoing research on YouTube.

Best Regards  
Johnny Jie Gu

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**Jannie Møller Hartley** (jath@ruc.dk)

Dear Johnny,

You mention that you have used Bourdieu in your thesis, I had the same question (why not Bourdieu!), as I was reading all the comments to your paper.

I just want to let you know of this call for papers, where you might be able to take something from your thesis and develop it into an article for the Nordic Journal MedieKultur. But then you need to expand on the Bourdieu-bit :) Maybe discuss how Bourdieu and practice theory differs and what they can both offer, when it comes to analyzing practices.

The call is here:

<http://ojs.statsbiblioteket.dk/index.php/mediekultur/announcement/view/259>

I am one of the editors, and please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Jannie Møller Hartley

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**Johnny Jie Gu** (johnnygubbi@hotmail.com)

Dear Jannie and other lists

Sorry for the late response as I am now on a business trip.

Many of you are suggesting that Bourdieu should be considered in my paper. This prompts me to re-examine my study. Actually, when I planned my study, Bourdieu was of course one of the most important candidates for a practice-based study. But for the following thoughts, I still select Theodore Schatzki:

1) Bourdieu and Schatzki both are right in incorporating 'time' as the most important parameter when looking at practices. According to both of them, changes in both of structures and individuals in a time flow are powerful weapons against methodological dualism.

2) Bourdieu's 'habitus' and Schatzki's 'intelligibility' have similarities in many aspects. But according to Schatzki (2001: 50), habitus is to some extent problematic in the following two aspects. First, as some sort of practical sensibility, this concept cannot differentiate itself from human mind. Second, this concept is mysterious and non-explanatory. In contrast, Schatzki's intelligibility is more universal as it also includes the elements of emotions and moods. Thus, Schatzki's framework is relatively flexible and inclusive in so far as it has the ability to explain more social practices and people's diversified activities.

3) According to Schatzki (1996: 137-143) Bourdieu's framework loses its force to some extent because it assumes a direct relationship between "habitus" and objective conditions while overlooking the mediating role of practices. As a result, the differentiation of behaviour patterns within a practice emerges from class stratification rather than the organization of the practice itself (Warde 2005: 138).

4) So I think Bourdieu's stuff might be more useful in providing an alternative perspective to look at YouTubing practice, namely the internal structure of YouTubing field and consequent user behaviours. But my research focus lies in the YouTubing practice itself. I want to examine how the integral development of YouTubing practice affects, as well as is affected by, YouTubing practitioners.

I am not sure whether my reflections are tenable. All comments are welcome!

#### References

Schatzki, T. R. 2001. Practice mind-ed orders. In *The practice turn in contemporary theory*, edited by T. R. Schatzki, K. D. Knorr-Cetina and E. V. Savigny. New York: Routledge

Warde, A. 2005. Consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2): 131-153.

Best Regards  
Johnny Jie Gu

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**Patricia Prieto Blanco** (p.prietoblanco1@nuigalway.ie)

Dear list,

Thanks to all of you for opening this conversation and for the comments and guidelines about researching youtube (and other online video platforms) as a site of learning a practice/skill.

The examples you all have mentioned are familiar to me. I have also used youtube to learn about an unknown destination, to try out a new recipe and to collaborate with fellow visual makers across distance. In the last couple of days I have been thinking of how the children I know use youtube. When any of them wants to tell me about something - a song, a commercial, a youtuber - they go directly to youtube as opposed to google or any other social media sites. That would be a main difference with respect to the way I access youtube material.

Specifically to the question of learning, the children I know watch videos preferably made by their peers - other children - to discover how to build an "Elsa" (yes, from Frozen) in minecraft (square by square, which somewhere else would be called pixel art!) or how to make fishtail loom bands bracelets. But they also use videos to find out codes and other ways of hacking online games (which subsequently leads to temporary account suspensions). Moreover they are eager to share information (legal and illegal) and make their own tutorial videos. Thus these kind of videos provide the children I know not only with the knowledge to master certain practices, but also with the encouragement to try out the practice of making youtube tutorial videos (which has become much more accessible since videos can be edited in youtube itself). Within this situation, two aspects catch my attention. First, the equalisation of right/legal and wrong/illegal information and its equal widespread. Second, the need of giving something in return, paired with the desire of being a youtube star in some cases or the wish to belong to a community, which precipitates the making of many children made youtube tutorials. Speaking from my own use, I do not feel the need of giving back and I do take care of spreading certain information anonymously only.

A beneficial side effect of the intense use of youtube by children I know is how their English improves. I come from Spain and so do my cousins, nieces, etc. For better or for worse, there are many more tutorials in English than in Spanish, which forces the children I know to follow commands in English thus becoming familiar with different accents, with browsing the Internet in more than one language and with using English in their daily lives outside of school. This is just a side note as it has not to do with using youtube to learn a skill, which nevertheless impacts (positively) in how my Spanish cousins are learning a second language.

What I probably wanted to highlight by sketching these contexts of use, is the fact that, to me, studying youtube means to look at the wider social media environments as John Postill pointed out, which includes not only other social media platforms but also other media products such as videogames, tv-shows, mainstream music and trendy consumables.

Researching youtube content and contexts linked to children seems to me like a challenging

but very interesting and rewarding enterprise, which I believe has received very little attention so far. If anyone is willing to engage with the field, I would be very willing to work in a team!

Best,

Patricia

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**Veronica Barassi** (v.barassi@gold.ac.uk)

Dear Jie and All,

There are few hours left till the seminar closes tonight at 00:00 GMT.

Please feel free to post any final thoughts on the issues discussed.

all the best

Veronica

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**Veronica Barassi** (v.barassi@gold.ac.uk)

Dear All,

The E-seminar is now closed. A heartfelt thanks to Dr Jie Gu for his paper, to Prof Ursula Rao for her comments and to all of you for your comments and contributions. We will let you know as soon as the transcripts are ready to be uploaded on our website.

All the best

Veronica

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**Johnny Jie Gu** (johnnygubbi@hotmail.com)

Dear John, Professor Ursula Rao, Veronica and all lists

It is my great pleasure to share my paper in the E-seminar. I really appreciate your insightful thoughts and contributions. I think my paper will be greatly improved after integrating your incisive suggestions!

So glad to see that so many of you are interested in a media practice approach, although I am still thinking I have been grasping the essence of it. Will keep working on it and looking forward to further discussions!

Best Regards

Johnny Jie Gu

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**Jacob Greer** (jacobmgreer@gmail.com)

Just came across this paper and thought of topic thread.

[http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/IJLM\\_a\\_00100](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/IJLM_a_00100)

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**Ayana Haaruun** (ahaaruun@yahoo.com)

Great question. I wrote a paper on a vast Youtube community focused on instructing black women on managing their hair. As much as the videos were instructional, the fundamental community agenda was to promote black hair in its natural state. Essentially participants might post instructional videos simple to help others and promote whatever their interests are.

Like other cyber communities, the youtube black hair community functioned as a virtual support system. I'm interested in learning more about the monetary impact of youtube instructional videos on offline commerce.?

Ayana Haaruun