Searching for the 'You' in 'YouTube': An Analysis of Online Response Ability

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Enthusiasm for adding sociality to Web sites is mounting. Yet, the YouTube experience shows that participation in social networking sites is complex and potentially contentious. Meaningful participation in part depends upon participants' ability to respond to others and contribute to a site. While some participants demand more active involvement from administrators to create a safe and encouraging environment, others view intensive regulation as impairing their individual response ability to communicate with others and contribute. Discussions about adequate participation inevitably lead to a consideration of administrators' responsibility for creating an environment that provides sufficient opportunities for widespread and diverse participation. Before embarking on creating a community or adding intensive social networking components that may be monetized to a site, administrators should think carefully about the challenges that will likely ensue as participants become more passionate about the community and consequently make demands that seek contradictory optimal participatory environments.

INTRODUCTION

Last year *Time Magazine* named "you" as its person of the year for "seizing the reins of global media" with so much "energy" and "passion" (Grossman 2006). YouTube is cited as part of this participatory movement because it enables global video sharing and facilitates online social networking. If prior statistics released from YouTube are accurate, people watch more than 100 million videos and upload more than 65,000 videos daily to the site (YouTube Fact Sheet 2007a). Yet, using the ambiguous term "you" masks certain participatory challenges faced by current and would-be participants. In linguistic terms, "you" is a deictic or shifter that changes in meaning according to the contextual time-space of the user and the recipient. When a person reads the article, the act of reading the word "you" urges the reader to interpellate or call into being their identity as a content creator who is part of the collective "you" to which Time refers (Althusser 1971). However, not everyone actually participates in advanced, user-content driven sites. What constitutes participation is complex and people may engage in certain forms while avoiding or being prohibited from others. Use of the ambiguous term "you" performs an inclusive slight of hand that obfuscates participatory complications, even when technical and economic participation requirements are met.

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The figures for participation in advanced Internet-based content production are not impressive in the United States, where only an estimated 8% of the population reportedly uses advanced "participatory Web and mobile applications" regularly (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2007). Globally, major hurdles still complicate technical and economic access to basic telephony services—a far cry from multimedia, online content production (International Telecommunication Union 2001). An examination of 500,000 YouTube channel pages[1] by researchers at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands revealed that some 70% of users with channel pages claimed to be from the United States (Gomes 2006). Although self-reported data must be used cautiously, such a high percentage suggests a U.S.-centric core of participation despite the availability of global video sharing. YouTube's fact sheet states that they are "committed to 'internationalizing' YouTube by translating services and features into each country's native language" (YouTube Fact Sheet 2007b). The site now offers YouTube portals tailored toward participants from Brazil, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

Yet, even after physical access is achieved, scholars have observed discrepancies in use that Jenkins et al. (n.d.) call the "participation gap," which refers to "the unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow" (Jenkins et al. n.d.). The term applies not just to youth but to anyone who encounters difficulties achieving online participation. For example, although YouTube offers easy video uploading, it is clear from casual viewing that some people are more technically proficient than others in crafting videos. Learning to manipulate video equipment and computer-based editing software is expensive and non-trivial.

Participatory complications on YouTube include: 1) acquiring necessary skill sets; 2) understanding and abiding by terms of service rules and governmental laws; 3) navigating social conventions: and 4) dealing with unpredictable interactional effects both on and off the site, all of which influence whether participation will take place, and what the quality of that participation will be. This paper focuses on complications that emerge from interacting with other people, such as administrators, parents, and participants. The paper draws on data from a 1-year ethnographic research project on YouTube that was funded by the MacArthur Foundation and is part of a large-scale Digital Youth study examining young people's media use and informal learning. A goal of the project is to use the findings to inform the design of educational programs and online environments.[2] The data includes weekly participant-observation sessions on YouTube, 50 formal interviews and pre-interview use surveys, 20 informal, video-recorded interviews, and attendance at 17 media- and video-themed events such as the YouTube meet-up on July 7, 2007 in New York City. The study also analyzed videos, comments, and related discourse. The paper explores participants' perceived ability to respond and contribute to YouTube activities.

[1] A channel page is the YouTube equivalent of a social networking profile page. Channel pages contain user-selected, self-reported personal information such as where one is from, age, contact information, and lists of friends, subscribers, and videos.

[2] http://digitalyouth.ischool.berkeley.edu/

Linguists have noted that the very term responsibility derives from the social act of giving people the opportunity to respond in conversation (Bergman 1998; Linell and Rommetveit 1998). Interlocutors may facilitate or inhibit other people's ability to respond through encouragement or hostile acts. This paper will analyze the "response ability" of individuals to participate on YouTube and it will investigate the responsibility of administrators to create opportunities for meaningful participation. The paper concludes with questions that people who wish to add social networking to their sites should consider before launching a social community and facing related issues and challenges.

PARTICIPATORY COMPLICATIONS

Participatory complications often include negotiations with administrators and parents. YouTube's Web page states that "people can watch what they want, when they want on YouTube" (YouTube Fact Sheet 2007b). Yet, there are limits to what people can watch and upload, depending, for instance, on legal and copyright concerns. YouTube has a terms of service policy which has rules about posting inappropriate material. The policy also states that children under 13 may not use the site, while children 13-17 may participate with parental permission. Some people may view these policies as ageist or as necessary (and inadequate) for protecting young people's safety. Whatever position one takes, the fact is that participation is limited. Navigating issues such as copyright infringements is not straightforward for all participants. For example, several interviewees said they were confused about YouTube's polices as well as general copyright laws. Some interviewees were angered when their accounts were closed, claiming that YouTube did not explain why the accounts were closed nor did they provide adequate guidance about how to adhere to copyright laws and other regulations.[3] In some cases, interviewees said their accounts were re-instated and the closures were acknowledged to be mistakes. In other cases, accounts remain suspended or closed and interviewees said they were still unclear as to why.[4]

Some interviewees claim that YouTube's application of their policies is uneven, with some users more visible and thus more vulnerable to censure than others. For instance, one group of children interviewed noted that although they admittedly violated rules about posting inappropriate content, they also attributed their account closure to a "rival" who flagged their videos and brought their transgressions to administrators' attention. People have expressed awareness that flagging popular videos as inappropriate can be a strategy to neutralize one's competition. YouTube investigates flagging claims, and states that they do not automatically close accounts that receive a flag. But in some cases, interviewees report a lack of dialogue between administrators and participants about reasons for account closures.

[3] A website has been devoted to raising awareness about several suspended accounts by children. For more information see: http://www.youngtubers.com/

[4] In the video, "Youtube... please DO NOT close my account..." renetto claims to have gotten a call from a Google attorney saying that children under 13 cannot appear in videos without their parents appearing in the video with them. Yet he claims such information is not currently stated in YouTube's terms of service policy. See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fuu4YzNaQCk&NR=1

The intense emotions associated with an account closing and the concerted efforts to negotiate with administrators to reinstate banned accounts reflects a commitment not only to keeping one's work online but also to maintaining a social presence on YouTube. When someone's account is closed, it is not simply a matter of starting a new account (which is ostensibly forbidden according to YouTube's account closure rules). If they have used YouTube as a primary storage facility for their videos because they do not have adequate computing capabilities, they will lose the videos as well. More importantly, participants lose all the textual commentary, ratings, personal messages, bulletins, and video responses that were posted on their channel page and videos. Comments and responses serve as a tangible articulation of a social identity that is lost when an account is banned.

In addition to administrators, parents may also have rules about how or whether their children should be allowed to post content or even view what could be characterized as explicit or controversial videos on YouTube. As a colleague researching home-computer use explains, "Even in Silicon Valley, arguably one of the most wired places in the US, kids do not have unfettered access to computers and the Internet. Indeed, kids still encounter age-old family dilemmas, including sharing the use of a computer with siblings, the deteriorating condition of 'hand-me-down' computers and restrictions on the time and duration of use" (Horst 2006). Interviewees have reported being unable to access YouTube from school which may be banned on school servers and children may not be aware of the technical means or have the social desire to circumvent these policies.

Anticipatory criticism from other participants also influences levels and types of participation. Several interviewees described how they felt they did not fit the model of certain forms of video making such as diary forms of video blogging (or video-based web logging) in which people often talk directly into a camera and relate their life experiences. Some interviewees expressed hesitation to put themselves on camera for fear of potential criticism and hurtful comments or because it was not socially acceptable. As one man put it:

> You know I'm in my mid-thirties and not quite the Adonis I used to be, and, you know, maybe if I were a younger man it would be for me but right now I like the production side of it is very fun and I'm learning a lot about video production and tripods and cameras and that sort of thing.

These kinds of comments suggest that although people participate and enjoy YouTube, they may do so in self-determined socially acceptable ways according to characteristics such as age and sex. Certainly everyone has dispositions with regard to how they want to participate in a video sharing site. This may include posting your own videos, posting comments, or using social networking features. But a key question becomes, are people declining to take advantage of certain types of participation because of individual dispositions or are their choices motivated from social pressures such as the wish to avoid harsh criticism? If such social pressure were absent, would their participation increase?

Even seasoned users expressed concerns about what level of participation they felt was optimal. One popular YouTube celebrity, for instance, said that he did not participate in the social networking side of YouTube because he is unfamiliar with the features and associates them with youth.[5] Further, he expressed concern about joining YouTube's partnership program, in which certain individuals are invited to share advertising revenues from ad banners placed above their videos (Riley 2007). YouTube has established a separate partner channel consisting of only partner-created videos. Some interviewees believe that partners tend to receive increased rotation on YouTube's featured video lists. Although achieving partnership is widely assumed to be the goal of many aspiring YouTube stars, this celebrity cited concerns about how increased visibility would likely prompt increased rules and unwelcome scrutiny of his work by administrators. He felt this scrutiny could compromise his enjoyment of and professional success with the site. Monetizing his YouTube work could compromise his self-expression, which could complicate his ability to attract other media producers who have seen his work and offered him business on the basis of his current YouTube videos. When asked if he would like to become a YouTube partner he said:

> I don't think so. I don't think so because...[so far] they haven't said anything. They haven't told me I can't do this or I can't do that and I don't want to become a partner and then have them sort of scrutinize my creativity or what I do. 'Cause I do stuff sometimes, I mean I use unlicensed content. [laughs] You know, it's the Internet! You know, and I think I'm going to do it until somebody says don't do that. Cease and desist.

HATERS

Adequate participation is strongly influenced by the emergent outcome from negotiating not only with administrators and parents, but also through interacting with a specific group of others within and across sites. A number of people have cited so-called "haters" and harsh criticism of videos as a problem for YouTube (Lange 2007). As one interviewee put it, "a hater is someone who posts a negative comment that doesn't offer any [criticism] or any helpful information. Simply commenting with 'gay' is hater like. Saying 'This sucks go die' is hater like. [They] insult you and offer no suggestions on [improvements]" (Lange 2007).

Evidence from videos, posted comments, and ethnographic interviews suggests that these comments may discourage people from posting videos or engaging in certain genres, such as video blogging styles of participation. In a video called "The community of YouTube." [sic] posted on August 7, 2006, a YouTube celebrity named renetto expressed concern about the hostility he saw as an unfortunate limiter of participation on the site.[6]

> renetto: I get so much email from people saying I would never make a video and

[5] These include so-called "friending" practices in which a user asks another user to become his or her friend. If the user accepts the request, their friendship link may be displayed on their channel pages.
[6] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLeQVtuVMSU

> put it on YouTube. [reporting comments from viewers] "Cause you don't understand, people will make fun of me, the way I talk, the way I am, the way I look." [in his own voice] I look at some of the people who were brave enough to leave videos for me and [some] of them, I've read the comments underneath their videos and there are like just people just going after them. I mean just flat out going after 'em for being brave enough to put up a video and talk about who they are 'cause maybe they're overweight or maybe they're old. I mean, old, that's what I get all the time...What's the crime in that?

These comments, as well as comments from interviewees at YouTube meet-ups are valuable in part because they provide a window into problems with participation that may not easily surface when ethnographically studying the output of current participants who are posting videos and comments. Yet they enable access to information about people who are interested in participating. Renetto points out that even if millions of people are watching videos, the proportion of comments to viewership can be relatively low. In his view, a video with 1 million views but only several hundred comments and less than 10 video responses is a participatory "failure" since the exchange of feedback and interaction is minimal. Renetto and others attribute these low numbers to mean-spirited mockery and cruelty from haters. Reactions to haters (a problematic term) are varied (Lange 2007). For example, while some YouTubers are grateful that even comments from haters drive up their video views and comment tallies (which are used by YouTube to bestow certain honors such as "most discussed video"), others are hurt by the remarks and are discouraged from participation, which many people see as unfortunate not just for the individuals but for the interest of the YouTube community as a whole.

Another man posted a video, "Time for a Break from GoogleTube"[7] in which he says that his participation on YouTube has ceased to become enjoyable, in part because of the frightening "[attacks]" he has had from video responders (some of whom sport ski masks) and from people on another site that used his name and YouTube videos in supposedly satirical, tabloid-style exposés. He called these accusations "libelous" and financially threatening should for example, his boss encounter the material and fire him. During our interview he expressed frustration with the account closures of children, and protested these closures at the New York City YouTube meet-up in July 2007. In his video less than two weeks later, he reconsidered whether children should be on YouTube in light of his unfortunate experiences. He interprets "GoogleTube's" "indifference" to hating behavior as a willingness to leave the site to the "television stations" and "nut cases." In his video he states:

> I've really lost a lot of the fun that was here for me on YouTube...I know for a fact that I need to take a break. I need to just walk away for a while and try and get back a perspective. I'm, I've heard a lot of people talking about kids don't belong on YouTube. They should require credit card verification and 18 or older to be on this

[7] The video has been removed by the user.

> site. Maybe that's true. Especially with the fact that GoogleTube is not interested in trying to ensure there's any kind of community or any kind of safety in the community, that's for sure. I don't think that GoogleTube is interested in the community at all anymore.

Interestingly, before ratcheting down his participation, he felt the need to make a video to explain his decreased participation to his subscribers (which number over 1000). He faulted administrators for not removing the response ability of "haters" and others who "attacked" him. He attributes his decision to decrease his participation to his increased popularity and visibility which brought a barrage of unwelcome attention from haters and others.

On the other hand, in the few short weeks since the first draft of this paper was written, he has posted an additional 80 videos, suggesting an intense interest in and enjoyment of participating and interacting with his viewers on YouTube. Some of the videos address his frustrations with YouTube while others examine different topics. The contention here is not that YouTube is only filled with haters and people who cannot participate. In fact, the data is biased to examine people who have continued on YouTube or have posted videos, despite the problems, because of the benefits of participation. As one 15-year old boy said in an interview:

> But then even when you get one good comment, that makes up for 50 mean comments, cause it's just the fact of knowing that someone else out there liked your videos and stuff, and it doesn't really matter about everyone else that's criticized you.

Many people enjoy YouTube and are willing to endure negative feedback if it means they can connect with others, learn more about making videos, or find new friends. Not all interviewees reported having problems with haters. In addition, some people said they participate on YouTube despite the problems because YouTube has a critical mass of viewers for their work. However, not all forthcoming sites that plan to add social networking features will have YouTube's large audience. Retention of site participation will take on greater salience amid an increasing number of competing sites with similar video content.

CRITICISM AND FEEDBACK

Recently, scholars have reconsidered the term "flaming" in online research (O'Sullivan and Flanagin 2003; Lange 2006). The problem with terms such as "flaming" and "hating" is that they are relative, interactional, and negotiable. Complicating the challenge for administrators who are trying to foster community and formulate responsible policies is that while some people have a high tolerance and indeed enjoy confrontational types of participation, others eschew it to the point where it can interfere with their enjoyment of basic online participation.

In a popular video called "BAN SARCASM FROM YOUTUBE!!!"[8] which was posted on November 4, 2006, a prominent YouTube partner named Paperlilies jokingly and sarcastically argued that sarcasm should be banned from YouTube. This video appeared on YouTube's home page featured list and as of this writing (July 30, 2007) had 1.7 million views. In a follow-up video entitled "RE: Hater Comments from the Sarcasm video"[9] which was posted on December 11, 2006 and to date has received over 180,000 views, Paperlilies reads some of the hater responses she received on her sarcasm video. These include stereotypical hater remarks that include permutations of words and phrases such as "gay," "go die," "you are ugly," and so forth. What is interesting is that within her list, some comments may not necessarily qualify as "hating" behavior for some people. Not everyone who posts criticism or strong commentary would consider themselves haters nor would they want their response ability truncated. Because of the format of Paperlilies' video which splices together a number of comments, viewers do not have the full context of the comments, in terms of prior relationship she might have had with the people who posted them. Nor do we know how the comments are positioned within the context of the poster's other remarks. In and of themselves the comments below would not necessarily qualify from all perspectives as "hating on" her:

- "Sarcasm is a fine art; your attempt at it was amateurish."
- "The way you did it wasn't really sarcastic at all. There is a certain tone you have to use in order to be sarcastic and this video was in no way portraying that."
- "[I] think she's being sarcastic but she don't do sarcasm well. You have to sound sarcastic."
- "Stop going on YouTube if you have a problem with it, noob"

The first three comments could be construed as criticism, but are they motivated by hate? In academe, I can definitively state that similar wording has appeared in reviewer's comments that I have seen. Despite the popular assumption that the Internet is responsible for fostering environments of hate, many other types of every day interactions contain their share of what receivers of such comments may feel is deliberate and unwarranted vitriol.

Problems with online haters, flamers, and other emotionally-charged interactions are well known. Rheingold (1993) describes having to physically remove himself from the WELL community and create balkanized zones where people who enjoy this type of verbal sport may go. Some communities may espouse the idea, as articulated in the fourth comment above, that people uncomfortable with this type of verbal sport should go elsewhere, while others set a tone through social mechanisms about the type of community they wish to create (Baym 2000).[10]

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[8] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPgkZfaA_K8

[9] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSYw4dUVb1E

[10] Part of the problem lies in the terminology that was first used in social science studies of online communities, which were actually not relegated purely to online interaction as Rheingold (1993) illustrates. Characterizing such groups as "virtual" rather than "dispersed" codes them as not real in social science research when in fact they involve real people having real reactions to others. The first decade of social science research has concentrated on supposed differences between "virtual" and

What is different today is that as businesses and educators seek to monetize sociality on their sites, they literally may not be able to afford to ignore the concerns of users and participants who may transfer their support to competitors should a particular environment not meet their needs. While in the past some online groups sought to maintain a small techno-elite, business concerns may wish to promote a more widespread user base. Yet, a difficult task facing them will be to determine what kinds of participation are perceived as negative and how interactional subtleties influence levels of participation and commitment to the site.

As noted above, not all interviewees perceived haters in the same way. One teenage interviewee noted that haters "never" discourage her from making another video. When I asked her if she thought haters were a problem for YouTube, she stated, "nah, they have their own free will to dislike things...I think it's fine. I just think it was funny that they waste their time trying to trash someone's work." Yet, the same interviewee felt compelled to respond to a "rant" by a popular YouTube comedy sketch participant and partner called thewinekone. He characterizes his video, "3:00 AM Madness," [11] as a "rant about people and their web cams" while also emphasizing that he doesn't "have anything against these people." In this video, which was posted on March 25, 2006, he states a "beef" of his:

> I seriously don't know why all you Internet people, Internet users, love to download and watch others lip synch to their web cams. Doesn't make any sense to me! They're not good, they're not funny...Basically what I'm trying to tell you is that you need new material cause that stuff is all done with and done with. Do something innovative. Something unique that someone has never done on a web cam and then show it to the world, alright. It's simple. I mean, you can do something like this: throwing random water bottles everywhere. [throws water bottles around] Random water bottles, just one after the other.

The teenager whom I talked with posted at least two videos which responded to thewinekone's rant. A popular lip syncher, she praised thewinekone for his video making ability and noted how much she enjoyed his rants. In two videos, she provided comedic examples of how she was trying to distinguish herself from the kinds of videos that thewinekone criticized. Even though she lists her style on YouTube as "Vlogging" or video blogging she nevertheless assures her viewers, and thewinekone whom she directly addresses, that she is "just not into" the kind of boring, minutiae-filled video blogging that thewinekone derides.

"real" interaction when in fact similarities exist and those are equally important to explore. Yet such similarities may not be seen by scholars as long as interactions involving online components continue to be coded in research as not real or "virtual" (Lange, in press).

[11] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wdow8SNemc

The rant is a genre in and of itself on YouTube and elsewhere in technical communities. The online Collaborative International Dictionary of English defines a ranting as "[raving] in violent, high-sounding, or extravagant language, without dignity of thought." To characterize one's remarks as a rant is a deliberate strategy that in Goffman's (1981) terms, provides a frame that helps listeners interpret the remarks. Socially, the criticism in the rant is marked as biased, emotional, and not necessarily meant to be read as a personal attack. It is as if marking harsh criticism with the term "rant" makes it socially acceptable to its audience. In this example, what is interesting is that the teenager did not feel the need to respond to nor remove hateful remarks from her video pages. She claimed that these comments did not affect her participation or stop her from making videos. Yet, thewinekone's rant attacked lip synching, one of her genres that her fans arguably appreciated. This attack prompted her to respond to him and to massage her public identity as one that is acceptable to technically proficient participants.

One reading of the "rant" dynamic such as that between thewinekone and the teenager is that such rants risk foreclosing participation through the actions of self-appointed members of "Internet police" who veil harsh criticism using the frame of the socially-accepted rant. Such rants are less concerned with helping others improve than with preserving a community for the techno-elite. In this interpretation, his remarks are not "constructive" but rather "deconstructive" criticism because they aim to discourage certain genres and types of participation (Lange 2007).

However, it is important to remember that in many cases, a person who "hates on" someone or "rants" is him- or herself responding to something that they see as morally wrong or incorrect. Scholars of conversational morality have observed that in person interaction is filled with moral positionings, accusations, and counter-accusations. In fact, ordinary, every day conversation is so morally-imbued that it is hardly possible to hold a conversation that is devoid of some explicit or tacit moral implications (Linell 1998). Seen in this light, thewinekone's rant is a response to transgressions that he perceives to be unfortunate for the YouTube community.

An alternative interpretation of the exchange is that the thewinekone uses an admittedly emotional "rant"—which he personalizes and further softens through his wildly popular comedic style—as a way of improving the benchmark of individual quality and social participation on the site. His admonishment can be read as a type of technical mentorship that attempts to close Jenkins' participation gap between uninspired and uninspiring video bloggers and lip synchers and technically-proficient and original video makers. If certain participants are being invited to be partners with YouTube and receive more air time, then it is to participants' advantage to understand why certain popular members are preferred over others for receiving increased attention and monetary compensation.

Yet, the question remains, how do these dynamics affect participation? This is an especially important question when one considers that not everyone wishes their sociality to be monetized and that people may learn from or simply enjoy certain forms of participation,

even if they are socially eschewed. For instance, one interviewee told me that she had learned a lot about editing by learning to synchronize music with video in her lip synching videos. Adequate mentoring may require a balance between providing feedback while avoiding harsh criticism that chokes off experimentation that many video makers say is crucial for improvement.

As participants demand more of each other, this may in turn complicate content makers' ability for experimentation and freedom of expression. On her channel page, Paperlilies stated, "I am completely daunted by having so many people watch me and I miss the old days when I felt like I could post any old crap whenever I felt like it." Participants may feel a certain sense of responsibility to their viewers which may complicate their creativity and social expression on the site.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Participation issues are becoming increasingly important as businesses, educators, content producers, and others seek to increase the sociality of their Web sites and services by including social networking components. Yet before deciding whether and how to implement such social network systems, it is very important to realize that as "passion" and commitment to community increases, the stakes also increase for participants who may demand more from administrators and other participants. Would-be administrators should consider the type of environment they wish to foster and how they will achieve it both technically and socially. As indicated here, some people expect administrators to be community liaisons, adjudicate complaints closely, and actively promote community, while others require more unfettered expression. To what extent administrators will even have the kind of control they wish is an open question. Some of the decisions about how the community will run will quite like be greatly influenced by the needs and goals of participants as they work out the kind of community that meets their needs.

Elsewhere I have explored a number of top-down proposals that have been suggested to regulate problems on the site (Lange 2007). Few of these proposals have met with enthusiasm from the young people interviewed in this study. These proposals include rules such as being a certain age, posting at least one video, or being a member of YouTube for a certain length of time before being able to post comments. Most of the negative reaction stems from the perceived threats to free speech that they see as outweighing any potential benefits such as deterring haters. Further, implementing these mechanisms may not actually solve the problems. For instance, some participants suggested "viewer rating" or "karma" systems in which viewers rate each other with regard to their participation. Someone who makes thoughtful comments and videos would receive more stars while "haters" would receive fewer stars. Only those rated with a certain number of stars would be allowed to comment. Many interviewees cited obvious cultural relativity problems and sabotage that could undermine this policy's intent. In a sense, the tension seems to that in order to create an environment that increases the "response ability" of some participants, such proposals

aim to decrease the "response ability" of others who would be subjected to uneven and culturally relative adjudication.[12]

The drive for adding social network components to online environments is currently strong but would-be administrators should consider the following questions before proceeding:

- What kind of community is optimal for a particular online environment?
- What constitutes a "problem" or social conflict that requires resolution?
- When problems occur, what social and technical mechanisms will be used to solve them?
- Will the problems be addressed through features such as increased customization and ability to "tune out" unfortunate comments or will problems be solved through social mechanisms such as community liaisons who publicly or privately adjudicate conflicts?
- Alternatively, will proposals emerge from the user community as they influence the changing parameters of their community?
- Is the goal to achieve one large community, or will smaller islands of community be beneficial for the site?

For example, whether the community enables customization to such an extent that islands of personal use are being created rather than a more communal experience depends upon the goals of the site and the participants. As noted above, user rating or "karma" systems in which users or their comments are rated are subject to certain abuses. One frequent complaint from YouTubers is a perceived lack of dialogue and feedback between administrators and participants. Yet, providing such feedback is time intensive and people managing sociality-based sites will have to assess whether such participation is optimal for their resources and goals.

Contrary to the folk belief that as people get to know each other, vitriol automatically decreases, the YouTube experience shows that when building community, passion comes with a price. As people care more about their community, they demand more and are more upset when demands are not met. Whether failure to meet the demands will drive users away or will prompt a tenacious drive toward resolution depends upon the success and approach of particular sites. Either way, managing sociality is non-trivial and will require attention to each individual's response ability as well as responsibility toward others on the site.

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[12] YouTube recently instituted a comment rating system in which anyone can rate comments that have been posted to videos. An individual comment can be rated as: "excellent," "great," "good," "average," or "poor."

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