Hyperlinked Life: Homo Ludens

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Introduction

This essay explores a fascinating phenomenon unfolding online. The business of journaling has become viable. Searching YouTube for your hobby or interest will, first, very likely show many results, second, spending some time will show who the regular content creators are on that topic, third, the social media element of YouTube makes it easy to follow them. YouTube has created a way for creators to publish and distribute their work and to monetize it through subscriptions and commercials. We often think of content marketing as an activity aimed at creating credibility, and visibility for some other business that the subject matter expert is promoting. For example, Bryan Alexander:

Bryan Alexander is an internationally known futurist, researcher, writer, speaker, consultant, and teacher, working in the field of how technology transforms education....

In 2013 Bryan launched a business, Bryan Alexander Consulting, LLC. Through BAC he consults throughout higher education in the United States and abroad. Bryan also speaks widely and publishes frequently, with articles appearing in venues including The Atlantic Monthly, Inside Higher Ed.

Bryan is very active with his monetized blog site as well on Flickr, Twitter, and LinkedIn where he routinely reposts his blog material. This recipe seems to be working for Bryan as his consulting business has survived even thrived over the last four years. Likewise, many other subject matter experts employ this approach to content marketing and to promoting their enterprises.

However, the phenomenon I am exploring here is slightly different. The content creators I describe and analyze in the following chapters have changed the recipe. They are not creating content in support of a retail enterprise or consulting business, rather content creation is the business.

I draw my title as a salute to John Seeley Brown's rethinking of a human being. We are familiar with our genus and species, Homo sapiens "sapient" meaning wise or knowing. Brown offers a more complex notion defining two additional facets, Homo faber, and Homo ludens, "maker" and "player" along with knower. I resonate especially with this more sophisticated sense of human being. In this essay, I aim to explore how play

makes us and particularly in an online or a hybridized real:virtual environment.

This three-part model of knower, maker, and player will play out throughout the following case studies. I imagine that "knower" is analogous to "subject matter expert" for example. Also, making these videos for some of the content creators is itself rewarding and a motivating passion, some have grown their enterprises so much that they have to hire others to do that work, however, very likely it remains part of their creative identity. One uniting thread among these content creators is the passion, fun, and playfulness that they experience with their topic. This integration and

fulfillment as well the ability to make a livelihood represents a fascinating moment.

Rather than seek out pre-existing definitions, I would like to struggle a bit to formulate, abductively, my interpretations. To establish a point of reference, first I want to develop several case studies. These content creators share, of necessity certain common elements, however, teasing out their differences shows fascinating intersections of our digital and real-world lives. Based on these case studies I then want to develop or abstract a critical theory of sorts. I will then return to content creators and test the critical hypothesis against the real activities of creators. Finally, revising the argument in light of both commonalities and differences between the case studies.

Accordingly, I offer Jon B., at <u>Fishing the Midwest</u> on YouTube and Brennan (several YouTube channels actually) at GoldGloveTV and Twitch, and Byron Nicholai at I sing. You Dance. these three are not alone, nor are they the most successful; however, they offer excellent cases. Two of the young men are self-employed, full-time, by and through their content creation. They have created recognizable personal brands, defined business models, and are executing their plans. The third, Byron, is a Yup'ik from southwestern Alaska and his case study richly complicates this inquiry.

This essay will first develop each as a case study. I will then turn to sketching a theory of commonalities and differences. I will return to YouTube for additional mini-case studies in order to test the theory. In the end, I hope to offer a snap shot of a moment of online content creation and into the intersection of lives online and in the real world.

PART I

Case Studies

Jon B.: Never Stop

Gold Glove: Home of Video Games and Lovemaking

Andrew Stanley: TheWildNorth

1

John B: Never Stop

Jon B. is in his early 20's. He recently dropped out of college to work full-time on his YouTube content. He has been creating YouTube content since 2009; he was 12-13 years old at that time. He participates in several additional social media, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Google+. Jon B. is attentive to the details of his camera, audio work, and editing and he seems as passionate about them as his fishing. Recently Jon B. has traveled, fished, and created content with a cohort of YouTube channel hosts. These people might be seen as competitors; however, they are working as collaborators driving traffic to each others' sites and

appearing in each others' videos. Jon B. has created a recognizable personal brand, defined a business model, and is executing his plans.
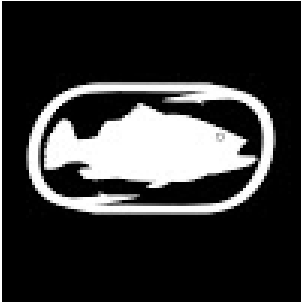
In this video, the friends have set a fishing challenge for themselves. It is not enough that Jon B. is hundreds of miles from his home near Chicago visiting Texas, during the winter, using borrowed boats on an unfamiliar water. This theatricality speaks to creating urgency, dramatic questions, emotional content, and pacing, all of which aids in having a story, an adventure, from what might otherwise only be a relaxing fishing trip. This emphasizes both the lived experiences and the gonzo journalistic technique of pouring gasoline on the fire – everything for the sake of a story.

I see a couple of places where Jon B. celebrates and advocates for "real" experience. Indeed, his love of fishing and fishing where he is present, informs all of his video creation. He surrounds himself with friends and fans who love fishing. That is only part of what is required by being a content creator. Jon B. has to film his activities and he, in turn, spends hours editing his videos. Solo camera work, self-filming, requires a split consciousness, as he must engage simultaneously with fishing and with video creation. We know that good framing and camera work can save hours of editing. Jon B. also puts the time into editing on his laptop, at home, or on the road and hence can be said to be sequestered in the virtual world as much as the real. This in part because he has to think like his consumer, to produce a product they want, and for many of them

the ratio is inverse virtual to real world. We know Jon B. values the real world because of the message from one of his sponsors, Mystery Tackle Box (an interesting consistency between espoused value and paid sponsorship).

In several of his videos, Jon B. talks about his decision to drop out of college. In this one, he comes at it from the direction of quitting fishing and quitting video making, or the price tag that college required him to pay, beyond tuition (view from 7:30).

For me, this links back to the real sense of urgency in his life and his business enterprise. Also, that connects with the critical theory as well. It also demonstrates the kind of social criticism that Jon B. is engaged in. I suspect that this cohort is speaking together in its' critique of schooling, and the "normal" career path.

Thinking back to deconstruction, we also see Jon B. seeking corporate sponsorship as one of his revenue streams. Some of these vlogs narrate his attendance at industry trade shows and, while he offers no details, he mentions business meetings as an aspect of those trips. Therefore, this form of social criticism is complicated. Likewise in some videos, we hear Jon B. say or do things unreflective of his middle-class privilege. At other times, he is deeply cognizant of the opportunity and luxury he has in creating this media. Some of this we can attribute to his youth, but some of it has to do with the straight up complexity of combining, art, self, and economics and doing it as a performance piece nearly real-time, for a subscriber base of four-hundred-thousand YouTube viewers.

Jon B. is serious about his art; his video editing, camera work, storytelling and selection of soundtrack are all intentional. He is undoubtedly bridging a very interesting divide. He is engaged really in fishing and virtually as a social media marketer and content creator.

2

Gold Glove: Home of Video Games and Lovemaking

Brennan O'Neill is 25 and has likewise been on YouTube since 2009. Among gamers, he is well known and widely subscribed as well. He and his personal information are more indiscriminately available online. Also, he is well known for his drunken live streaming and his unfiltered, sometimes inappropriate, game commentary. His social media includes Twitter,

Facebook, Twitch, and some game related sites. Brennan employs a Video Editor to assist with the creation of videos. He likewise has a cohort of friends with whom he games and creates content.

We are broadly familiar with YouTube. Twitch, however, is more of a niche social media and bears some further introduction. Twitch is a platform that allows computer gamers to broadcast live and real-time their game-play. Frequently there is a social component to the gameplay, either through the game being a massive-multiplayer-online (MMO) or through a co-op element to otherwise single player games. Twitch facilitates the creation of online communities and potentially a revenue stream for successful "hosts." Content creators can monetize their accounts by permitting advertising and promoting subscriptions. It is possible to record the Twitch stream and edit and compile it to tell various stories, stories which in turn may become YouTube content.

A particularly fruitful example is DayZ. The game itself is in development. Customers purchase a beta version through Steam. The premise is the world after a Zombie Apocalypse. Players are spawned hungry, thirsty, and minimally equipped, and if they are unsuccessful at avoiding Zombies, disease, hypothermia, and gathering equipment, their avatar will die fairly quickly. But beyond that are the other players who may be bandits, heroes, or just worse off and desperate for survival. Sometimes trust is developed, and players band together trying to survive, and sometimes they fight and die. The game itself is rough and buggy. However, it is a fascinating environment for social experimentation but more for live streaming. Some players are so satisfied with their online improvisational storytelling that they have turned gameplay into full-time work.

I see this as a defining element of this kind of content creation where the content and much of the social interaction occurs exclusively online. Indeed, these content creators may attend fan meet-up events, or, participate in conferences, but the content they create is made of and refers to online, or computer-based activities. In Gold Glove's case, like Jon B., we see that he, as well as a cohort of friends, play together in-game if the game has multi-player capacity. Or, if playing a single player game, a social component is added through streaming the play on Twitch.

Gold Glove has split his YouTube channels out in three ways, Twitch content, game playthroughs, and vlogging.

In Gold Gloves' case he and a girlfriend also a gamer/content creator, vlogged several months, playing

together and living together. Later when he bought a home, he provided tours of the interior and showed his gaming recording studio.

His Twitch content on YouTube tends to capture his exuberance, spontaneity and improvisational "what if" approach to all games, multi or single player. This YouTube channel has a wide variety of content, sometimes Twitch compilations, lasting 10 minutes or less, or multi-hour gameplay.

He is committed to an excellent product like any content creator. He employs a video editor to edit and compile his videos. This is an efficient distribution of work since folks are fans of his personality first. With Gold Glove we hear a little less about sponsorship then we do with Jon B. however, Gold Glove does receive early releases on games. Usually, these come with limits

to how far he can play the game. However, it is a technique for creating hype as the game release approaches. As well this kind of channel will occasionally have equipment giveaways to enhance the social element with fans.

3

Andrew Stanley: TheWildNorth

Andrew lives in Northwest Territories, Canada. He is 35 years old and has been creating content for this channel since 2010. He is an indigenous person although I am uncertain which of the six major groups in which he shares ancestry. He has 38,000 subscribers however his videos are not commercialized. His social media participation is not clearly visible on his channel. However, he is promoting a link to Patreon. Accordingly, his brand and taglines are less clearly developed. That said, Andrew does participate in the

social aspect of YouTube responding to commenters. Andrew's filmmaking has evolved over the life of his channel. He, unlike the other content creators, works from the Canadian bush and accordingly films and edits under relatively extreme conditions. His channel is about his passion for living in the remote Canadian wilderness and the connected hunting, fishing, and trapping. Several years back Andrew was featured in several episodes of a Canadian outdoor TV show. During that time he learned a great deal more about filming and editing and his interest in that and the quality of his videos has increased. Andrew's content (hunting, fishing, and trapping) and his online persona (he swears, vitriolically sometimes) as well sometimes his videos capture drunken moments as well which offers some challenges to some viewers.

Since this channel is more broadly about life in the Canadian bush there are several threads of content. One example is the construction of his base cabin. This video is from 2010 and represents the roots of the channel.

Because of the organic quality of the filmmaking and because Andrew has chosen not to commercialize his videos there is a different feel to this site and the participation in content creation. Indeed, the channel has opened opportunities for Andrew some of which appear to include fiscal benefits. He mentions gifts that viewers send and uses them in videos. As well he talks about his participation in several outside projects, the TV show, for example. However, the business model seems less clear less well developed. Or instead, it seems to be more traditionally about content marketing a subject matter expert.

Stylistically, Andrew is quite a good vlogger and a teacher as well explaining life in the Candian bush in a detailed and exciting way.

PART II

Theorizing: Sketching a Structure

DISCLAIMERS

Ethnicity

I show two young men who share in America's historically dominate race. YouTube is a global phenomenon. Accordingly, these examples reflect a minority position. Rather, they were selected for the distinctness of their business model.

Gender

There are representatives of both genders being successful and creative on YouTube. It is possible to

locate Transgendered content creators as well. My sample is in no way reflective of the complexity of this Global publishing medium.

Age

Content creators of all ages can be located on YouTube some of whom are more successful in various ways than these case studies.

Economic Privilege

Certainly, folks doing online streaming and screen capture are displaying access to relatively expensive equipment. Likewise, folks able to afford a camera and editing crews are displaying resources outside of some content creators budgets. That said, in all of these cases we see this as a result of the success of their business model, in part.

4

Playfulness

In the following clip, just the segment about the professional surfer Dusty Paine, Brown describes a fascinating interplay between embodied lives and online lives.

...It turns out that my neighbor turns out to be a 20-year-old kid, moderately world-famous in the surfing world named Dusty Payne. And what got interesting to us is that Maui has never produced a world-class champion before. They basically come from Oahu, from the North Shore and so on and so forth. But all of a sudden four kids make it big, big time here in Maui. You say "What Happened?"

And it turns out that if you kind meet these kids they have all come together very much like a guild in World of Warcraft, and what they do is they compete with each other and they collaborate with each other incredibly intensely. They think up a new move, they dash down the hill, they try it out, they take their video cameras with them. They're videoing each other. They dash back up here. They start kind of analyzing what worked, what didn't work, build new ideas, dash down the hill again,

try it out. And then what they start doing is they start looking at, of course, all the other people surfing around the world, which they get from YouTube. They have all this kind of stuff. They start picking up new moves like that. That's a kind of interesting way that digital media has enhanced the ability of these surfing kids to pick up all kinds of new tricks. And I can actually show you how a particular move now on a surfboard takes about 48 hours to propagate around the world before all the key surfers of the top edge are trying it out themselves, okay? And of course any time something changes they're the first to try it out and to appropriate it, so these kids live for picking up something new. They live for trying out something new. And some of this stuff, by the way, is moderately dangerous. So these are high-cost mistakes, but the passion that they have to do this is really awesome.

Well, guess what. The passion that I see in the World of Warcraft of the high-end high performers is also awesome, but it doesn't stop there. If you look at the artists, if you look at the musicians, if you look at the dancers, if you look at athletics in general and to the extreme edge what you have is kids that are turned on. And when they get really turned on in the right context there's almost no stopping.

Any interest that any kid has, I am sure there's already existing out there a passionate community of interest group or a community of practice that you can try to join…. (Brown, 2013)

I love this example for me it does double work. I see it as an example of the demographic I have isolated. I see it

as well as an example of my meaning of "conversation." Certainly, we see face-to-face conversations between the surfer buddies; we see "conversation" take on valences as the videos are posted and commented on and video responses posted. Indeed other social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram all play into the conversations and in nuanced and different ways.

Perhaps, the place I might insert myself and raise a self-reflective moment with this demographic is the distinct model of learning that is constructed in this example. As well, that the learning model maps between entirely virtual activities, World of Warcraft gaming and fully embodied activities of professional surfing. I think this is a fundamental realization that the model of learning maps across this continuum. This type of learning is about identity, about curiosity, about real compensation. I think these definitions of online learning and online learning community is substantially different from the online learning in which universities or human resource departments engage. To understand better, the process that Brown describes includes the following elements:

This type of learning is about identity, about curiosity, about real compensation. I think these definitions of online learning and online learning community is substantially different from the online learning in which universities or human resource

departments engage. To understand better, the process that Brown describes includes the following elements:

- Shared passion
- Face-to-face cohort
- Practice capture technology
- Play/practice (elements of gamification)
- Online cohort
- Published/peer reviewed (open)
- Failure has a real cost (injury, financial loss)
- Practice refinement and improvement (lather, rinse, repeat)
- Success has potential for compensation/recognition in both real and virtual world

Here learning, and community is learner/passion-centric. Inquiry originates with passionate individuals following their dreams. That is, less frequently, or not at all how we describe school learners. More often in schools, our starting assumption is that learners are deficient in the knowledge we also assume that they need development across a broad curriculum. This approach to learning puts identity, curiosity, and real compensation at the far end of learning.

5

Content Creation

Bryan Alexander offers a working definition of "digital storytelling": "Simply put, it is telling stories with digital technologies. Digital stories are narratives built from the stuff of cyberculture" (Alexander, 2010, Loc 110 of 3318). Jon B. and Gold Glove appear at first glimpse to fit this definition. Alas, "the stuff of cyberculture" reintroduces some ambiguity when we compare the topics, the niches that each content creator addresses. Rather than too quickly reconcile this tension I want to claim that our critical theory must address both sides of the dilemma. Some content creators are operating in both the virtual and real world

and some are operating mostly in the virtual world. However, in both cases, it is apparent that they are focused, or at least the most successful are focused their content is particular and situated. So if our topic is particular and situated, then it seems wise to develop an aesthetic equally specific and situated. Again, "To achieve success on YouTube you have to have a niche" (Edwards, 2014).

Their participation in social media also intentionally blurs boundaries of identities – this blurring is seen clearly in "vlogging" content offered by both. "Vlogging" is a "journalistic documentation of a person's life, thoughts, opinions, and interests" (ZMD, 2005). We are broadly familiar with YouTube. Twitch, however, is more of a niche social media and bears some additional introduction. Twitch is a platform that allows computer gamers to broadcast live and real-time their game-play. Frequently there is a social component to the game-play, either through the game being a massive-multiplayer-online (MMO) or through a co-op element to otherwise single player games. Twitch facilitates the creation of online communities and potentially a revenue stream for successful "hosts." Content creators can monetize their accounts by permitting advertising and promoting subscriptions.

Alas, my tolerance for pure fiction has waned over the years. Rather my aesthetic cuts in a different direction:

Gonzo journalism is a style of journalism that is written

without claims of objectivity, often including the reporter as part of the story via a first-person narrative. The word "gonzo" is believed to have been first used in 1970 to describe an article by Hunter S. Thompson, who later popularized the style. It is an energetic first-person participatory writing style in which the author is a protagonist, and it draws its power from a combination of social critique and self-satire.[1] It has since been applied to other subjective artistic endeavors. (Wikipedia, Gonzo Journalism retrieved 1/21/2017)

And, second, Yvon Chouinard says in the movie 180° South, "The word adventure has gotten overused. For me, when everything goes wrong, that's when adventure starts" (Copeland, 2010). Entailed in both of these is a lived experience, lived in the "real" world. Once we attach the "digital" to our storytelling, we add complexity and nuance to this lived experience that will need to be explored.

Taken together we see aspects of this aesthetic and this notion of "adventure" in the content of these two case studies.

This short video explores nicely other elements of storytelling. We are altogether too familiar with plot and character and so this list is refreshing as it explores other elements.

I found interesting connections between what I was sketching and this video definition of digital storytelling (Iwancio, 2010).

- Point of view

- Dramatic Question

- Emotional Content

- Voice

- Soundtrack

- Pacing

- Economy

- Length

I savor and favor the first person/subjective voice. It is most appropriate for these fraught (probably sometimes contrived and antagonized) experiences. Also, the fictive quality of memoir, changing names, or locations, or dates to protect the guilty adds complexity requiring additional development. "Self-aware" this is taking the first person perspective one step further and having that voice reflect on learning, emotions, and the physicality of the experience. "Self-aware" is from the point of view, and in this case, we hear a subjective first-person accounting hence we can combine this with a voice as well.

The urgency and the on-edge quality of both quotes are essential as well. Failure, injury, and death are real possible consequences. Unlike most computer games, where we respawn at a save point, instead this lifestyle/ storytelling is pushing the boundaries of our lived experiences, our skills, our preparation, and our knowledge. I would argue that dramatic question, emotional content, and pacing could all be folded together in this element.

Lastly is the social criticism implicit or explicit in these lives/stories? Going to where the risks are taken us beyond the normal. Indeed for many of us living vicariously through those tolerant of risk is part of what

fuels the lives/stories. Risk tolerance is quite a complicated figure because storytellers need an audience to consume their telling and, as we will see, these consumers underwrite the risks. So social criticism and social norms are complicit in ways requiring further development.

Finally, soundtrack and economy are still unaccounted for, but readers of Hunter S. Thompson will remember popular music references to the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane in his writing. Accordingly, we will want to look at the soundtrack as a facet of storytelling and style. "Economy" is a delightful ambiguous figure; we may be speaking of efficient prose or precise illustration, or we may be thinking about the transactions between characters, or writer/reader, or the money-making potential of the story and storytelling itself. Indeed, all these elements are present in gonzo journalism.

Length, Iwanicio's video offers us a simple formula, and immediately, we hear Tara Hunt speak to a much more complicated notion for deciding narrative length based on optimization accounting for YouTube algorithms (2016).

These definitions and this critical theory, alas, are formulated in the abstract. I believe it will make better sense to explore them based on a case study of a particular digital storyteller.

PART III

Revising the Theory

6

Testing the Theory
Real:Virtual

I believe this case study develops my aesthetic/critical theory and demonstrates its coherence. Likewise, I think this theory can be used to examine other niche content creators on YouTube, for example, Adventure Adrift and the Ginger Runner:

These stories are built from both real culture and cyberculture. These creators are probably engaged in

digital storytelling, and yet our definitions struggle to keep up with their innovation.

Circling back to the tension between economics and social criticism in the persona that Adventure Adrift has constructed, their social criticism is more explicit. Their tiny house allows them to travel the oceans and one of their aims is to do good in communities as they go. Their monetized web presence facilitates their doing well as they do good. I might suggest that Ethan Newberry is most at peace with being an entrepreneur. If his passion for ultra-running has a social criticism, it is more subtle, and he knows better than to alienate potential customers with proselytizing. Nonetheless, he is advocating for a more active and healthy lifestyle. As mentioned above, Jon B.'s social criticism is youthful and not fully developed but intensely relevant to higher education.

Circling back to the ambiguity of lived adventures turned to content for consumption of YouTube viewers, it remains to be seen how impactful this genre is in fostering lifestyle change and increased risk-taking. I take the Sailing Nervous channel to be one of these fast followers in the live-aboard community. Brendan's Fabulous World of Fishing is likewise a channel on the rise in the fishing community. At what point will imitation breakdown and the market saturate? However, in truth and speaking from personal experience in the last year, I have taken several

significant risks in part emboldened by this genre. I too experimented briefly with video making. It, however, is not my passion and struggling with cameras while engaged in an adventure dilutes my fun. Therefore, it will be hard to know the impact of this genre only because not everyone will become a content creator – even as s/he changes his or her life.

7

Testing the Theory Virtual:Virtual

However, I think my theory begins to break down with other kinds of niche content creators. So for example, those that engage in purely cyberculture content creation, such as computer game playthroughs, or those involved in MMORPG streaming pull on my valuing of real-life activities in a troubling way. Though I am not deeply bothered with that since my opening argument indicated my abiding suspicion of universal definition and theory. The Gamer niche needs a niche

aesthetic/theory just like these genres I explore here need a niche theory.

TheRadBrad

Jam Jar

8

Testing the Theory Indigenous People and Content Creation

I want to explore several case studies of Alaska Native participation on YouTube as a way to test and refine these notions and to explore them on the internet. I wonder if the web, Creative Commons, and other modern, Western technology values mask these indigenous values completely or if the outlaw elements survive and display. I offer:

I Sing. You Dance. — Bryon Nicholai

Byron Nicholai is just 18. He started his channel in 2014 when he was 15-16. His content is evolving. However, it is focused on Yupik song and dance. Byron is Yup'ik from Tooksok Bay, Alaska, a village of 600. Byron participates on Facebook and Google+ Instagram and Twitter. However, he does not have them all linked to his YouTube channel. Unlike, the other case studies, Byron's social media presence is more evident on Facebook. On YouTube, his brand and tagline are none existent or less developed. President Obama recognized Byron as an up and coming leader. He is currently attending the University of Alaska in Anchorage.

Byron's YouTube channel shows just 1,200 subscribers, and it does not appear to be monetized.

One possible explanation of the differences between Byron's channel and the other two is where he is in the business plan, and that is worth exploring. However, there are other complicating factors as well. One, for example, is that internet access in rural Alaska is expensive, slow and unreliable. Customers purchase bandwidth and data accordingly; content creators will be limited both in size of upload and in frequency.

Ethnicity and gender play in this case and while I want to be careful not to overgeneralize there are striking aspects of cultural difference that matter to this case. Many young men in remote rural villages drop out of high school. They instead focus on subsistence activities, hunting, fishing, trapping, and on the tools of those activities, snow machines, and 4-wheelers. (Indeed other indigenous people have YouTube channels and focus on these activities, for example, TheWildNorth.) Whereas many young women persist in school and the workplace developing skills with computers. As well, women seem to take the lead in cultural preservation through language, and arts and crafts. Another element of culture as a topic of content creation is that traditional elders are understood as the knowledge bearers. Beyond this Byron seems to be playing with style and content mixing hip-hop aesthetic with Yup'ik language. So, for a young person to tread in this arena is potentially fraught with tensions.

Byron seems to be self-conscious of his status as role model and as well respectful of cultural values, and this may lessen some of the tensions. Browsing through the comments on his videos I did not encounter censure rather much encouragement, and this may be because his audience is mostly his peer group although it is not safe to assume that elders are not keeping an eye on his content. With his move to Anchorage, his video length and content is changing. We see him engaging with vlogging now as he travels to locations in the lower-48 and Alaska.

There are several reasons that Byron's YouTube presence is different from Jon B. and Gold Glove's. It remains to be seen whether his move to Anchorage and better internet access pulls him in their direction or if

the tensions of gender and culture take his channel in another direction.

X̱'unei Lance Twitchell

nativejazzlive

We have several different projects going on on these channels, and curiously some overlap in moments of cultural fusion.

Bryon is a young Yup'ik. He has been creating content focused on his traditional singing, dancing, and drumming. He has been recognized in the Alaska and nationally by President Obama as a rising leader. His channel content is changing as he matures and has gone to college. We see him fusing Yup'ik singing with hip-hop rhythms and techniques and also vlogging some of his recent travels.

Lance Twitchell is an assistant professor of Alaska

Native Languages at the University of Southeast Alaska. His channel is a rich resource for Tlingit language preservation and instruction. His channel archives 70 recordings of fluent elders speaking. As well he offers extensive content on language instruction.

Ed Littlefield's TED talk and the nativejazzlive channel push the question of cultural innovation into the conversation. Ed's thinking about it is more ffull-blownperhaps then Bryon's, but we see them both exploring in this space. Accordingly, we need to ask questions about the cultural, intellectual property at moments of cultural innovation.

First, we have to assume that all of the knowledge we see on these channels falls into the realm of "public information." Perhaps, if a content creator were to distribute "sensitive information" that could be challenged through the various social media elements on the channel, comments, and dislikes, perhaps as well some sort of reporting (though likely not successfully copyright).

To begin with how does copyright play out on these channels? I did not check every single video on all these channels, however, everyone that I did showed a "standard youtube license" the terms of that are linked here. Additionally, content creators may select Creative Commons CC-BY license which is an open content license. I did not find any such licenses on these channels, but again, I did not check every single video.

Turning to our indigenous sense of "copyright" I do not see in the "show more" or about sections of video or channel description any discussion of group ownership and individual use as might arise from a sense of indigenous "copyright." Both Byron's and Lance's channels have strong elements of cultural preservation in their content. This kind of intellectual property would seem to fall into a more traditional approach to intellectual property. Additionally, we do not know how any of these content creators have set their YouTube monetization, however, clearly, that is a concern that arises in the Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge.

When we enter into cultural innovation fusion of Yup'ik singing and hip-hop or the native jazz fusion that Ed Littlefield explores this opens up a variety of questions about intellectual property. How does the innovation contribute to cultural continuity and coherence? Or, is it more individualistic then the tradition can bear? Personally, I think that this kind of innovation is extremely important for keeping young people involved in their cultures. I hazard as well that it is a way for traditional cultures to be vibrant and relevant. But it is a very complicated question as well. On one hand, we see climate change rendering vast swaths of vocabulary and specialized knowledge irrelevant (think about sea ice) and yet there still exists

many points of relevance and creativity for cultural participants to sustain language, aesthetic and values.

The videos on the nativejazzlive channel frequently tell a genealogy or site the traditional source of inspiration for the song. So there is still a sense of group ownership that precedes the innovation. The channel builds in the "live" or performance aspect into its name and that likewise seems a gesture towards a shared ownership as well. However, in the end, I cannot see a real self-consciousness about either traditional intellectual property nor a coherent participation in Western intellectual property protections in these examples. Rather, it seems that this YouTube content is being generated in a kind of vacuum and the default of "standard license" is filling the void. While it makes sense that indigenous content creators would be struggling with the same questions about intellectual property that all content creators are struggling with I suspect that perhaps more is at stake for them.

Indigenous intellectual property

Alaska Native Knowledge Network Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights

Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples

The scope of these resources precludes anymore than a survey of issues and concepts. However, from the outset, I felt that the conversations were talking past each other. The economics and legal structure of Western societies take for granted and from a

privileged site, much that indigenous cultures do not or which is so alien that they cannot.

> Nation states across the world have experienced difficulties reconciling local indigenous laws and cultural norms with a predominantly western legal system, in many cases leaving indigenous peoples' individual and communal intellectual property rights largely unprotected.[6] Therefore, international bodies such as the United Nations have become involved in the issue,[2] making more specific declarations that intellectual property also includes cultural property such as historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, and performing arts in addition to artwork and literature.[7]
> Wikipedia

Three resolutions from the 2007 UN declaration address what we are calling "intellectual property." These are articles 11, 24, and 31. Article 11 provides broad protections for cultural knowledge and identity. Article 24 focuses on and protects traditional medicinal practices. Article 31 speaks most directly to areas easily recognizable in Western discussions of "intellectual property." "*They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.*" It is precisely this phrasing that demonstrates the slippage between the conversations.

> Intellectual   property   rights include patents, copyright, industrial   design

rights, trademarks, plant variety rights, trade dress, geographical indications,[15] and in some jurisdictions trade secrets. There are also more specialized or derived varieties of *sui generis* exclusive rights, such as circuit design rights (called mask work rights in the US) and supplementary protection certificates for pharmaceutical products (after expiry of a patent protecting them) and database rights (in European law). Wikipedia

There appear to be a few points of contact, copyright, design rights, and plant variety rights seem to map most closely across the two conversations. But this far I have reviewed Western documents or representations. Turning to the Alaska Native Knowledge Network what can we learn about these three facets of intellectual property from a native perspective? The Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge offers a definition of two terms that may inform a sense of copyright.

Sensitive cultural information: Cultural information or details that are delicate in nature and not meant to be shared with the general public or those outside of that cultural group.

Public information: Information, which no longer belongs to an individual or group, but has become public property and the general public is allowed to use it. Informants and/or members of a cultural group have a right to understand the use that will be made of their contributions before cultural knowledge is shared and allowed to become public information.

Public information seems to entail traces of the "usufruct" still but also traces of anti-colonialism. Usufruct here emphasizing communal ownership and individual use rights. Sensitive information seems as well to bear stamps of traditional values and cultural abuse. If we recall the spiral logic of elders transmission of knowledge then perhaps sensitive knowledge is at the tightest coil of the spiral and only revealed after a long effort. But, I do think this might be different from "secret information." Secrets would seem to privilege individual rights in a way too contradictory to be situated on the same continuum as usufruct. Certainly, "secrets" may be an appropriate reaction to colonialism, but that is different from the sensitive or powerful knowledge that is transmitted after demonstrated maturity and to a proven cultural knowledge bearer. Certainly, this is very different from copyright it does not give ownership to an individual and their heirs. It does make cultural transmission and preservation possible, but it is aimed at knowledge transfer. There is an interesting parallel to some Western tropes about intellecutal property where analogies between physical and intellectual property seem to be made as well.

Returning to the Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge we see two points for Elders regarding copyright and intellectual property. Certainly, this is a

clear charge of responsibility and probably an onerous burden as well.

> Seek out information on ways to protect intellectual property rights and retain copyright authority over all local knowledge that is being shared with others for documentation purposes.
>
> Carefully review contracts and release forms to determine who controls the distribution of any publications and associated royalties.

The second section of this statement which seems to have bearing on both intellectual property and cultural innovation is aimed at Artists and Illustrators. Ten points are raised for these creators (and here I am assuming these are aimed at culture members) I present only the four points that are relevant to my topic.

> Make it a practice to insure that all cultural content has been acquired under informed consent and has been reviewed for accuracy and appropriateness by knowledgeable local people representative of the culture in question.
>
> Arrange for copyright authority and royalties to be retained or shared by the person or community from which the cultural information originated, and follow local protocols for its approval and distribution.
>
> Insure controlled access for sensitive cultural information that has not been explicitly authorized for general distribution.
>
> Carefully explain the intent and use when obtaining

permission to take photographs or videos, and make it
clear in publication whether they have been staged as a
re-enactment or represent actual events.

Informed consent and intent and use loom large as
responsibilities these content creators may have. As I
mentioned already controlled access is another
important aspect and one that is unclear in the online
environment. The final point, however, stops short, it
does not entertain the possibility of cultural innovation
nor does it anticipate the thorny questions of
ownership. While these statements are actually quite
helpful I have to wonder how universally shared they
are among cultural members. How frequently are
conversations had how much training is provided?

Turning to "design rights" I immediately think of
form line art in Southeast Alaska. This 1998 article from
the Juneau Empire "Whose art?" is quite an impressive
representation of the complexity of viewpoints. Even
among the native voices, there is little consistency,
however near the end of the article one artist mentions
treating art for commercial purposes differently from
art for cultural uses. Another theme is a call for artists
to pay their dues to gain the vocabulary of the style.
But, if we turn time back a bit we recall that this art
signaled clans, and moites, it connected people with
legend and natural environment, and it was very much
owned. Perhaps not in an equivalent way to Wester
ownership, yet, access and expression were not, shall

we say, public information even within the same culture.

Turning to the Intellectual Property Rights and Indigenous Peoples Rights and Obligations we see an interesting discussion of both "design rights" and "plant variety rights" though in a way that sets our Western thinking on end. This paper is written by a Maori and is focused on their concerns. The author outlines in detail **The Wai262 Claim to Indigenous Flora and Fauna and Cultural and Intellectual Heritage Rights and Obligations.**

> 2.1 The claim relates to te tino rangatiratanga o te Iwi Maori in respect of indigenous flora and fauna me o ratou taonga katoa (and all their treasures) including but not limited to matauranga, whakairo, waahi tapu, biodiversity, genetics, Maori symbols and designs and their use and development and associated indigenous, cultural and customary heritage rights in relation to such taonga. Taongaí in this claim refers to all elements of a tribal groupsí estate, both material and non-material, tangible and intangible.

In this, we see that the conceptual architecture of Western notions of intellectual property as irrelevant to this statement. For the Maori plants and animals and the knowledge of them is bound together with symbols and designs. Interestingly, group estate involves both tangible property and intangible, though it is less clear what metaphors inform or exchange meaning between

these categories. I am very hesitant to map concepts from the Maori onto Alaska Native cultures. But for the sake of this assignment, I will hold this point as an artifice that moves the conversation along, but which might be falsified and modified.

9

The Difference That Makes a Difference

Conclusions

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