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Unintentional Dialogues on YouTube

RESEV 554: Semester Project Analysis Memo

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Introduction

The purpose of this video is to illustrate themes within the online user commentary reacting to Chris Crocker's (2008) YouTube video titled, "Gay HATE on YouTube!" The central question of this study is how users intermittently engage about Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Questioning (LGTBQQ) topics represented on YouTube. The unintentional dialogues between users on YouTube™ are providing additional knowledge to what is happening within today's society (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Online social networks are a natural place to employ post modern theory due to its playfulness, reflexivity, and the deconstruction of the cyber world (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). The research findings demonstrate a connection between time and negative user reactions towards LGBTQQ topics.

Why Online?

An evolution of the online world has taken place to provide everyone the ability to create content. Social networks provided a way people to connect with friends, family and online social acquaintances. Similar to the offline world, user created content had begun to utilize hate language and expletives to describe people. These degrading interactions provided a catalyst for me to take action. This online social laboratory can be brought to light, deconstructed and transcended. Therefore, helping people understand their actions are broader than snippet commented online. These unintentional dialogues are broadcast around the world. The internet is an environment where people's small gestures may become large, and it is a mirror or lens of the world around them (Popkin, 2008).

As the online world has progressed to involve many more users, the opportunities for hate language has proliferated the majority of all of the user created content websites. Many of the

websites have community guidelines. However, due to the high volume of people utilizing a website it is difficult to manage the entire community. Therefore, helping people understand their actions are broader than the snippet they comment on a website. Their unintentional dialogue is broadcast around the world. Unintentional refers to users not recognizing their comments or videos remain archived for the world to see, forever. Therefore, when a user posts a response, comment, story, video somewhere online, they may not estimate how the information may be utilized by the world online, and offline.

My Experience

My online experience began in 1993 while in graduate school. I ventured online via Talkers, which served as a real time communication system between people remotely. This application was followed by the use of Internet Relay Chat (IRC), ICQ, America Online Instant Messenger (AIM), Microsoft Messenger, GoogleTalk and finally Skype. An evolution of the online world was taking place to involve everyone.

In 1996, I developed my first website through geocities.com. This site provided a way for my online friends to see my pictures, and learn more about who I was at the time. I no longer have this website. In 2005, I was an early adopter of MySpace.com/gotchallama and Facebook. Both of these social networks provide a way for me to connect with friends, family and my online social network.

One of the many reasons I am passionate about the online community is because of my personal experiences. In December 2004, I started to play the game Halo 2 on XBOX Live via the XBOX console. The interface for XBOX Live allowed opportunities for gamers to communicate through voice interactions while playing the game. In many ways, it was a way for

me to personally escape from everyday life. Until, I started to come across players who ruined the gaming experience for me by utilizing expletives to describe people. The interactions provided a catalyst for me to take action.

In 2006, I became an administrator for an online gameserver. This experience was where I found the use of hate speech and language to increase through our various game server formats: in-game chat, game forums, and the ventrillo voice server. Particularly, with gamers between the ages of 9 and 21. Being an educator, it was difficult for me to not teach during any sort of discipline regarding the player degradation. Community guidelines were put into place, and enforced through a series of steps. The first being explaining why the language was not appropriate for the gaming server, nor in the “real” world. Secondly, if the behavior was not modified the player’s account would be suspended for a period of time, and ultimately could be permanently removed.

YouTube as an Artifact

Since 2005, YouTube.com has existed for users to share videos to a worldwide audience. According to Comscore (2008), in July 2008, 91 million viewers watched 5 billion videos on YouTube.com (54.8 videos per viewer). YouTube may be considered a virtual settlement where people post videos about the society. These videos evolve into user comments and videos in response to the various, sometimes controversial, subject matter.

Chris Crocker

In September 2007, the world was introduced to Chris Crocker. His video, “Leave Britney Alone,” has been viewed on YouTube.com over 24 million times. Chris Crocker’s YouTube channel has over 10 million people subscribing to its content. Coined by Will Doig (2008)

Homophobosphere as, “an environment created by antigay postings on Internet blogs that spreads hate, produces fear, and is still protected by free speech.” Chris Crocker reflected through video log about Doig’s article on February 8, 2008 with his video “Gay HATE on YouTube!” This video has been viewed over 2.5 million times.

Analyzing Data

A sample of the over 84,214 user comments and 375 video responses were randomly extracted from YouTube with respect to “Gay HATE on YouTube!” The data are parsed into several different levels of analysis. First, the comment data is left as is, including user names. This analysis allows for the increased understanding of the structure of the community since the user names will be clustered together if the users had frequent common interaction. Second, individual user comments are separated into positive, neutral, and negative towards the video itself. Third, the comments are categorized by use of phrases, and words. This step is taken to see if there is a difference between themes within language usage. Finally, the individual user files are bundled by user-shared identification.

Preliminary Results

Based upon a scan of the data, an early assumption concludes the majority of the earlier comments are positive, and later responses are negative. The positive comments are thematically caring, supportive, nurturing and understanding. Whereas, the negative responses are violent, abrasive, rejecting, and hateful.

My Lens and Implications

Analyzing the data provided me with responses I was unprepared to acknowledge existed in society. I have not been personally privy to hate. In particular the violent responses to Chris’s

video about Gay hate. It did not and does not sit with ease in my mind. In fact, it only strengthens my ambition to understand the unintentional dialogues occurring online. I hope to continue to unfold the paradigm of intentional and unintentional dialogue within the hypertextual world of an online community while determining how it impacts society as a whole.

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