

# You're in My 1-1 World Now: The practice of remixing gaming culture on YouTube

Theo Plothe  
American University

## Abstract

This paper explores content regarding videogame remix culture on *YouTube* focusing on the comedy channel *Dorkly*, a comedy and gaming culture site. *Dorkly* videos take a humorous look at video game characters and gaming culture, often making social and meta-commentary by taking characters out of their textual places and remediating them in new, sometimes nuanced or highly controversial contexts. The author investigated the reception of videos within the gaming community on *YouTube* amongst user-generated comments posted underneath each video. Analysis compiled 150 randomly selected comments from 20 randomly selected videos on *Dorkly's YouTube* channel, for a total of 3,000 comments. Emergent categories were coded as an indicator of audience interpretation of the text; derivative, synchronicity, authenticity, comparative, evaluative, communicative, and memetic. The implications of the study suggest gamers interpret the text communally, reifying community norms and culture while inspiring creativity and future remixing.

## Keywords

YouTube; games; gaming community; intertextuality; remix culture

## Literature Review: YouTube and Remix

Fagerjord (2010) calls *YouTube* a remix in itself: "You might call the site a clever remix of a video gallery, a blog-like commenting system, a system of friends and connections as in a social network site such as *LinkedIn* and a file-sharing site or network" (p. 195). *YouTube* is the logical destination for many users and their expressions of remix culture, but there are the looming issues of copyright and creative culture in a formal context. This paper explores this content regarding videogame remix culture on *YouTube* focusing on the comedy channel *Dorkly*, a comedy and gaming culture site created by the founders and editors of *College Humor*. Currently *Dorkly's YouTube* channel, (begun Jan. 13, 2007) has nearly 440,000 subscribers and well over 97 million views. Most of their near 200 videos have at least 100,000 views, with some into the multi-millions.

*Dorkly* videos take a humorous look at video game characters and gaming culture, often making social and meta-commentary by taking characters out of their textual places and remediating them in new, sometimes nuanced or highly controversial contexts. Their remediation of popular these popular characters including *Mario*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and any number of fighters in the *Mortal Kombat* series often include commentary and narratology from a myriad of extratextual sources in gaming and nerd culture including television, films, comic books, the Internet and popular culture at large.

For the purposes of this paper, I investigated the reception of the videos within the gaming community on *YouTube* amongst user-generated comments posted underneath each video.

This 'new media' presents a more interactive form of media, sometimes profoundly influenced by its fanbase; the storytelling is woven into the audience interaction. As Jenkins wrote regarding the *Matrix* trilogy and his notion of "trans-media storytelling" (96), the interlocking parts of the trilogy make their own unique contributions to a single unfolding macro-narrative, and reference one another freely. The *Matrix* phenomenon also spawned another type of convergence, in the form of a rabid fanbase who research the philosophy behind the story; write elaborate fictions of their own set within its world; create short *Matrix* movies of their own; and of course are vocal with complaints and/or praise as they watch the official storyline unfold.

Halbert (2009) argues that video remixes constitute a different logic than that of commercial

production, whereby professionals create artistic content that is then distributed to the masses. The logic of remix, Halbert argues, does not rely on the motive of profit, but of cultural circulation and provides an alternative to the commercial model, “By using the term “user-generated content,” the structure of the narrative implicitly undermines the value that can be placed on the original work of “users” and implies that professional contributions are somehow superior” (p. 929). Video remix, then, constitutes the creation of original creative content using commercial sources in a way that often undermines or speaks back to the original source. Rather than seeing remixed videos as derivative entertainment, some scholars argue that these products stand as creative works in their own right.

## Research Questions

Research questions considered in this paper will include: (1) How do the commenters on *Dorkly* remix videos understand these videos as remix?; (2) Are the commenters aware of, or are they concerned with, intertextuality?; (3) What do commenters on *Dorkly* videos consider to be important in each video?

## Methods

This study conducted a content analysis of a sample of *YouTube* comments within videos on the *Dorkly YouTube* page. As a research tool, content analysis is often used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts and is frequently used within social media to analyze interactions between users on *YouTube*.

Content analysis is a common method used to analyze *YouTube* comments. Muralidharan, Dilistone, and Shin (2011) used a content analysis of 113 *YouTube* videos and 2,219 audience comments on the site to examine BP’s public relations strategy after the Gulf Oil Spill. Siersdorfer et al. (2010) analyzed *YouTube* comments and their influence using the Mutual Information (MI) measure. Asselin et al. (2011) also used content analysis of comments on educational *YouTube* to determine how students interpret these videos. Thelwell et al.’s (2012) study of sentiment in social media posts also included a content analysis of *YouTube* comments.

For this study, the author analyzed 150 randomly selected comments on 20 randomly selected videos from *Dorkly’s YouTube* channel, totaling a sample size of 3,000 randomly selected comments. The comments were coded based on a specific coding scheme derived from the data. These emergent categories serve as an indicator of audience interpretation of the text and are as follows:

- **derivative**, comments which simply rehashed lines or actions in the videos.
- **synchronicity**, considers the intertextuality of referents and other texts, most often elicited for humor such as “So this is what Ari Gold does now” by ReedParkes on the “*Mario Meets With His Agent*” video. ReedParkes refers to *Mario’s* agent as a pastiche of the agent from the *HBO* series *Entourage*.
- **authenticity**, considers the “trueness” of the remix to its source materials. robertsfunny1995 wrote “Stars aren’t even supposed to last THAT long.”
- **comparative**, how the video compares to other videos that contain similar texts.
- **evaluative**, editorial analysis from the user. On “*Koopa Gets A Star*,” retrosonicfan58 writes, “This is what happens when your being a dick to Mario you get owned.”
- **communicative**, conversations between *YouTube* users.
- **memetic**, comments that elicit internet meme culture. Referencing the popular “Friendship” meme from *Mortal Kombat*, bulletbill479 wrote “Friendship: REGRETED.”

## Implications

It is clear that *Dorkly* and other *YouTube* channels like it tread the deep waters of remix culture. Its use of various gaming characters, archetypes, and even notions of game design and gameplay itself, belie a sophisticated mashup of genres and media that should be analyzed and further explored. The implications of the study suggest gamers interpret the text communally, reifying community norms and culture while inspiring creativity and future remixing. This study seeks to complement existing scholarship on remix culture and gaming, and develop and inspire new research on the merging of these subjects within the field of communication.

## References

- Alexa Internet. (2012). "Collegehumor.com Site Info". Retrieved <http://www.alexacorp.com/siteinfo/collegehumor.com>
- Asselin, M., Dobson, T., Meyers, E.,M., Teixeira, C., Ham, L. (2011). *iConference '11: Proceedings of the 2011 iConference*, 640-642.
- Consalvo, M. (2006). Console video games and global corporations: creating a hybrid culture. *New Media & Society* 8, 117-213. doi: 10.1177/1461444806059921.
- Burgess, J. & Green, J. (2009). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture*. Polity, Malden, MA.
- CHMedia. (2012). "Properties." Retrieved from <http://www.chmedia.com/properties>
- da Silva, P.D. & Garcia, J.L. (2012). YouTubers as satirists: Humour and remix in online video. *Journal of e-Democracy*, 4, 89-114.
- Edwards, R., & Tryon, C. (2009). "Political Video Mashups as Allegories of Citizen Empowerment." *First Monday* 14 (10). Retrieved from <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/26>
- Ellison, N., Lampe, C. Steinfield, C., & Vitak, J. (2010). With a little help from my friends: How social network sites affect social capital processes. In Z. Papacharissi, (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture in social network sites* (pp. 124-145). New York: Routledge.
- Fagerjord, Anders. (2010). After convergence: YouTube and remix culture. In J. Hunsinger et al., (Eds.), *International handbook of internet research* (pp. 187-200), Springer.
- Fernandez-Luque L, Elahi N, Grajales FJ. (2009). An analysis of personal medical information disclosed in YouTube videos created by patients with multiple sclerosis. *Stud Health Technol Inform*, 150, 292–6.
- Halbert, D. (2009). Mass culture and the culture of the masses: A manifesto for user-generated rights. *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law*, 11, 921-961.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: NYU Press.
- Lessig, Lawrence. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. New York: Penguin.
- Marwick, Alice E. (2007). The people's republic of YouTube? Interrogating rhetorics of internet democracy. Association of Internet Researchers Conference 8.0, Vancouver, Canada, 2007. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1884349>
- McLure Wasko, M. & Faraj, S. (2005). Why should I share?: Examining social capital and knowledge contribution in electronic networks of practice. *MIS Quarterly*, 29, 35-57.
- Muralidharan S., Dillistone K., & Shin J-H. (2011). The Gulf Coast oil spill: Extending the theory of image restoration discourse to the realm of social media and beyond petroleum. *Public Relations Review*, 37, 226-232.
- Pfeil, U., Arjan, R., & Zaphiris, P. (2009). Differences in online social networking – A study of user profiles and the social capital divide among teenagers and older users in MySpace. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25, 643-654.
- Seneviratne, O. & Monroy-Hernández, A. (2010). Remix culture on the web: A survey of content reuse on different user-generated content websites. In *Proceedings of the WebSci10: Extending the Frontiers of Society On-Line*, April 26-27th, 2010, Raleigh, NC: US.

Selected Papers of Internet Research 14.0, 2013: Denver, USA

Siersdorfer, S., Chelaru, S., Nejdil, W., San Pedro, J. (2010). How useful are your comments?: Analyzing and predicting YouTube comments and comment ratings. Proceedings of WWW '10 Conference, Raleigh, NC. 891-900.

Thelwall, M., Buckley, K., Paltoglou, G. (2012). Sentiment strength detection for the social web. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 63, 163-173.

Vaidhyanathan, Siva. (2003). *Copyrights and copywrongs: The rise of intellectual property and how it threatens creativity*. New York: New York University Press.