THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO MEDIA ANTHROPOLOGY

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Patricia G. Lange

In the world of mediation, why do some social media sites become hot while others cool? What causes people to migrate away from old sites to new ones? How do social media platforms as communicative infrastructures impact self-expression, sociality, and personal empowerment? Media anthropology scholars should explore how online sites are structured and how their features and general aura impact interaction. Of particular interest is studying media migration, in which people stop using media or leave an online site that was previously important to their sociality or self-actualization. A discernable break in usage occurs, and participants go elsewhere to escape inhospitable environments or to support their goals. Given that everyday interaction often requires using social media, media migration studies should analyze why people stop using a site or service to understand users' mediated desires and sites' participatory limits.

Social media sites, which enable public, vernacular posting of media and interaction, serve as forms of infrastructure that support and influence how media may be posted and exchanged. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.), the prefix "infra" means below, and "infrastructure" refers to structures or systems containing features and capabilities that support required functionality, such as facilitating flows or exchanges of things (Larkin, 2013). Transportation infrastructures include roads and traffic laws, while media infrastructures refer in this ethnographic context to characteristics such as technical features, terms of service rules, and the site's participatory aura, all of which influence what may be posted and whether desired forms of sociality may be accomplished through video exchange. Anthropologists are interested in studying infrastructures in part to see how they might reveal "insights into other domains" (Larkin, 2103), which here refers to understanding how corporate changes to social media infrastructures both impact and reveal participants' creative and social opportunities and desires.

This chapter contributes to media anthropology scholarship by focusing on migration away from a media platform due to perceived infrastructural problems. Using a case study of early socially oriented YouTubers who migrated to Twitter, the chapter engages with digital media anthropology and traditional anthropological migration literature to understand how infrastructure impacts sociality. A key goal is exploring whether commercialized internet "architectures" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018) support sociality, to work toward achieving social justice. Reasons for leaving a site should be analyzed, and site administrators should be held accountable for

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how they support or complicate interaction, given that social media platforms are central to accomplishing sociality on public forums, yet are controlled by profit-oriented, private companies (Zuboff, 2019).

Two key factors undergird media migration studies. The first is the centrality of media in sociality in everyday life (Postill, 2017). Media anthropologists have explored how interaction and self-actualization require access to mediated spaces, taking on even greater importance than co-located community when access to community acceptance in physical locations is not available to marginalized groups (Boellstorff, 2008; Ito et al., 2010; McDonald, 2016; Miller et al., 2016). The second factor involves conceptions of place as moving beyond main associations with physical location. Pink (2015) argues that physical place is more productively theorized as a social "event" that includes interrelated constellations of people and things—including media.

Given media's central role in supporting sociality and changing conceptions of physical place, it is advantageous to explore similarities and differences between media migration and traditional physical migration concepts. Are the reasons for leaving physical places versus media sites too dissimilar for comparison? Or can traditional migration theories shed light on movement between media? Does media anthropology require new frameworks for analyzing why people leave one media infrastructure for another? Or are there meaningful similarities that invite comparison and use of both rubrics to broaden understanding of movement to support sociality and personal empowerment? Media migration sometimes exhibits motivations similar to those in transnational migration, which seek to expand and maintain human connection and social support systems (Baldassar, 2015; McKay, 2018)—although key differences also exist. Nevertheless, media anthropologists and migration theorists analyze why people change their loci of sociality, a fundamental aspect of humanity.

Anthropologists have investigated social reasons for leaving one's homeland, and for switching technologies. In addition to political concerns and economic opportunities, social motivations such as joining extended family networks also influence physical movement. Such motivations may even contradict economic logic or personal well-being (Baldassar, 2015). Notably, media migration is different from swapping back and forth between media to communicate. It is distinct from "polymedia" practices in which people choose from myriad communicative options to fulfill social or emotional needs (Madianou and Miller, 2012). Media migration centrally involves a visible and meaningful break from one platform or media to use another.

This chapter draws on a multi-year, multi-method ethnographic study of sociality-motivated YouTubers to analyze their migration away from the site due to its intensifying commercialized atmosphere. The chapter first outlines the ethnographic context and discusses past instances of media migration in response to infrastructural changes. It then compares media migration to anthropological conceptualizations of geographical migration, noting similarities and differences. The chapter next explores media migration categories, and shows how numerous scholarly terms might productively be theorized under the broader media migration category. My goal is to encourage a collective conversation by proposing and analyzing dynamics in the anthropology of media migration, particularly with regard to how specific media supports human sociality.

Ethnographic Context

The chapter draws on an ethnography of self-expression and sociality on the video-sharing site of YouTube. The study focused on a group of video bloggers (vloggers) who created video blogs (vlogs) to connect with people socially (Lange 2019, 2020a). Interviewees watched each

other's videos, posted supportive comments, exchanged tips for improvement, sent private messages, and met offline in grassroots gatherings to hang out and have fun. Many wished to support each other's amateur video-making skills or help each other through personal tragedy. YouTube interviewees often worked in professions such as office support, web design, temporary agencies, social work, and retail. Most had access to numerous media—and thus migration opportunities—although some struggled financially with securing new equipment or stable internet access.

Data was examined from 152 interviews, video-sharing patterns, hundreds of video artifacts, and participant-observation online and in grassroots meet-ups across the United States, and one in Canada. Most YouTube interviewees were early adopters, having joined within the first year of YouTube's launch in 2005. The study originated in 2006–2009, with supplementary data collected in 2016–2020. I also maintained a YouTube vlog (*AnthroVlog*) and completed an ethnographic film entitled, *Hey Watch This! Sharing the Self Through Media* (Lange 2020a).

YouTube originally offered features common on "social media," which connotes "the collection of software that enables individuals and communities to gather, communicate, share, and in some cases collaborate or play" (boyd, 2009). Social network sites (SNS), one form of social media, offers features such as a "profile page" containing a self-description and hard-coded friendship links depicting one's site-organized social network. Initially mimicking the social network "profile page" feature was the YouTube "channel page" which is a participant's main YouTube page. It lists videos that the user has uploaded and self-entered personal information. In 2007, YouTube introduced monetization. Qualifying individuals could join YouTube's "partner" program, and receive a share of revenue earned through video-based ads. Official figures are not available but content creators report that YouTube's share of ad revenue is about 45 percent (Kaufman, 2014). YouTube's current hybrid structure privileges commercialized video streaming but retains a few social media features, such as an ability to post videos and comments. Although some interviewees became YouTube partners who earned ad revenue, most of the socially motivated YouTubers whom I studied bonded by exchanging videos and comments rather than using social network or monetization features.

Interviewees often used Stickam, a different live video chat service that ran from 2005 to 2013 ("Stickam," n.d.). YouTubers appreciated experiencing synchronous video chat versus asynchronously making and commenting on videos. One interviewee characterized waiting for comments as less "interactive" than Stickam's live, synchronous atmosphere. Yet synchronous interaction was insufficient to lure participants away from YouTube's platform. Instead, Stickam effectively functioned as a "satellite" (Lange, 2019) or "supplement" or "plug in" to YouTube (Burgess and Green, 2018: 101). YouTubers swapped between these modalities to post both videos and enjoy "live" interaction with YouTube friends, but they did not cease using YouTube to migrate to Stickam.

The longitudinal aspect of the study revealed important mediation patterns that were not apparent during initial YouTube participation. Key infrastructure characteristics include participatory rules and technical features. As monetization goals intensified, YouTube's rules tightened about integrating copyrighted material into videos—a common social and creative practice. In addition, algorithms were used to identify popular videos and promote them on recommendation lists. The way that infrastructures are organized not only facilitates flows of things but also provides a kind of "mentality or way of living in the world" (Larkin, 2013: 331). Through its rules and incentives, infrastructures aim to produce certain types of participants who can orient more efficiently to standardized behaviors (Larkin, 2013; Von Schnitzler, 2008). As a result of the site's infrastructural characteristics, YouTubers often posted content oriented less around friendship and more toward gaining views and achieving broad algorithmic success, all of which

created a commercialized aura that prompted many interviewees to become disillusioned and leave, often after three to five years on the site.

Studying sites longitudinally reveals insight for analyzing responses to infrastructural changes, rhythms of usage, and response to changes in media. For instance, Kottak and Pace (this volume) observed recognizable stages in Brazilian television adoption, moving from novelty to saturation. YouTube interviewees exhibited a participatory rhythm moving from enthusiasm to social intensification to disillusionment. This chapter picks up where the ethnographic story of *Thanks for Watching* (2019) concluded, by delving more deeply into migration theory, rethinking terms such as "digital migration," and proposing a more general rubric of media migration. As YouTubers left, some joined Twitter or Facebook. Yet, YouTube as an orienting community framework did not disappear. Rather, it took new form in new social media sites—a phenomena that became visible by studying the site over time.

Media Migration Histories

Media migrations—including infrastructural disruptions to sociality—have occurred since the earliest online communities. One instance of media migration—albeit without use of the term—appeared in a study of the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), a computer-based community that Howard Rheingold (2000) studied between 1985–1993. Due to financial difficulties, it was sold to an entrepreneur whom many members disliked. Conflict drove some members to establish their own online community, which remained small and eventually experienced its own discord. Migration occurred because members became disenchanted with the community's infrastructure, including its operations and parameters.

Media anthropologists have observed that social media may exhibit a generational aura, such that young people collectively use a site to be with friends on a particular platform (Ito et al., 2010). Participants may leave amid changing age-based demographics. When older adults predominate, or as parents join sites to monitor their children (Miller, 2016), young people may migrate away to seek their own mediated social spaces. Youths in the United States have reportedly migrated away from Facebook and toward Instagram and Snapchat (Ross, 2019). Media migration may also exhibit apparent race and class dimensions as when media scholar danah boyd (2012) observed that many white, affluent, young people began migrating away from MySpace to Facebook, citing concerns about MySpace being overrun with spam and having a perceived broader user demographic in comparison to college-oriented Facebook users in its early years.

Numerous scholarly terms describing such dynamics may be subsumed under the rubric of media migration. Technologists and computer specialists speak of "user migration" when transferring people, data, or hardware from one system to another (Bourreau, Cambini, and Dogan, 2011). Additional terms include "cyber migration" (Zengyan, Yinping, and Lim, 2009), "digital migration" (Lange, 2019, 2020b), and "virtual diaspora" (Boellstorff, 2008). In their study of SNS, Zengyan, Yinping, and Lim (2009) argue that when users switch away from an SNS more permanently, their behavior constitutes "cyber migration."

Previously I used the term "digital migration" to characterize YouTubers' movements between digital sites (Lange, 2020b). This chapter proposes the broader term "media migration" as a productive general rubric, given that not all migration between media is digitally based, nor are digital properties always the most salient experiential characteristics of media migration. The theoretical category of media migration gathers disparate but related concepts to understand mediated movement. The idea is to compare various media migration experiences, and through comparison, identify important characteristics and patterns in media migration.

Media Migration Dynamics and Migration Theory

Migration scholars explore why people leave one experiential context, and how they create meaning when moving elsewhere (Baldassar, 2015; Brettell and Hollifield, 2015; Horst, 2007; Lanz, 2013; McKay, 2018). In media migration, people cease using or centrally orienting around one infrastructural medium and use other sites or services. Yet, what aspects of geographical migration apply when analyzing media migration? Classical migration theory previously emphasized escaping "poverty, conflict, or environmental degradation," yet the migratory landscape is complex, and poverty and violence are no longer the overwhelming factors driving physical migration (Castles, De Haas, and Miller, 2014: 5). Geographical migration often increases with development, "because improved access to education and information, social capital and financial resources increases people's *aspirations* and *capabilities* to migrate, while improved transport and communication also facilitate movement" (emphasis original; Castles, De Haas, and Miller, 2014: 25).

Media migration and geographical migration share similar characteristics. They both often exhibit socially oriented motivations for leaving, aspirations for self-advancement, and sometimes a longing to return. Yet, key differences exist in terms of the practical demands and types of relocation, the degree of emotional intensity of leaving, and whether a return to a participatory environment is feasible. Transnational migration scholarship shows that dispersed families often use social media to engage in intimate communications and maintain relationships (Baldassar, 2015; McKay, 2018, Sinanan, 2017). The present data suggest that these patterns differ from the contact that YouTubers exhibited when migrating to another platform, sometimes only casually maintaining friendships. Nevertheless, general similarities between media migration and geographical migration invite analytical comparisons to identify useful frameworks for analyzing media migration.

Motivations for Leaving

Geographical migration scholarship explores why people leave a social nexus. Such explorations are observable and worthy of investigation on social media, particularly with respect to infrastructural changes. In response to decreased video postings, "farewell videos" announcing participants' departures, and reports of increased Twitter use, I explored whether interviewees viewed their Twitter participation as a "migration" away from YouTube. Similar to geographical migration, interviewees described leaving an inhospitable environment to seek new opportunities.

At a meet-up in Santa Monica, California I interviewed a documentary filmmaker who requested that I refer to her by her YouTube channel name of K80Blog. A white woman in her 20s, she often vlogged about humorous life observations. As depicted in the documentary *Hey Watch This!* (Lange 2020a), she described patterns resembling a media migration away from YouTube.

PATRICIA: Do you think that YouTube is kind of over now, um, or is it still going strong?

K80BLOG: Uhh, I think it's on its way out. I mean, you know, MySpace had its time. Uh, Facebook might be on its way out as well. Twitter will be. You know, I mean that's what's interesting like websites, they don't last very long. [I] think YouTube is on its way out. [I] think it's because it became so corporate and so much about advertising that I think a lot of people are turned off. And then maybe just the novelty of it is kind of worn away.

PATRICIA: Are you still participating on YouTube?
K80BLOG: [Not] like I used to, no.
PATRICIA: Do you stay in touch with friends you met on YouTube?
K80BLOG: Yes, I do. I do. [And] that's what Twitter is good for … [I'm on Twitter] because I'm keeping connected with the YouTube community.

Similar to other YouTubers, K80Blog faults infrastructural issues, specifically monetization and its effects, for complicating sociality. For her, YouTube was "on its way out," suggesting a decline in enthusiasm and intensity of use.

Many interviewees reported decreasing YouTube usage and instead using Twitter, a microblogging and social network site launched in 2006 that updates friends on thoughts and activities (Burgess and Baym, 2020). Twitter users post brief messages or "tweets," which were originally limited to 140 characters but expanded in 2017 to allow 280 characters ("Twitter," n.d.). I joined Twitter in April 2007 (eventually migrating to my current account in 2009 with a better online user name!) and followed publicly posting interviewees. Artifactual analysis supports K80Blog's contention. Her YouTube channel shows three videos posted in May 2020. Prior to that, her latest video was posted in 2015. In contrast, she tweeted 58 times between February and May 2020.

Geographical migration studies suggest that people leave when their current situation presents difficulties or when a new location facilitates achieving aspirations. YouTubers complained that excessive advertising supporting the site's monetization negatively impacted their social environment. Video makers began ending their videos with obnoxious exhortations to "Rate! Comment! Subscribe!" to their YouTube channel. To subscribe to a video maker at that time only required pressing a yellow "Subscribe" button, and an account holder would be alerted at no cost when the video maker uploaded a new video. The site has considerably expanded its technical features to include paid subscription options and monetization metrics that track aggregate video watch time and require minimum subscription thresholds to achieve monetization (Levin, 2018). Interestingly, even amid today's commercialized infrastructure, successful video makers still characterize their persona as oriented to creative self-expression rather than just making money (Stokel-Walker, 2019).

Interview narratives referenced not only individual choices, but also patterns of collective movement. An interviewee named Ryan (thetalesend on YouTube) similarly blamed YouTube's excessive commercial atmosphere for compromising sociality. Ryan was a 29-year-old man of Filipino descent and iReporter for the CNN.com website, who sadly, has since passed away. He posted about social issues, and made humorous vlogs. As recorded in *Hey Watch This!* (Lange, 2020a), he takes a broad perspective of YouTube's future in his interview in Santa Monica. Ryan opined that YouTube would continue offering interesting content, but had ceased to be an effective site for supporting vernacular social media.

RYAN: YouTube is still gonna go strong. But it's not gonna be mainly from user-generated content. It's [gotten] more commercial, you've seen all the ads pop up a lot more. As a community-based, kind of social media thing, YouTube is pretty much done. But as a place for people to find interesting videos, and videos that may be promoted by YouTube, it's not gone yet, but, uh, it may be. Someone [is] bound to make a service that is more user-friendly. And [whenever] someone finds or adopts that area, people will move on. It's like the rest of the internet. We had MySpace, now we have Facebook. No one's on MySpace anymore, now we have Twitter. So, it's just whoever gives the next best step, that's what's gonna go on. That's just the way the internet is.

K80Blog and Ryan reference intensive commercialization as prompting deep concerns about the site's *participatory* future. As in traditional migration theory, deprivation or inability to tolerate one's circumstances prompts change, particularly to fulfill goals of sociality and self-expression.

Notably, several participants used their YouTube name on Twitter, reflecting an internet pattern in which people retain their online names across sites. One study estimated that 45 percent of social network participants on Facebook, Twitter, and Foursquare use the same online name across sites (Li et al., 2018). Transporting a name from a prior social media site also potentially indexes how the original site may organize participants who travel to new interactive contexts. Conceptually, participants maintained an idea of YouTube sociality on a new infrastructural platform, suggesting that infrastructures may continue to retain influence beyond use in their original instantiation.

Migrating to Self-Actualize

Interviewees referenced being influenced by a new site's "novelty," a concept linked to self-actualization opportunities and aspirational aspects of geographical migration. In their study of massively multiplayer online role-playing games, Hou et al. (2011) observed that the novelty of an alternative served as an impetus for migrating to a new site. Closely associated with novelty is the "cool" factor, which by definition continually changes. Gladwell (1997) argues that "the act of discovering what's cool is what causes cool to move on." In interviews, participants described patterned movement to new sites, as seen in prior media adoption studies. A new medium initially feels "novel and strange" and accords prestige to early adopters, but upon saturation in a community, it loses its "novelty and distinction" (Kottak, 2016).

Research suggests that the "cool" factor constitutes much more than superficial fads. Rather, it connotes how infrastructural factors support achieving one's goals. Infrastructures have long been associated with "fantasy and desire," and a dream of "realizing the future" to achieve personal and societal progress and freedom (Larkin, 2013). In a study of public access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), Gomez and Gould (20010: 257) found that "cool" could be defined as a "set of subjective perceptions that make public access to ICT attractive: a combination of unrestricted internet access, friendly operators, and a comfortable space for social interaction." Venues such as libraries that offered instrumental uses of ICTs were perceived as less cool than cyber cafés that supported sociality. In a study of Facebook applications, Neale and Russell-Bennett (2009) quote researchers who argue that cool products are "inspiring and attractive" thus "providing *empowerment* to the user," eliciting the "best of their capacities and abilities" (emphasis added; Parvaz, 2003). Once a platform no longer inspires or empowers, it is no longer "cool." Participants move on to the "next best thing," as Ryan stated.

Floods of obnoxiously presented advertisements, competition between video makers, extreme videos with unsupported claims, and increasingly strict rules about producing content to attain monetization are all examples of infrastructural factors that socially motivated YouTubers cited as participatory complications (Lange, 2017). YouTubers complained that tight copyright prohibitions were enacted to facilitate lucrative partnerships with corporate advertisers. They believed these factors unfairly complicated self-expression and creativity. To the extent that what is "novel" and "cool" feeds creative empowerment, people may migrate away when they can no longer creatively express the self, in contrast to new sites where they hope to attain creative control and social support. Such patterns resemble a common motivation in traditional migration in which people move in the "hopes for a better life," one that

enables self-actualization (Jackson, 2013), suggesting that understanding aspiration, infrastructural opportunities, and the "cool" factor are all important for studying both geographical and media migration.

Relation to Diaspora

Scholars call for analyzing the relationship between migration and diaspora (Butler, 2001; Clifford, 1994; Tölölyan, 1996), which typically refers to people who have been dispersed from their homeland. Common characteristics include violent separation, impossibility of return, trauma, and how people negotiate past identities in new locations. Two opposing analytical concerns have emerged. The first protests an overly restricted definition of diaspora to an "ideal type," thus ignoring new socially salient forms of diaspora (Clifford, 1994). An opposite concern opposes overly broad use to the point of disrespectfully losing analytical force, as in the so-called "egg cream diaspora," referring to that beverage's geographically dispersed consumers (Tölölyan, 1996: 10). To what extent, then, does the diaspora rubric apply to media migration?

Media migration is distinct from patterns of "digital diaspora" (Everett, 2009; Laguerre, 2010), at least where that term describes consistently used media that supports already-dispersed groups in an ongoing way to achieve economic, political, and social goals. The term digital diaspora has been used to characterize how a diaspora might "express and perform its *digital* identity" (emphasis original; Laguerre, 2010). However, media migration would become salient if a diaspora moved from one platform or media to another as its central participatory locus.

Research in media anthropology reveals that, infrastructurally, when a platform that is important to a social group is shut down, participants may feel intense sadness and loss. They may form a "virtual diaspora" (Boellstorff, 2008; Pearce, 2009) that seeks to bond on a different media platform. The term "virtual diaspora" (Boellstorff, 2008) describes forced and often traumatic mediated movement between online, virtual worlds, and is an important sub-category of media migration.

Participants may experience intense feelings over the loss of central interactive loci, particularly in marginalized communities in which online connections are vital to sociality, such as in disabled groups. In his study of *Second Life*, a site in which people play and interact in player-created graphical environments, anthropologist Tom Boellstorff (2008: 197) observed that "virtual diasporas" form "when a virtual world goes out of existence and some of its residents flee to other virtual worlds." Similarly, players of a massively multiplayer online game called Uru formed a virtual diaspora that Pearce (2009) called the "Uru Disaspora." When Uru developers discontinued the game, players migrated to platforms such as *Second Life*. Participants were "shocked" and exhibited "symptoms of posttraumatic stress" upon losing their social "homeland" (Pearce, 2009: 89). The players reportedly experienced "shared trauma" due to the "deep emotional connection" they formed with Uru community members—some of whom were disabled and relied on internet enclaves to obtain resources and facilitate social interaction (Pearce, 2009: 89). Hou et al. (2011: 1893) use the term "migration" to describe players' feelings of isolation when a game is shut down or no longer meets their needs, thus losing connection to their ludic "place of origin." Boellstorff (2008: 197–198) also observed "lesser forms of virtual diaspora" in which sites simply become "less popular" and participants migrate elsewhere, often bringing friends with them.

The data suggest that the present YouTubers did not form a tight-knit diaspora in traditional or updated media senses. The break that YouTubers experienced was voluntary rather than due to forced circumstances such as a site closure. Interviewees often said they left because the environment no longer met their needs, yet many retained connections to YouTube and its

participants via other social media. Whether or not an instance of media migration constitutes a "diaspora," or group that suffers a violent break from a social nexus, must be evaluated in each case. However, given that some mediated groups have experienced infrastructural disruptions to central forms of interaction in ways that resemble diasporas, further ethnographic research should explore the relationship between new types of diaspora and media migration.

Migratory Return

In both geographical and media migration, participants may return to a prior social context. In her anthropological study of geographical migration, Brettell (2003: 47) quotes Gmelch (1980) who defines return migration as "the movement of emigrants back to their homeland to resettle." In the early 20th century, despite the costs, an estimated 25 percent of the 16 million Europeans who emigrated to the United States eventually returned to Europe, suggesting that return is a crucial area of migration studies (Brettell, 2003). Media participants at times similarly expressed a wish to return.

Yet, return is not always possible physically or online. A place of origin may no longer exist, such as when political boundaries change or a site permanently closes. YouTube still exists and people may post videos, yet personal and social factors may complicate a robust return. Many participants have not yet returned to YouTube to post videos to their original account with the same intensity, in part because their "media cohort," or group who arrived at the same time on the site also left (Lange, 2019). Still, interviewees sometimes conceptualized future participation in terms of a possible return. An interviewee who asked to be referred to by her YouTube channel name of lemonette illustrated a common theme. She is a white woman now in her 60s who helped organize YouTube meet-ups in the southern U.S. and was very social on the site. Often vlogging from her car, her videos are heartfelt and comedic.

In a birthday video posted in 2011 that she calls a "comeback video," or what I call a "return video" (Lange, 2019), she says she no longer makes videos but keeps up with YouTube friends by reading their Facebook posts. This disclosure suggests at least a partial migration to a different social media site—one that does not orient around the time-consuming activity of making videos. In her video *Check in with Lemonette* posted in 2013, she admits having lost interest in YouTube when the environment shifted to boasting "how many views you got," rendering the site no longer "fun" for her. She notes that receiving kind comments still gives her a warm feeling—and a twinge of guilt for not posting videos. She does not promise to make new videos, but hedges saying, "I'm not going to say I'm *not* going to make any either. We'll just wait and see what happens." Like many social YouTubers, she leaves the door open to return.

Issues complicating a full return for YouTubers included health challenges, family responsibilities, departure of friends from the site, and most especially, decreased interest given the site's commercialized infrastructure. Notably, participants were often reluctant to declare that they would never again post videos. Most YouTubers in the study retained the possibility that they might return, although not exhibiting the full force of prolific video-making that they exhibited when they first joined. Videos posted a decade later reveal a desire to communicate one day through video and to keep connected with members of an envisioned YouTube community—whether on YouTube or on other sites.

A Collective Conversation About Media Migration

Media migration scholarship should explore specific types of media migration as they emerge in socio-technical contexts. Scholars should examine arrivals and departures, and explore nuanced

uses of the concept that pertain to mediated dynamics. For example, in traditional migration, ethnographic research shows that returnees may encounter difficulties in re-adjusting socially back home (Horst, 2007). Researchers might explore whether these and other dynamics are present when participants attempt to "return" back to a favorite media platform. Comparisons bring enhanced understanding of media usage patterns over time.

Types of Media Migration

The YouTube case study revealed that media migration exhibits several forms: *radical migration*, *in-migration*, and *conceptual migration* (Lange, 2019). In radical migration, a participant stops using a medium altogether. A YouTube participant may leave their channel nominally open, but post no videos, or post so infrequently as to effectively keep open a dead channel. In-migration refers to abandoning a prior channel and creating a new one *on the same site* that expresses a participant's current interests, goals, or persona. For example, an interviewee who wished to be referred to by her YouTube channel name of jenluv37 posted a video in 2012 in which she announced opening a new make-up review channel. Her prior channel exhibited no new videos after her announcement. Conversely, her new channel consistently showed many new videos from 2012 to 2020, often including several per week.

In conceptual migration, a participant may stop using a site or vastly reduce their usage, yet the idea of the site continues to provide an *orienting social context* for interaction on new sites. Conceptual migration is a useful umbrella term that folds in the "lesser virtual diaspora" that Boellstorff (2008) referenced—without overgeneralizing the term "diaspora." Conceptual migration does not presume the traumatic effects of diaspora, yet recognizes the desire for social continuity across sites. "YouTubers" may still wish to interact after they leave YouTube for Twitter. For example, K80Blog contextualized her decreased usage on YouTube by explaining that Twitter helps her keep "connected with the YouTube community." YouTube continues to provide a framework for organizing sociality on Twitter, but it is conceptual rather than practically infrastructural once participants no longer use the YouTube platform.

Departures and Arrivals

This chapter analyzed motivations for *leaving* YouTube. However, arrival stories are also crucial to the media migration saga. Anthropologists have analyzed the impact of arriving on immigrants, ramifications for the host populations, and tensions between them (Brettell, 2003; Horst, 2007; Rytter, 2019; Salem-Murdock, 1989). Colson (2003) argues that more research is needed in studying the impacts of new arrivals on existing communities. Similar categorical impacts are observable on social media. On YouTube, tensions emerged when popular users of the video-based Vine service migrated to YouTube after Vine was closed (Alexander, 2018). Vine was a video-hosting service founded in 2012, in which people shared 6-second long, looped video clips.

Viners with large audiences migrated to YouTube and Instagram after Vine uploads were disabled in 2016 ("Vine," n.d.). Referred to in YouTube videos as "Vine refugees," controversy erupted when certain popular Viners achieved rapid success on YouTube (Alexander, 2018). By transitioning their aesthetics to longer-form videos, successful Viners brought many of their followers to YouTube. YouTubers faulted Viners such as Jake Paul and Logan Paul for their abrasive personalities and negative impact on YouTube.

Using migration terminology, one pundit opined that the Viners' immigration to YouTube "may have started out as an invasion, but it's become a permanent settlement" (Alexander,

2018). Researchers on Vine lamented the death of that infrastructure's technical 6-second video requirement, which provided challenging and unique creative opportunities that spawned distinct aesthetics (Browne, 2017). The Vine tale may be just the beginning. Reports suggest that governmental bans on the short-form, video-sharing site of TikTok may prompt new waves of media migration to YouTube (Doval and Sarkar, 2020). Studying media migration arrivals—both voluntary and forced due to site closures—are very important to understand media migration's impacts, including the interactive dynamics on the receiving media service and its participants.

Studies of media participants' arrivals or returns to a former site might draw inspiration from return migration rubrics. Important analytical categories may emerge, such as examining closely how current participants on a social media site treat new arrivals, and whether returnees' behaviors exhibit similar or different patterns depending upon which media sites they are originating from. Horst (2007) for example, found that current residents felt that returnees to Jamaica exhibited different behavior depending on whether they were returning from England versus the United States. Research on migration and transnational movement may offer meaningful analytical categories for exploring new forms of media migration.

Conclusion

Media migration away from a particular medium is often prompted by dissatisfaction with the infrastructure of a prior site as well as opportunities and technical affordances of new sites. Media migration is an important chapter in the human mediation saga, particularly in terms of understanding the infrastructural reasons that complicate a site's perception as socially inviting and personally empowering. For socially oriented vloggers in the study, a prime migration motivation involved their disenchantment with YouTube's monetization requirements, changes in technical features, and heavily competitive, commercialized atmosphere. Infrastructures are never just about physical parameters but also include the economic, political, legal, and social systems with which they are intertwined (Larkin, 2013). Understanding the forces that prompt changes in media sites and services is important to design equitable interactive spaces that support participants' goals. Achieving self-expression online amid services that are owned by a few corporations presents challenges and may require activism to envision equitable participatory opportunities (Lange, 2017).

An important goal for this chapter has been to propose an umbrella term that gathers disparate phenomena to facilitate a collective anthropological conversation about media migration dynamics. It has presented a rubric that at times drew on traditional migration theory to explore how and why people break with prior media. It also provided analytical categories particular to media migration. Future research should investigate which type of media migration is present ethnographically. Not all online migration stories, for example, yield an emotionally driven "virtual diaspora" but may still exhibit a "conceptual migration" in which the sociality of a prior site retains socio-emotional force. Nor are all migrations online oriented around "digital migration" as the key salient aspect of their movement.

Future media migration studies might address: 1) motivations for leaving a site, service, or medium; 2) motivations for choosing a new site; 3) the impact of leaving a prior site or social group; and 4) the impact of the arrival of a new group. Knowing why people migrate away from media reveals important clues about what different cultural groups expect from media to fulfill their goals and desires for achieving self-expression and sociality. The term *media migration* broadly addresses media usage at points of origin and arrival, thus encouraging researchers to explore nuanced dimensions and sub-types that are salient for particular social groups. Media

migration serves as a general rubric for understanding a wide range of phenomena that support human mediation, and offers rich terrain for understanding human interaction and creativity.

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