Conner Hepting

Allison Burns

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Week 5 Activity

1. List three ways that "fandom" can potentially play a positive role in society and three ways it can play a negative role in society.

The first way fandom can play a positive role in society is that it can allow fans to put their own inclusive twists on popular comics by making women, minorities, or LGBTQ’s the main character. Second, it gives people with unique likes a chance to express themselves without having to take backlash from unaccepting people. Finally, it allows people to add new aspects to a story that aren’t generally accepted, but in the world of fandom they are, and they allow people to express themselves. One negative thing that can come from fandom is shown in the example of James Holmes and the “Holmies.” The fans of this group were almost idolizing a mass murderer, which is something that we don’t want to come from fandom. Second, fandom can possibly give rise to a lot of trolling, which only a certain crowd understands and even then, it is still not a great form of comedy. It also can severely confuse people who do not understand the concept of trolling and can lead to big misunderstandings. Finally, fandom and fanfiction present the issue of copyright. This is not as big of an issue as the other two, but it still is a negative effect fandom can bring. Fandom writers may be attempting to make their own twist on the story, but instead violate copyright laws.

1. Essay on Audience Continuum

Around 1998 two men by the names of Abercrombie and Longhurst sought to identify and describe the types of media use by different users through the creation of many typologies describing user activity with different forms of media. According to Paul Hodkinson, they were focused on, “identifying different audience types on the basis of intensity of consumption patterns, connections with other consumer and levels of productive activity.” (Hodkinson 90) In order to fulfill this goal, Abercrombie and Longhurst came up with the audience continuum, which consist of five different categories, consumers, fans, cultists, enthusiasts, and petty producers. Consumers were those whose media use was generalized and unfocused, while fans displayed heavy media use, especially attached to certain genres, stars, or texts. Cultists are heavier media users, who develop a special and strong attachment to certain forms of media. Finally, enthusiasts are those who consume, produce, and share small-scale media produced for highly intensive fans, and petty producers create forms of cultural production beyond amateur appropriations that are organized through the market rather than enthusiasts. These five typologies and their descriptions make up Abercrombie and Longhurst’s audience continuum to describe the different types of media users in the world.

My favorite media content would be sports media, especially ESPN, so I chose this to analyze where I fall on the audience continuum. Sports are probably the thing I enjoy the most in the world, and ESPN, in my opinion, is by far the best provider of sports media in the world. I would consider myself a cultist when it comes to sports media and ESPN. Cultists are people who have a “concentrated specialist attachment to certain genres or texts, regularly communicate with discrete yet informal networks of other fans and consume, create, and circulate, specialist ‘fannish’ literature, media specific to such communities.”(Hodkinson 90) The first thing that I feel describes me and sports media is the specialist attachment to a specific genre. I am constantly watching, playing, or following sports. I have multiple ESPN sports media apps on my phone that have all alerts turned on, so I can constantly know what is going on in the world of sports. Second, I regularly am communicating in group chats with friends, on small sports blogs, or on Twitter and Instagram about how I feel about the current events in sports or other various debates. Finally, I would say that in my own way I create and circulate “fannish” media. I hang posters of my favorite sports moments in my room, I personalize my phone background to display my favorite teams, and I constantly read about future possibilities that could shake up the sports world. All of this goes back to my unyielding devotion to the sports and sports media. Although I could make an argument for falling into one of the other audience continuum categories, I believe that due to these reasons Abercrombie and Longhurst would describe me as a cultist when it comes to sports media.

Works Cited

Hodkinson, Paul. *Media, Culture and Society*. 2nd ed., Sage Publications, 2017, *VitalSource Bookshelf*, bookshelf.vitalsource.com/#/books/9781473998346/recent.