

Paul Robeson's place in YouTube: A social spatial network analysis of digital heritage

Mark Alan Rhodes II
Kent State University, USA

Abstract

This article utilizes the African American Paul Robeson and his representation on YouTube to address three critical and underexplored arenas in heritage studies. First, Paul Robeson is an individual all but lost in the public memory of the USA, despite having been one of the USA's most well-known celebrities. This article presents, for the first time, a global analysis of his representation and presence through the medium of YouTube. Second, in only a limited number of studies has YouTube been utilized to analyze memorialization and heritage; this article solidifies, channels, and expands upon those techniques. Finally, this article presents a spatial component to the otherwise nonspatial technique of analyzing YouTube social networks, presenting specific spatial data, which can be mapped and analyzed. Utilizing values of connectedness among videos of different topical clusters, as well as audience reactions to videos of a specific topic or place, allows for a deeper and broader understanding of both how Paul Robeson is memorialized and represented globally and how YouTube is an essential tool in social spatial heritage studies.

Correspondence:

Mark Rhodes, 325 S. Lincoln St., 413 McGilvrey Hall, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44240, USA.

E-mail: mrhode21@kent.edu

1 A Global Athlete, Activist, Actor, Singer, and Scholar

Born in 1898 in New Jersey, by the mid-twentieth century Paul Robeson was possibly the most recognized figure in the world. Even without such a superlative label, he, nonetheless, was influential enough to not only be in the College Football Hall of Fame, have a Hollywood Star, posthumous Grammy, and numerous honorary degrees, but continue to hold the record for longest running Shakespearean play on Broadway, be a founding member of the 'We Charge Genocide' campaign, and be memorialized and commemorated across the globe. From exhibitions in Wales, plays in England, and buildings, street signs, and statues in the USA, Paul Robeson represents a cornerstone in not only African

American and US history but Pan-Africanist thought and global rights movements.

This continued memory is in spite of, though not free from influence, his being blacklisted and restricted from travel during the red-baiting of the McCarthy era before his death in 1976. Particularly following the centenary of his birth, there has been somewhat of a renaissance of scholarly work on Paul Robeson. Many researchers have begun to compare and contrast Robeson with his peers and contemporaries, such as Beyoncé (Gammage, 2017), W.E.B. DuBois (Carew, 2004; Balaji, 2007), Isadora Duncan, Charlie Chaplin (Chambers, 2006), Jackie Robinson (Dorinson, 1999, 2002), actor and writer Tayo Aluko (Rhodes, 2016b), O.J. Simpson (Guerrero, 1998), and British politician Aneurin Bevan (Williams, 2015), while

others strive to understand his theoretical underpinnings (e.g. Spohrer, 2007, Blum, 2008, Wilson, 2013, and Rhodes, 2016a). Throughout the literature, and Robeson's (1958, 1978) own writing, the themes of anti-colonialism, human rights, and socialism come to the floor. These themes permeate through his work with the UK Parliament, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Council on African Affairs, and the United States Civil Rights Movement.

Despite being a decisive force in global geopolitics, popular memory of him today is exceptionally limited (Wright, 1975; Brown, 1976; Blum, 1998; Guerrero, 1998; Robeson, 2001, 2010). Paul Robeson is further ignored in the fields of geography, heritage, and memory studies. Other than the studies on his memorialization in Wales (Rhodes, 2015), East Berlin (Carmody, 2014), and the USA (Rhodes, 2016b, p. 2), there has been no conscious effort to study the memorialization of this prominent figure who was 'literally written out of history'. He is given passing mention in some studies (Tyner, 2006; Featherstone, 2013), but there has been no meaningful attention to the broadscale spatiality of his legacy. While previous works have analyzed his memorial landscape as found on the material landscape or in performed popular culture, this article explores an aspect of Paul Robeson's memory not yet discussed: his presence in social media. The idea that memory and heritage lives on in the digital realm of social media is a concept only recently developed (Giaccardi, 2012), something I foresee as a rapid growth area in geography, memory, and heritage studies, as more and more of the world's population gains reliable access to the internet and engages with social media.

Paul Robeson was a global activist, artist, athlete, and scholar. His spatiality and theory live on and are maintained through social media, particularly YouTube. This presence, as well as commemoration through a number of songs, plays, musicals, and films since his death in 1976, provides an ideal case study to understand how social spatial network analyses might provide better understanding into the spatiality and global heritage networks of individuals, ideas, and events. Utilizing mixed methods through social network analysis software to

determine not only how Robeson is being remembered but the spatial patterns to that memory, I reveal how individual videos factor into these separate spheres of place and/or topic. This lays a groundwork for both scholarship on Robeson, including Pan-African, music, theater, and social activist research, and more broadly, techniques analyzing YouTube or other media platforms to identify social and spatial patterns and influences of digital heritage.

2 Digital Heritage: YouTube and Memory

If we think of heritage as the work of bringing the past into the present, digital heritage considers the role of technology in those actions of memory consumption and production. Waterton *et al.* (2017, p. 4) praise the 'virtually unrestricted opportunities to (re)interpret, critique, subvert, reinforce, and (re)deploy' heritage digitally. While there exists no previous research looking at Paul Robeson and the role of social media in his memory and representation, social media, digital heritage, and the development of YouTube analysis as a fledgling area of study lay strong foundations upon which this study resides. Hoskins (2009) coined the term 'networked memory' in one of the earliest works that addressed our digital technologies as no longer simply means of communication but arenas in which memory and identity are shaped. Dijck (2010) applied this conceptualization to a Flickr analysis where shared perspectives, experiences, and memories transform individual actions into a collective and (able to be studied) connected social network. As he wrote:

Photo sharing sites tend to be presented either as spaces where communal perspectives and experiences evolve as a result of picture exchange or as visual archives where the exchange of pictures, experiences, and interpretations in the present naturally lead to a communal sense of the past. Photo sharing sites such as Flickr are neither photo exchange sites nor archives but rather social media platforms based on databases that

enable the construction of infinite connections. These platforms are firmly embedded in a culture of connectivity, a culture where the algorithms of social networking sites are gradually penetrating the core of our daily routines and practices, such as sharing photos or exchanging stories about the past. Dijck, 2010, p. 12

Even more directly speaking to memory, Pentzold (2009) presented Wikipedia as a social media platform that not only stores and disseminates knowledge but operates as a place where memory is shaped.

YouTube, specifically, operates as another social media platform that shapes and connects memories, identities, and individuals. In relation to memory studies, YouTube operates as a form of memory work, shaping and creating perceptions of history and the past (Smit *et al.*, 2017). Unlike state-sanctioned monuments or costly and highly organized commemorative events, YouTube circumvents these conventional powers through the ability for individuals and organizations to produce their own forms of communication and shape others through YouTube's various means of interaction. These virtual memorial landscapes of documentaries, podcasts, tributes, or first-person accounts shape a new form of memorialization. Knudsen and Stage (2013, p. 419) used the term 'commemorative emergence' to describe the process by which individuals, through comments, continually shape and sculpt new meanings into existed commemorative videos. Knudsen and Stage (2013, p. 424) connected YouTube's relationship between memory and space with the following statement, '[w]e see YouTube as the arena or sociopolitical space in which individual producers articulate their specific...memories'. YouTube (and the individuals and organizations who use it) has the power, however, to not only shape memories in virtual space but to shape memories of physical space. What sort of benefits could be gleaned from a spatial analysis of YouTube's memory work? To date, only studies dealing with tragedy and loss have utilized YouTube as a memorial platform (Wahlberg, 2009; Knudsen and Stage, 2013). While these studies have laid important groundwork in digital heritage, memorials

are sites of memory, not just tragedy. And, as Beciek and Juul (2008, p. 111) state, 'memory work takes place somewhere' with embedded spatial and identity-laden characteristics. This digital sense of place, with all the cultural context that accompanies it, provides a vital window into the shaping of digital heritage, the methodological means to understand and expand these processes, and the specific processes at work in the digital heritage and memorialization of Paul Robeson. This study presents YouTube as such, an arena of memory production and consumption, digital, yet still spatial.

Glynn (2009) appears to be the first to apply YouTube and the connections and power it generates to a geographical context as he examined social media's role in the place-making of Christchurch, New Zealand. Spatial history, on the other hand, is negotiated through YouTube in slightly different ways, and as Roberts (2014, p. 142) mentioned, YouTube's place-based narratives can 'provoke insights into the anthropological and lived spaces of memory and trauma, and the hidden or muted spatial stories to which they play host'. While the beginnings of research on the spatial social media geographies of YouTube and a well-developed foundation of individual and small sample video narrative analyses have revealed the power YouTube transmits to both groups and individuals (e.g. Waters and Jones, 2011; Neumayer, 2012; Edgerly *et al.*, 2013; Deschamps, 2014; Piotrowski, 2015; Puente *et al.*, 2015; White, 2015), little has been done in the form of true network analysis since Klausen and colleague's (2012) social network analysis of Al Qaeda terrorist-based videos. There has yet to be any true social spatial network analysis of YouTube, a gap in the literature, which this article fills and builds upon by introducing social media, memory studies, and spatial analysis to Paul Robeson.

3 Methods

Building off of the methods of two recent publications utilizing social network analysis to identity cultural diffusion (Xu *et al.*, 2016) and topology (Song *et al.*, 2015) of K-pop, I collected 500

videos using the search query 'Paul Robeson'. This search and collection of data, completed through the network analysis software NodeXL, enables users to draw an edge line—a visualization of connected values—between any two videos that share a similar commenter. Furthermore, YouTube videos are all classified into groupings such as music, sports, and education. Co-links or co-occurrences can then be used to orient these groups between themselves or in relation to other groups based upon their connection strength and the betweenness of clusters (Song *et al.*, 2015, p. 2582). Betweenness is measured by the frequency by which a node is 'located on the shortest path connecting everyone else in the network' (Xu *et al.*, 2016, p. 112). In other words, betweenness measures 'the number of nodes that a particular node is connecting through indirect links' (Klausen *et al.*, 2012, p. 48). Because it is identifying the shortest paths, it identifies the 'gatekeepers in a network'. Klausen *et al.* (2012, p. 48) utilized betweenness centrality in their analysis of YouTube videos by terrorist organizations and identified the following about the usefulness of the analysis:

Rather than rank-ordering nodes by the number of links, it [betweenness] is a measure of the degree to which a starting node controls the dissemination of content through strategic placement in the network. The higher the betweenness centrality the greater the number of unique 'shortest paths' pass through the node The controlling nodes in the . . . network are individually more important to the flow of information through the network.

Additionally, since YouTube does not explicitly provide spatial coordinates, or even a basic place-based categorization that researchers can use to classify videos, it is up to the researcher to qualitatively assign places to videos. Much like Roberts (2014) and Kopacz and Lawton (2011), I utilized context clues in the videos tags, titles, and descriptions to assign the 'located-ness' or place-based association of each of the 500 videos. For example the video 'Life of Paul Robeson | Kevin Maynor' included the words Newark, NJ, in its description, so it was

classified Newark, NJ, and later generalized to the USA. Similarly, 'HUAC's Jackie Robinson v Paul Robeson' was classified Washington, D.C., because the (USA) House (of Representatives) Un-American Activities Committee was in the title. In this way, classification requires personal knowledge of the subject, and at times greater time commitment to watch a video or do additional research if that information is not readily present, but as the goal of this method is to provide additional information to specific topics of digital heritage, these methodological requirements are not a barrier to replication.

YouTube does, however, provide information on the audience reaction to specific videos. Those data are collected by NodeXL and can also be the subject of analysis. Likes, dislikes, and comments present general trends of audience perception. Videos with more likes than dislikes understandably indicate the video's content is positive to the audience, and disliked videos are more negative. Comments, on the other hand, surprisingly are not the neutral median. As Rotman and Golbeck (2011) explained, users who disagree with a topic or find it controversial will more often comment on a video rather than dislike it. For this reason, they suggest when identifying negatively perceived videos to focus on number of comments rather than dislikes. Below I utilize betweenness, likes, and comments to assess YouTube videos of Paul Robeson and how they are clustered and ranked by both topic and location.

4 Paul Robeson in YouTube

4.1 Clusters and betweenness

NodeXL produced nine total clusters (seven unique), from which a breakdown of topic, size, connection, and exposure can be seen in Table 1. Music nearly constitutes a majority of the videos, and considering many videos from other groups, such as the internationalist and folk traditions clusters, contained music, music in a general sense holds a clear majority over the total number of videos. These data also show that while groups hold categorically similar data, they can still be structurally differently from one another. Group 2, which I label internationalism, for instance, has almost twice as many videos than Group 3, but Group 3 contains

Table 1 Topical clusters of 500 Paul Robeson YouTube videos

Group	Label	Vertices	Unique edges	Betweenness	Average views	Average comments	Average likes
G1	Music	233	26569	102.007	11,443.176	10.395	50.103
G2	Internationalism	123	2475	643.478	100,143.472	153.488	399.805
G3	Heritage and Folk Traditions	66	2145	109.367	6,473.424	4.561	29.258
G4	Social Organization and Resistance	41	820	75.981	19,561.951	1.463	17.683
G5	Sports	14	91	442.929	456.571	0.429	2.500
G6	Communication and Documentary	14	91	9.085	592.429	0.643	6.357
G7	Paul Robeson High School	5	10	0.000	1,622.800	1.000	4.200
G8	Paul Robeson High School	2	1	0.000	2,362.500	4.500	4.750
G9	Paul Robeson High School	2	1	0.000	2,362.500	4.500	4.750

Table 2 The seven videos with the highest betweenness values

Group	Betweenness centrality	Place association	Title	Views	Comments	Likes count	Dislikes count
5	6,201.000	Newark, NJ	Life of Paul Robeson Kevin Maynor	785	1	12	0
4	4,843.830	Washington, D.C.	HUAC's Jackie Robinson v Paul Robeson	13,518	37	34	1
2	3,649.390	Russia	Paul Robeson and LSD: MKULTRA: Part 1	8,786	12	38	4
2	3,403.751		Paul Robeson: Here I Stand Documentary	51,302	110	560	5
2	3,371.287	New York City, NY	Paul Robeson discusses Othello	44,673	92	210	3
2	2,851.815	Mississippi River	Paul Robeson - 'Ol' Man River (Showboat - 1936) J.Kern O. Hammerstein II	3,382,970	2,490	12,557	288
2	2,818.127	Russia	Soviet/ USSR Anthem in English [by Paul Robeson]	1,640,023	10,581	7,411	564

almost as many edges as Group 2, symbolizing either the compactness and virtual community of Heritage and Folk Traditions or the dispersed nature of internationalism. Similarly, Groups 5 and 6 are fairly similar in almost every category, but the betweenness value for Sports is the second highest among all groups, and Communication and Documentary holds the lowest value other than 0, signaling that Sports has a more significant role in connecting disperse groups and videos.

In addition to betweenness values on the group scale, the role of betweenness for individual videos is also important (Table 2). In the case of Paul Robeson, the two highest scoring videos, as you can see, are neither in the largest three groups nor have the highest number of views, likes, or

comments. In fact, the bottom two videos in Table 2 are the highest two viewed. 'Ol' Man River', Robeson's popular song from the musical and film *Show Boat*, holds the highest number of views and likes. 'USSR Anthem' holds the second highest views and likes and the highest number of comments and dislikes (affirming my earlier dislike statement).

Pointing out the two highest valued betweenness videos on the overall network (Fig. 1), it is clear to see how the first, while being clustered as Sports, links to Music, Internationalism, and Heritage and Folk Tradition, thus enabling a viewer of one cluster to transfer clusters via the more obscure less individually important video. The video itself is an interview with opera singer Kevin Maynor who

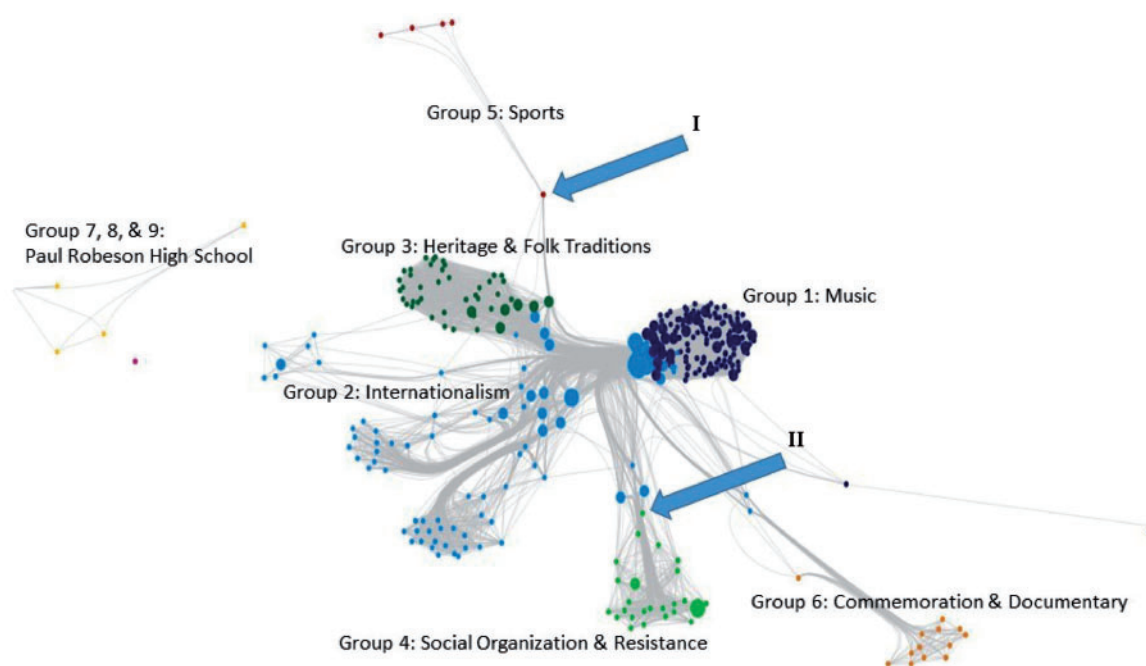


Fig. 1 Visualization of the nine topical clusters in NodeXL based upon 500 YouTube videos on Paul Robeson
Source: Author

commissioned an opera about Robeson's life in honor of New Jersey's 350th anniversary. The video touches on numerous subjects such as music, acting, sports, and activism by utilizing music, acting, photographs, and direct quotes to discuss Robeson's life, thus enabling such a strong betweenness value for, as the video states, 'the hugest figure who has ever come out of New Jersey, out of America'. Likewise, the second video (labeled 2 on the image) links Music and Internationalism to Social Organization and Resistance, a point to which I will return. The video, produced by ESPN, describes the role of the baseball star Jackie Robinson in testifying against Paul Robeson for the House Un-American Activities Committee, particularly through the lens of Robeson's son Paul Jr. As YouTube does, once you finish watching the video, it will take you to another similar video, and a simple observation from my perspective is that once this video finished the fourth video, a Paul Robeson documentary began playing, clearly showing ease at which these

high-betweenness videos can connect disparate groups.

4.2 Place-based results

Gaging the place-based results in YouTube, due to YouTube's lack of spatial data, as you can see in Fig. 2, is not simple. Especially with so many variables, including placelessness, discerning the relevant information becomes the difficult task. Observing Fig. 3, you see that in the center of the network there is a cluster of places that you can visualize better once zoomed in, but other than a qualitative assessment of which places are more central to the YouTube narrative of Robeson, further quantitative analyses had to be conducted. To do so, I simplified all locations into the respective state units and produced the following series of maps to depict the number of videos, betweenness values, average number of likes, average number of views, and average number of comments for each video based upon the country that each video is about (Table 3).

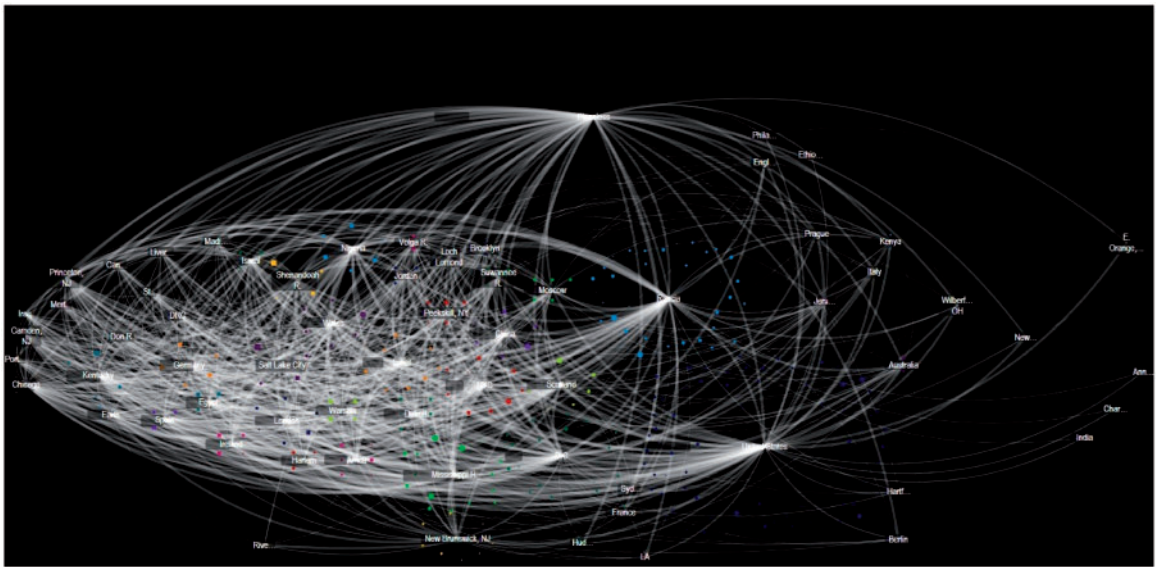


Fig. 2 Visual representation in NodeXL of Paul Robeson's place-based YouTube videos
Source: Author

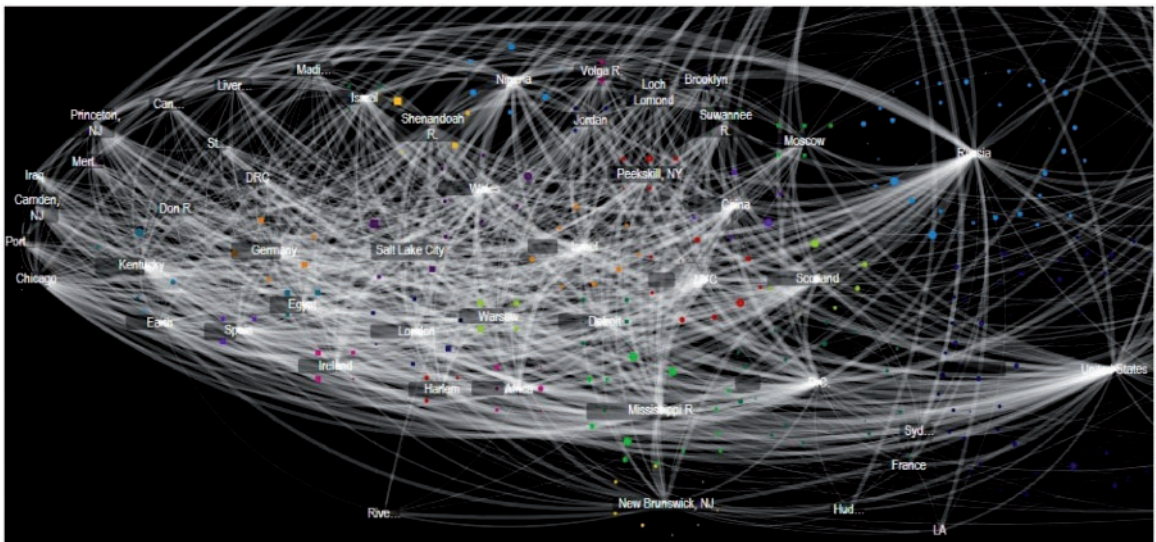


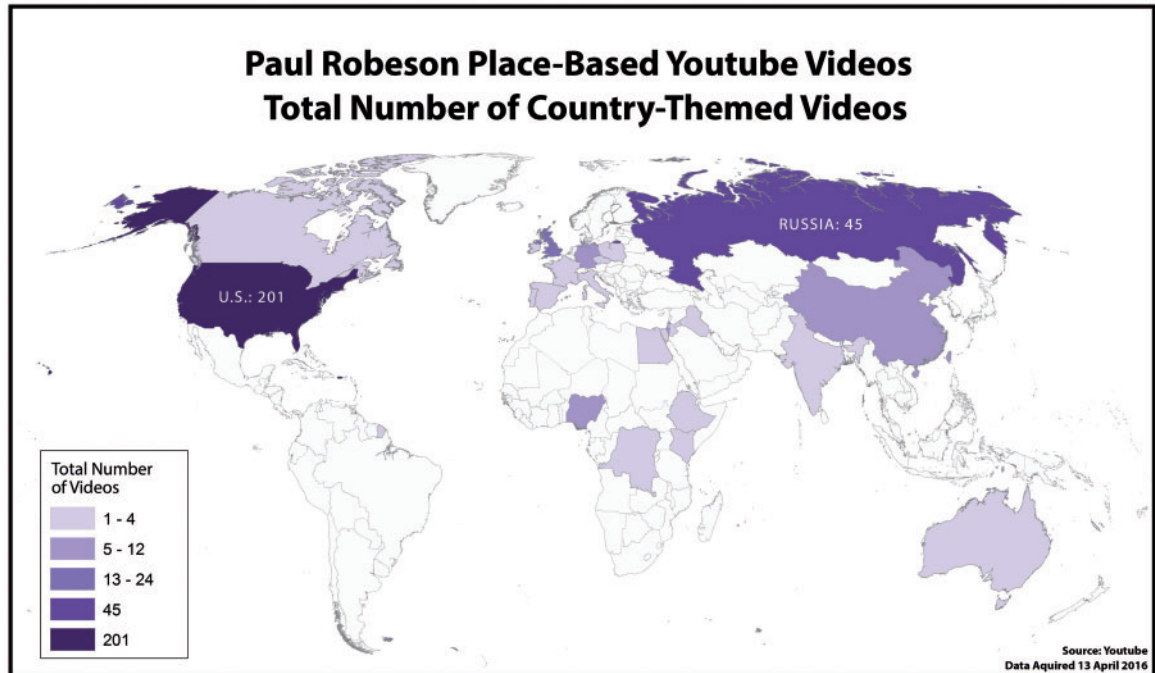
Fig. 3 Close-up on the lower left portion of Fig. 2
Source: Author

First, Fig. 4 depicts the number of videos about each of the twenty-three total countries (keep in mind there are sixty-four total places that have scaled down into these twenty-three countries

except for Africa and Earth, which did not have enough information or were irrelevant to include in a state-based map). As you can see, the USA, Russia, and the UK are the three highest countries

Table 3 The 23 Countries represented in Paul Robeson YouTube videos

Country	Vertices	Percent	Betweenness value	Average views	Average comments	Average likes
Australia	3	0.009036	952.544	30,992.33	30.333	294
Canada	1	0.003012	83.222	14,267	18	44
China	6	0.018072	191.28	30,771.17	62.833	152.333
Egypt	3	0.009036	322.971	29,581	17.667	142.667
Ethiopia	1	0.003012	0	1,118	3	7
France	2	0.006024	234.306	3,347	4.5	16
Germany	6	0.018072	211.977	14,942	16.6	57
India	1	0.003012	0	837	0	2
Iraq	1	0.003012	0	19,123	8	50
Ireland	4	0.012048	216.435	19,418.5	11.25	63.5
Israel	12	0.036145	131.182	9,874	8.5	45.25
Italy	1	0.003012	129.835	13,327	5	34
Jordan	3	0.009036	220.259	27,463	8.5	121.667
Kenya	2	0.006024	0	3,574	5.5	11.5
UK	24	0.072289	371.765	24,281.92	20.333	95.5
Nigeria	6	0.018072	62.557	8,020.127	8	28
Portugal	1	0.003012	0	188	0	1
Czech Rep.	1	0.003012	186.822	178	1	4
Russia	45	0.135542	385.717	59,395.56	263.311	264.778
Spain	3	0.009036	357.705	5,245.667	6.667	30.667
Congo DRC	1	0.003012	370.468	29,426	22	102
The USA	201	0.605422	243.148	42,907.48	29.144	152.488
Poland	4	0.012048	357.417	34,406.5	43.5	189

**Fig. 4** This map shows the distribution of all applicable videos by the country most associated with each video

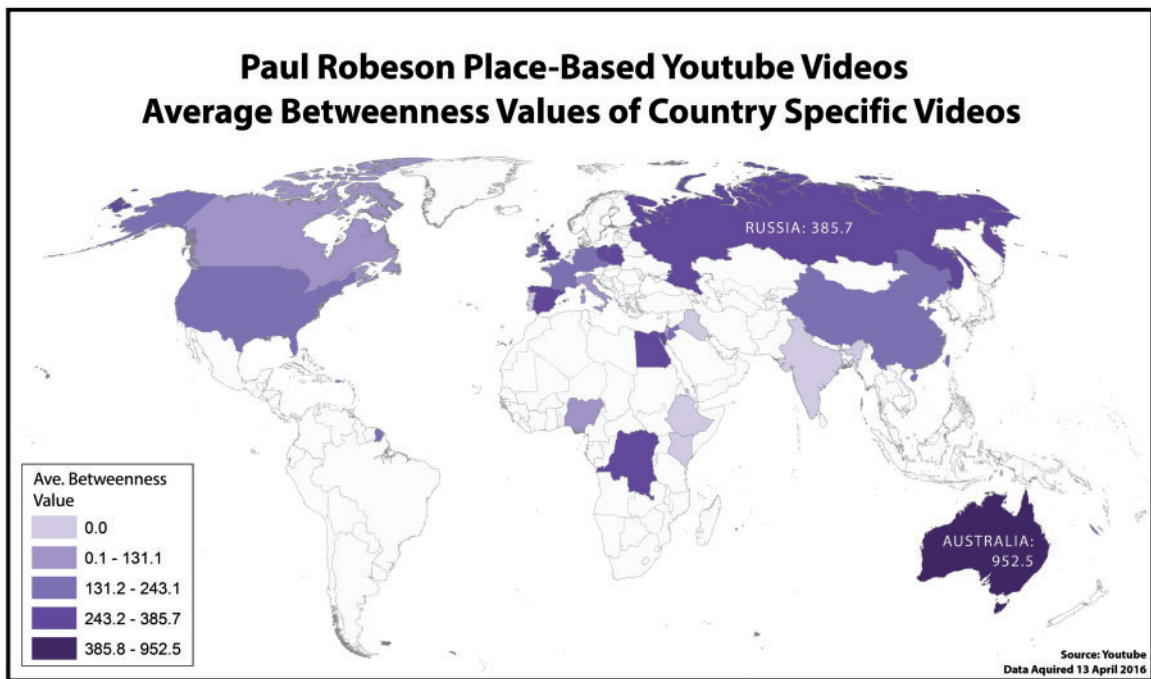


Fig. 5 This map depicts the average betweenness values for the videos associated with each country as presented in Fig. 4 and Table 3

Source: Author

coinciding with the three countries spend considerable time in. Israel, Germany, China, and Nigeria are all low scoring, again not surprising since Robeson only spent a brief period of time in Germany and never visited the other three countries. This map indicates the expected; however, the maps below illustrate why more detailed analyses of YouTube can uncover relevant information.

Second, Fig. 5 returns to the betweenness values, this time separating the clusters out by country. Australia, while holding less than one percent of total videos, operates as the go-between country in Paul Robeson videos, as its average betweenness value is nearly thrice of Russia's, which has the second highest betweenness score. This indicates that while the Australia-themed videos comprise a fraction of a percent of total videos and do not appear in the list of top seven betweenness valued videos, they hold a key value in the social networks and digital heritage of Paul Robeson. This

knowledge can now be applied to more specific studies of Paul Robeson, a pattern that could be replicated for any area of digital heritage to identify breaks with standard narratives and the power of individuals, places, and institutions in the shaping of memory.

Third, Figs 6–8 begin to expose more of the audience reaction to Robeson's videos. Particularly, Russia holds nearly as high of a comment average as it does likes, which is a unique feature in this study. Negative values are seen here in the number of comments on videos. In both the cases of Russia and China, the most viewed video is the communist (USSR and the Republic of China) national anthem being sung by Robeson. On the positive side, however, you also have Russia at the second and Australia at the first. The other high-valued countries—USA, Egypt, Jordan, Poland, and China—also indicate that while the USA, Russia, and the rather overlooked UK are the centerpieces of the most videos, views, likes, comments, and

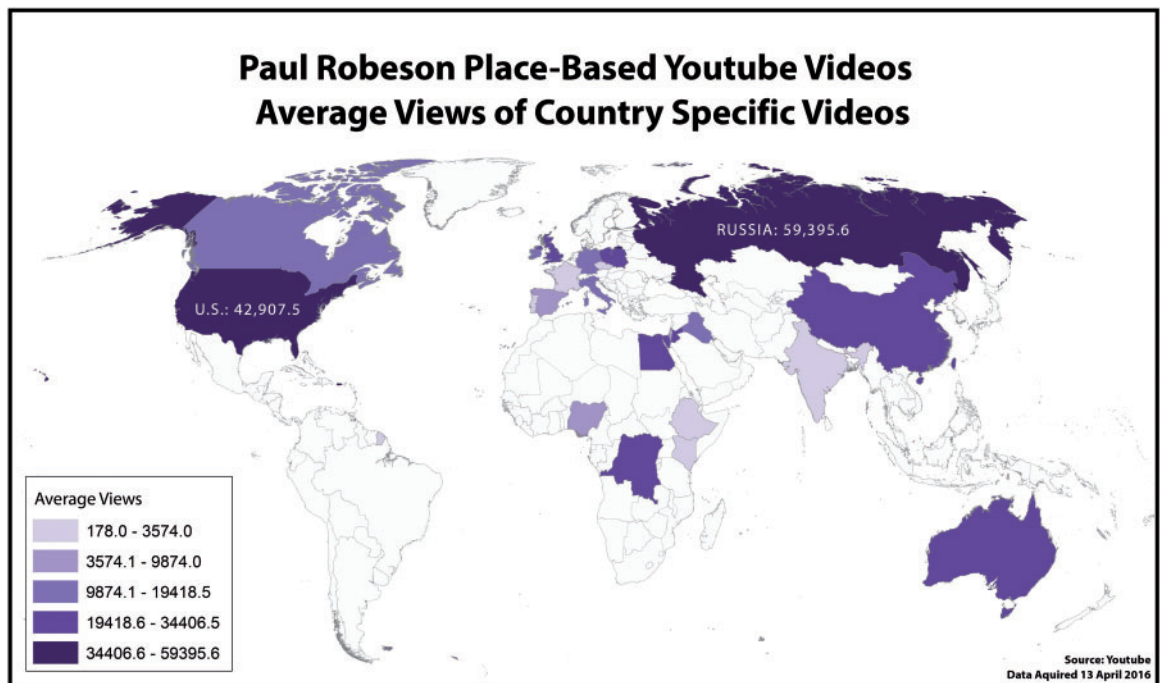


Fig. 6 This map depicts the average number of views for the videos associated with each country as presented in Fig. 4 and Table 3

Source: Author

betweenness values show that the actions by viewers are taking place elsewhere.

4.3 Significance of topic and place

Finally, combining topical group cluster and place-based results generates a number of additional questions for future Paul Robeson research. By utilizing a significance value of 0.2, we can begin to view those places and clusters which have a significantly low or significantly high proportion of their videos falling into a certain place or category. The only category that contained a significant number of videos about a certain place was Sports, wherein half of its videos are USA-based (unsurprising because Robeson was a professional athlete for only domestic athletic organizations), 31% greater than the overall percentage of USA-based videos.

Places that have significant clusters, however, are quite numerous. Chicago, Egypt, Germany, Kentucky, Mississippi R., Nigeria, Princeton NJ, Salt Lake City, Shenandoah R., and Wales all contain

a high proportion of videos from Group 1, Music. Detroit, Earth, Ireland, Moscow, New Brunswick, NJ, and Peekskill, NY, are all significantly below average for videos from Music. Africa, Detroit, Earth, New Brunswick, Peekskill, and Spain are all high in Group 2, Internationalism, videos, and Chicago, Nigeria, and Princeton are low. Jordan, Moscow, Suwannee R, and Washington D.C. are all significantly high in videos from Group 3, Heritage and Folk Traditions, and Harlem, Ireland, London, and Warsaw were high in Group 4, Social Organization and Resistance, videos. These values, for the most part, are significant in quickly assessing the content of videos in certain locations, or at least understanding what is not being produced about certain locations. This contributes toward the overall understanding of Robeson as not only being classified into different topical areas, such as musician or internationalism, but combinations of the two, such as an activist who is involved in the social organizations and politics of Harlem, Ireland, London, and Warsaw (which he was).

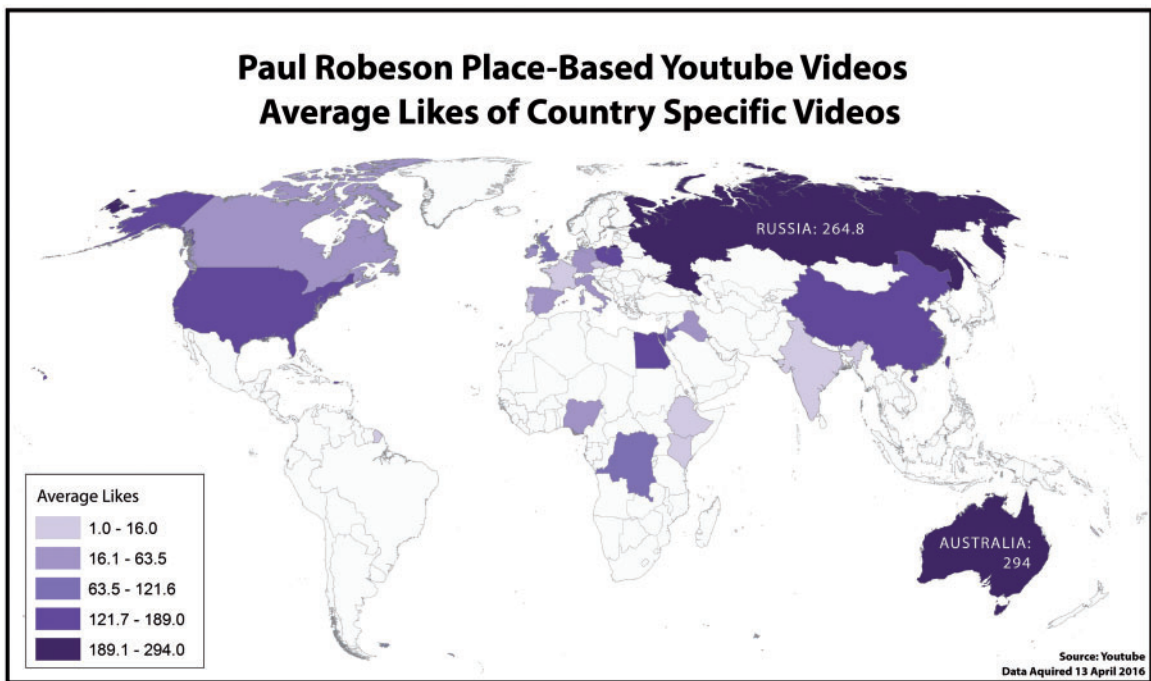


Fig. 7 This map depicts the average number of likes for the videos associated with each country as presented in Fig. 4 and Table 3

Source: Author

Further, this combination of place-based and topic-based data can also indicate absences in historical context, public pedagogy, and narratives surrounding Paul Robeson's life.

5 Connecting Place and Paul Robeson through Digital Heritage

These various results translate into various conclusions. First, YouTube is a reflection (or cause) of Paul Robeson's continual representation as a musician and internationalist. Second, betweenness values indicate that Sports and Internationalism are two of the connecting topics in Paul Robeson's social network and that certain videos, such as 'Life of Paul Robeson | Kevin Maynor' and 'HUAC's Jackie Robinson v Paul Robeson', serve as important nodes in the overall network of Robeson's by connecting disparate clusters. Third, the role of place

association, just as much as topic association, is important in understanding the overall history of Robeson, what countries he is most networked to, and how that is perceived by YouTube audiences. Finally, the results show us future directions scholars of Robeson can take in theme and in location.

Rhodes (2015) looked at the representation of Robeson in Wales and concluded that Paul Robeson is an individual of many personalities and that those personalities tend to be memorialized independent of one another, skewing his overall representation. In the USA and in Wales, above all, Robeson is thought of as a musician, and of his ideologies, his internationalism curtains his other philosophies, affecting the way political and cultural narratives may result from his memorialization (Williams, 2012). This research reveals that indeed, within social media, Paul Robeson is being portrayed as a musician and internationalist at the cost of his acting, athleticism, activism, and scholarship.

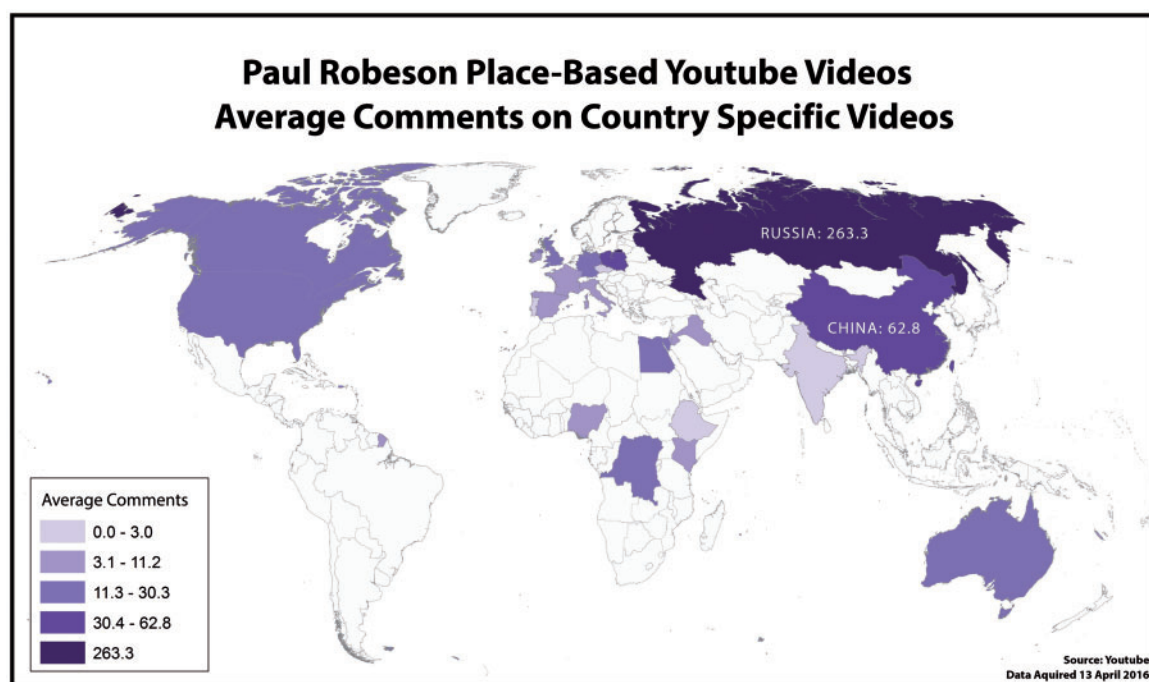


Fig. 8 This map depicts the average number of comments on the videos associated with each country as presented in Fig. 4 and Table 3

Source: Author

Measuring the betweenness values of the clusters, place, and videos of this study has revealed the next steps that can be taken following what was just revealed. The two videos mentioned earlier are able to pull viewers out of the stereotypical categories of music and internationalism toward sports and social organization and resistance. Likewise, as I am about to discuss, Russia tends to dominate place-based narratives of Paul Robeson, due to his support of socialism, but Australia's strong betweenness average value gives it the potential to pull viewers out of the stereotypical red baiting that Robeson is subjected to and toward the USA and the many countries that Robeson is commonly not associated with (Nigeria, for example).

These place-based patterns explain a great deal as to some of Paul Robeson's stereotyping. Robeson continues to be a victim of red-baiting (there have been multiple protests for the naming of Rutgers University's library after him), and his association on YouTube with places such as Russia and China

will continue skewing Robeson toward a communist-style socialism, and away from the British, labor-rights, style socialism that he actually promoted (Rhodes, 2016a). Furthermore, the negative response to these videos (the national anthems of the USSR and China) is also something that comes across clear in the data. This indicates a level of political ideology that may be addressed and possible directions in intercultural communication and multicultural studies, which could begin to engage with and discuss these negative reactions.

Finally, this research reveals a number of future directions in Paul Robeson research. One direction may be on the places where Paul Robeson's videos engage with on a significantly low level in the areas of music or internationalism. Detroit, Ireland, New Brunswick, Chicago, Nigeria, and Princeton all contain direct relationships with Robeson, and research on Paul Robeson in any of these areas will most likely add to the growing literature on him without perpetuating any of his stereotypes. Likewise,

looking at the heritage and folk tradition of Paul Robeson by analyzing his videos and connections to Jordan, Moscow, and Washington, DC and social organization and resistance in Harlem, Ireland, London, or Warsaw will also engage with Robeson in places he is not often associated with and on topics connected to Robeson that often escape public perception. It is also important to keep in mind that place association is qualitatively assigned, and future research may seek a more systematic method in spatially defining videos. Reaching beyond YouTube should also be a goal of future social media-based research on Robeson, as he is a prominent, yet not extensive, figure on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and other platforms.

6 Conclusion

Just as Meek (2012, p. 1444) argued that his study of Invisible Children's videos does 'more than merely raise collective consciousness about the unseen plight of these refugees' by achieving 'their social purpose by creating novel place-based connections between the empowered viewer and the disempowered viewed', I believe the results and analysis of Robeson videos links Robeson's representations, places, and audiences. Meek continues,

Despite the emancipatory potential of YouTube as a medium, neither the internet nor cyberspace itself is a laboratory environment (Froehling, 1997, Warf and Grimes, 1997). Through this paper I have shown that, like any place, cyberspace both includes and excludes. However, it is its potential to connect geographically disparate peoples in solidarity that cyberspace and terrestrial place coincide in a global, deterritorialized world of flows.

Paul Robeson, likewise, has a 'cyberspace' in YouTube, and just like other places, his digital places are embedded with meaning. His social networks reveal an equal level of complexity, meaning, politicizing, and spatial characteristics to his traditional memorial landscapes. He is remembered primarily as a musician and secondarily as an internationalist, both of which are strongly

interconnected. Robeson's activist videos, however, are more significant for exposing new memories when looking at his entire presence on YouTube as a social spatial network. Finally, while most of Robeson's videos are topically on the USA, his videos related to Australia, Russia, and China produce a more meaningful impact, as far as audience engagement through likes, comments, and betweenness values. While the focus in this study has been Robeson, replicating this work for any other individual (or topic, event, etc...), from Dr Martin Luther King Jr. to President Donald Trump, would open similar avenues of understanding which would be of use to scholars and international policy makers alike. This method of social media network analysis can be a quick tool to assess popularity and connectedness in place. As digital technologies grow and develop, more and more memory and history making will take place through social media, not simply as representations of materiality but as socially and spatially networked constructions of meaning and emotion. Paul Robeson's place in YouTube is just the first node in this rapidly developing network of digital memory work.

References

- Balaji, M.** (2007). *The Professor and the Pupil: The Politics and Friendship of W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson*. New York, NY: Nation Books.
- Beciek, K. and Juul, K.** (2008). 'We are here, yet we are not here': the heritage of excluded groups. In Graham, B. and Howard, P. (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, pp. 105–24.
- Blum, P.** (1998). Combating historical amnesia: using Paul Robeson to promote a university/high school connection. *The History Teacher* 31: 331–9.
- Blum, P.** (2008). Paul Robeson: the quintessential public intellectual. *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2(7): 70–81.
- Brown, L.** (1976). *Paul Robeson: Rediscovered*. New York, NY: American Institute for Marxist Studies.
- Carmody, T.** (2014). Missing Paul Robeson in East Berlin: the spirituals of the empty archive. *Cultural Critique* 88: 1–27.

- Carew, J. (2004). Paul Robeson and WEB Du Bois in London. *Race and Class* 46(2): 39–48.
- Chambers, C. (2006). *Here We Stand: Politics, Performers and Performance: Paul Robeson, Isadora Duncan and Charlie Chaplin*. London, England: Nick Hern Books.
- Deschamps, R. (2014). What potential for YouTube as a policy deliberation tool? Commenter reactions to videos about the keystone XL oil pipeline. *Policy and Internet* 6(4): 341–59.
- Dijck, J. (2010). Flickr and the culture of connectivity: sharing views, experiences, memories. *Memory Studies* 4(4): 401–15.
- Dorinson, J. (1999). Paul Robeson and Jackie Robinson: athletes and activists at armageddon. *Pennsylvania History* 66(1): 17–24.
- Dorinson, J. (2002). Something to cheer about: Paul Robeson, athlete. In Dorinson, J. and Pencak, W. (eds), *Paul Robeson: Essays on his life and legacy*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, pp. 65–75.
- Edgerly, S., Vraga, E., Dalrymple, K., Macafee, T., and Fung, T. (2013). Directing the dialogue: the relationship between YouTube videos and the comments they spur. *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 10:276–92.
- Featherstone, D. (2013). Black internationalism, subaltern cosmopolitanism, and the spatial politics of anti-fascism. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103(6): 1406–20.
- Froehling, O. (1997). The cyberspace “war of ink and internet” in Chiapas, Mexico. *Geographical Review* 87(2): 291–307.
- Gammage, M. (2017). Pop culture without culture: examining the public backlash to Beyoncé’s super bowl 50 performance. *Journal of Black Studies* 48. DOI:0021934717729504.
- Giaccardi, E. (2012). *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture*. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- Glynn, K. (2009). Contested land and mediascapes: the visibility of the postcolonial city. *New Zealand Geographer* 65: 6–22.
- Guerrero, E. (1998). Black stars in exile: Paul Robeson, O. J. Simpson, and Othello. In Stewart, J. (ed.), *Paul Robeson: Artist and citizen*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp. 275–291.
- Hoskins A. (2009). Digital network memory. In Erll, A. and Rigney, A. (eds), *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*. Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 91–100.
- Klausen, J., Barbieri, E., Reichlin-Melnick, A., and Zelin, A. (2012). The YouTube Jihadists: a social network analysis of Al Muhajiroun’s propaganda campaign. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6(1): 36–53.
- Knudsen, B. and Stage, C. (2013). Online war memorials: YouTube as a democratic space of commemoration exemplified through video tributes to fallen Danish soldiers. *Memory studies* 6(4): 418–36.
- Kopacz, M. and Lawton, B. (2011). The YouTube Indian: portrayals of native Americans on a viral video site. *New Media and Society* 13(2): 330–49.
- Meek, D. (2012). YouTube and social movements: a phenomenological analysis of participation, events and cyberplace. *Antipode* 44(4): 1429–48.
- Neumayer, C. (2012). Which alternative? A critical analysis of YouTube comments in anti-fascist protest. *tripleC* 10(1): 56–65.
- Pentzold, C. (2009). Fixing the floating gap: the online encyclopedia Wikipedia as a global memory place. *Memory Studies* 2(2): 255–72.
- Piotrowski, M. (2015). Speaking “out of place”: YouTube documentaries and viewers’ comment culture as political education. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 12: 53–72.
- Puente, S., Romero, D. and García, R. (2015). Online activism and subject construction of the victim of gender-based violence on Spanish YouTube channels: multimodal analysis and performativity. *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 22(3): 319–33.
- Rhodes, M. (2015). “They Feel Me a Part of that Land”: *Welsh memorial landscapes of Paul Robeson*. MA thesis, Kent State University, Kent, OH. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=kent1430923136 (accessed 7 October 2016).
- Rhodes, M. (2016a). Placing Paul Robeson in history: understanding his philosophical framework. *Journal of Black Studies* 47(3): 235–57.
- Rhodes, M. (2016b). Performing history: remembering Paul Robeson and the peekskill riots through Tayo Aluko’s call Mr. Robeson. *Excellence in Performing Arts Research* 3(1): 1–17.
- Roberts, L. (2014). The Bulger case: a spatial story. *The Cartographic Journal* 51(2): 141–51.
- Robeson, P. (1958). *Here I Stand*. New York, NY: Othello Associates.

- Robeson, P.** (1978). *Paul Robeson Speaks*. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press.
- Robeson, P., Jr.** (2001). *The undiscovered Paul Robeson: An artist's journey, 1898-1939*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Robeson, P., Jr.** (2010). *The undiscovered Paul Robeson: Quest for freedom, 1939-1976*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Rotman, D. and Golbeck D.** (2011). YouTube: contrasting patterns of content, interaction, and prominence. In Hansen, D., Shneiderman, B., and Smith, M. (eds), *Analyzing Social Media Networks with NodeXL: Insights from a Connected World*. Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann, pp. 225–46.
- Smit, R., Heinrich, A., and Broersma, M.** (2017). Witnessing in the new memory ecology: memory construction of the Syrian conflict on YouTube. *New Media And Society* 19(2): 289–307.
- Song, M., Jeong, Y., and Kim, H.** (2015). Identifying the topology of the K-pop video community on YouTube: a combined co-comment analysis approach. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 66(12): 2580–95.
- Spohrer, E.** (2007). Becoming extra-textual: celebrity discourse and Paul Robeson's political transformation. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(2): 151–68.
- Tyner, J.** (2006). *The Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wahlberg, M.** (2009). YouTube commemoration: private grief and communal consolation. In Snickars, P. and Vonderau, P. (eds), *The YouTube Reader*. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, pp. 218–35.
- Warf, B. and Grimes, J.** (1997). Counterhegemonic discourses and the internet. *Geographical Review* 87(2): 193–218.
- Waters, R. and Jones, P.** (2011). Using video to build an organization's identity and brand: a content analysis of nonprofit organizations' YouTube videos. *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing* 23: 248–68.
- Waterton, E., Watson, S. and Silverman, H.** (2017). An introduction to heritage in action. In Silverman, H., Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds), *Heritage in action: Making the past in the present*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, pp. 3–16.
- White, C.** (2015). Banal nationalism and belonging within the echoed imagined community: the case of New Zealand anthems on YouTube. *Journal of Language and Politics* 14(5): 627–644.
- Williams, D.** (2012). *Black skin, Blue Books: African-Americans and the Welsh, 1845-1945*. Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press.
- Williams, D.** (2015). *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Wilson, K.** (2013). The cosmopolitan creative-intellectual: the creative ideal of Paul Robeson. *Journal of Black Studies* 44(7): 725–40.
- Wright, C.** (1975). *Robeson: Labor's Forgotten Champion*. Detroit, MI: Balamp.
- Xu, W., Park, J., Kim, J. and Park, H.** (2016). Networked cultural diffusion and creation on YouTube: an analysis of YouTube Memes. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 60(1): 104–22.