

# BookTube and the (Not So) Hidden Adult: Online Fan Communities and the Dissolution of Power

## Abstract

Members of the YouTube based community of BookTube, upload videos discussing their favorite books, showing off recent purchases, participating in book discussions, and sharing their love of reading with likeminded members. BookTube, through its passion and dedication to young-adult literature, offers a sense of agency and power to it is oftentimes marginalized participants. From its beginnings, the participatory community, governed solely by its users, operated as a space relatively free from adult control and influence. Today, as BookTube's influence grows, publishers are entering the community, turning the once democratic space into a capital-driven market, risking the community all but losing its adolescent voice.

To children's literature scholars, this manipulation of adolescent voice by an adult one will sound all too familiar. Children's and adolescent literature has, for centuries, been used as an educational tool to instruct and guide young readers on how to be suitable children and eventually suitable adults. To do this, adult writers frequently manipulate adolescent voice and identity and the end result is decidedly adult. This dissertation will explore these similarities, and by its conclusion, will critique the extent to which BookTube is allowed to operate as a collaborative and democratic space for fans of YA literature by looking at the (mis)treatment and manipulation of the fan body and identity and the seemingly ever present nature of the "hidden adult." In doing so, I will argue that there is a reinforcement of pre-existing hierarchies, not just between adult author and adolescent reader, but between fan and producer, thus expanding the adult influence well past the written text.

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