gnovis

a journal of communication, culture & technology

gnovis **staff**

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Letter from the Editor

The 2018-2019 academic year has been an exciting one for the *gnovis* team. This spring we held our eighth annual academic conference, gnoviCon, featuring two panel discussions on "Big Tech, Data, and Democracy." Our first panel discussion, "Big Tech and Competition Policy" was moderated by our very own Communication, Culture, and Technology (CCT) professor, Dr. Mark MacCarthy, and featured panelists from the Antitrust Institute, the Department of Justice Antitrust Division, the McDonough School of Business, and the Harvard Kennedy School. The discussion centered on the implications of growing Big Tech companies from a policy perspective, focusing on Amazon Inc. Our second panel, "Big Tech and the Future of Democracy" was an extension of this same topic, but from an ethical standpoint on the sociopolitical implications of Big Tech, using Facebook Inc. as a case study. During this panel, we heard from research experts within the Consortium, the University of Virginia, and the Open Markets Institute. We are pleased to have hosted yet another gathering that showcases the quality of the interdisciplinary discussion that is found within the CCT program.

In addition to gnoviCon, the *gnovis* staff continued to build our multimedia portfolio through the production of *CCTea*. Created and hosted by our Directors of Web and Blog, Zachary Omer and Kevin Ackermann, *CCTea* is a podcast that explores the social nuances of tech in modern society. This season featured ten episodes, touching on topics including identity formation in the Digital Age, wearable medical tech, fake news, Internet etiquette, and artificial intelligence.

gnovis' dedication to high-quality interdisciplinary scholarship continued in the latest edition of the Journal. Five papers from a diverse group of women scholars analyze niche groups as they relate to society at-large by deconstructing dominant media narratives and challenging how we see ourselves and others. The first article "Aggrieved, Entitled, and Hostile," comes from CCT student Mihika Sapru and offers a text-based analysis of the writings of three high-profile school shooters. Next, UVA PhD candidate Anna Cameron articulates the necessity for an intersectional approach to the study of geek masculinity in video gamer culture in "No More Games." From the University of Hyderabad, doctoral scholar Meenakshi Srihari's "Sound and the Fury" explores the portrayal of disability in media, using the multimedia interactive text, *Tailspin*, as a case study. In "Things You Wouldn't Believe," CCT student Jordan Moeny comparatively analyzes two iconic science fiction films from a futurist perspective. Finally, fellow CCTer, Deborah Oliveros, examines diasporic identification process through the lens of postcolonial theory and gender studies in "Beyond the Homeland."

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each member of *gnovis* for their tireless efforts and dedication to the organization. Thank you to our multimedia team, Remel Hoskins and Jill Fredenburg, for bringing a positive and creative perspective to our digital media content. Our outreach team, Fred Ji and Jenny Lee: thank you for keeping us on top of our social media game and working well under pressure during events like gnoviCon. Thanks again to Zach and Kevin for your fresh ideas, your humor, and your patience during our website restructuring. Kathryn Hartzell and Susannah Green, thank you for bringing your tremendous editorial skills to the table, and for dedicating hours to making sure our content, both papers and otherwise, are the best they can be. And last but certainly not least, thank you to Alexa DeJesus, for being a leader that got things done, a role model that showed me the ropes, and a friend that has encouraged me to excel. Through a collaborative dialogue, all of us have been able to continue the legacy of high-quality projects and set forth new ideas and standards for those to come. As a student-run group, we could not do this work without the incredible support of CCT faculty and staff, in particular, *gnovis* faculty advisor Dr. Leticia Bode, Director of Academic Programs, Sarah Twose, and Director of CCT, Dr. David Lightfoot. We cannot thank you enough for the support and for challenging us to reach our potential as an organization. Finally, we would like to thank you, our readers of *gnovis* Journal. We hope you will enjoy the conversations we have opened through the scholarship published in this Spring 2019 Edition of *gnovis*.

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Kimberly Marcela Durón
gnovis Editor-in-Chief
Class of 2020

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Aggrieved, Entitled, and Hostile: A Word-Level Analysis of the Writings of Three Rampage Shooters

Mihika Sapru

This paper analyzes the writings of Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, and Elliott Rodger—three rampage shooters responsible for the Columbine and Isla Vista massacres. Through a multi-method linguistic analysis of their writings, this paper explores how toxic masculinity and mental illness are expressed in the texts. The methods used include a word-level analysis for references to toxic masculinity and mental illness, a close-reading for the use of rhetorical devices shown to be used by violent men, and the application of the Gottschalk-Gleser content analysis method using Psychiatric Content Analysis and Diagnosis (PCAD) software. The paper finds evidence of toxic masculinity in all three shooters' texts. There is also evidence of abnormal psychological dimensions on the Gottschalk-Gleser scale. Klebold returned the most abnormal results. He was found to be *moderately high* for the Hostility Outward (Overt) subscale, *very high* for the Hostility Inward scale—more than three standard deviations above the mean, *slightly high* on the Social Alienation-Personal Disorganization scale, and *slightly low* on the Human Relations scale. Harris was *slightly high* for Social Alienation-Personal Disorganization and *slightly low* on the Human Relations scale. Rodger was found to be *slightly high* on the Social Alienation-Personal Disorganization scale. This paper argues for the responsible analysis of the multifactorial causes of rampage school shootings.

Mihika Sapru is pursuing her Masters in Communication, Culture, and Technology at Georgetown University. Her research focuses on the intersection of technology and gender-based violence, and on the ways new media helps us shape and communicate our worldviews. You can reach her at ms4347@ georgetown.edu.

The Second Phase will take place on the Day of Retribution itself, just before the climactic massacre. The Second Phase will represent my War on Women. I will punish all females for the crime of depriving me of sex.

– Elliot Rodger, *My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger* (2014, 132)

Depending on who you ask, America might have a gun problem, a mental health problem, or a toxic masculinity problem. What we know for certain is that horrifying acts of mass violence grip the nation. School shootings and the people who carry them out dominate news cycles time and time again. Cable news covers the shootings obsessively in the immediate aftermath, think-pieces appear on the internet, and people theorize over motives, solutions, and what went wrong. Given the extensive media coverage, there is a huge demand for information about school shootings and school shooters, but many of these perpetrators turn their guns on themselves during the rampages, or are killed by police—a practice colloquially referred to as "suicide-by-cop." As a result, there are often many unanswered questions. What drove these men to carry out these horrifying acts of violence? What worldviews were they steeped in that justified their actions? In the aftermath of these attacks, the writings left behind by these perpetrators become a compelling source of answers. We must, however, resist the urge to reduce the motives of these mass murderers to any single cause. Most importantly, we must not focus on the cultural causes of school shootings at the expense of holding perpetrators accountable for making the decision to plan and carry out a mass casualty attack at a school.

Through a multi-method analysis of the writings of three rampage shooters, this paper explores how toxic masculinity and mental disorders—two of the many contributing factors to rampage school shootings—are expressed in the natural language of these killers. The three rampage shooters whose writings I analyze are Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, and Elliot Rodger. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold carried out the Columbine High School shooting in Jefferson County, Colorado on April 20, 1999. Harris was eighteen years old at the time of the attack, and both he and seventeen-year-old Klebold committed suicide in the final moments of the shooting. Elliot Rodger was twenty-two years old when he killed six people and injured fourteen more in Isla Vista, California, near the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) campus on May 23, 2014. Rodger was never a student at UCSB, but instead attended Santa Barbara Community College for a brief period before dropping his classes. He, like Harris and Klebold, turned his gun on himself and committed suicide following his attack.

In the absence of post-attack mental health evaluations and interviews, rendered impossible because the killers did not survive their rampages, this paper seeks answers about the perpetrators' mental health and attitudes toward masculinity, and examines whether their narrative rationalizations can, in fact, offer us insights that help us understand the magnitude of the influence of toxic masculinity and mental illness on their deadly acts of violence.

Literature Review

The following literature review will first discuss scholarship on toxic masculinity and how this relates to the phenomenon of rampage shootings. Then it will discuss how scholars have applied word-level analysis to the language of men who have used violence against women, as violence against women is the extreme outcome of a misogynist world view that follows the logic of toxic masculinity. The literature review will also consider the discourse of mental health as it applies to school shooters and explore methodologies for determining mental health through textual analysis.

TOXIC MASCULINITY

The Good Men Project defines toxic masculinity as:

A narrow, repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status and aggression. It's the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything while emotions are a weakness; where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured, while supposedly "feminine" traits—which can range from emotional vulnerability to simply not being hypersexual—are the means by which your status as "man" can be taken away. (O'Malley 2017)

In essence, toxic masculinity is the idea that being a man involves being strong, aggressive, and sexually successful. Strength and power are tied to violence, wealth, and hypersexuality. Weakness is tied to emotional vulnerability and empathy. Leading scholars on the subject of masculinity include Michael Kimmel, who has written extensively about the connection between violence and masculinity. He also applied a gender studies lens to the subject of rampage school shootings. One such paper, co-authored with Rachel Kalish, is entitled "Suicide by Mass Murder: Masculinity, Aggrieved Entitlement, and Rampage School Shootings" (2010). Kalish and Kimmel establish that "aggrieved entitlement" is a gendered attitude shared by school shooters steeped in ideas of toxic masculinity (2010, 454). Feeling "aggrieved, wronged by the world," is common among adolescents of all genders, but when it is compounded by entitlement, it enables young men to use violence to exact revenge on those they hold responsible for their humiliation (Kalish & Kimmel 2010, 454). Notably, Kalish and Kimmel propose that humiliation to these men is equivalent to emasculation (2010, 454). This paper attempts to understand how, if at all, Klebold, Harris, and Rodger communicate toxic masculinity in general, and "aggrieved entitlement" in particular, in their writings.

Given Elliot Rodger's detailed writings on his thoughts about women, his perceived entitlement to sex, and his feelings of rejection, much of the media narrative after Rodger's killing spree focused on his misogyny. During this period, there was some debate over the particular brand of hatred and hostility Rodger felt toward women, and whether misogyny was even the correct term to use. In her book, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (2017), Kate Manne explains that there was some dispute around calling Rodger a misogynist, and it came from those who are self-described misogynists (39-40). One argument, espoused by radical "Men's Rights Activist" Roosh Valizadeh, is that Rodger did not hate women—he actually desired them *too much*. Valizadeh claimed that Rodger "put pussy on a pedestal" (2014) which actually made him the "first feminist mass murderer" (Manne 2017, 39). Another fact used to reject claims that Rodger was motivated by misogyny is the ratio of men to women he killed—four men to two women. Furthermore, Manne claims that Rodger's hostility was not directed at all women, just toward "hot" women (2017, 40). These counterarguments, however, reflect the sort of aggrieved entitlement Kalish and Kimmel argue is central to the logic of toxic masculinity.

RHETORICAL DEVICES USED BY VIOLENT MEN

Adams, Towns, and Gavey, three researchers from the University of Auckland, attempted to define specific characteristics of the rhetoric men use to discuss their violence toward women. They conducted 90-minute interviews with fourteen men who were enrolled in "stopping violence" programs after recently being violent toward women (Adams et al. 1995). The researchers concluded that referencing ambiguity, axiom markers, metaphor, synecdoche, and metonymy were the five salient rhetorical devices used in the rhetoric of violent men (Adams et al. 1995). This paper will focus on two of these five rhetorical devices to see if their use is evident in the corpus: reference ambiguity and axiom markers. Reference ambiguity is the overuse of words that leaves the subject deliberately ambiguous. This is most commonly seen by the overuse of the word "we" by the abusive men interviewed. This "we" can mean "we as a society," the interviewer and interviewee, the couple involved in the relationship, or men in general (Adams et al. 1995, 392). "We" is left deliberately ambiguous to displace responsibility for certain behaviors. Axiom markers are "global assertions" about how the world is and are used to "[qualify] adjacent statements" (394). For example, if a man says something "is a fact of life," he conveys that he considers it self-evidently true. Speaking this way is meant to convey dominance and authority by asserting that his belief is commonly held and therefore true (394).

MENTAL HEALTH

The role of mental health in understanding shooter motivation is a subject of great cultural intrigue following a rampage shooting. While some of this discussion is grounded in psychology, it often manifests in an increased interest in implementing psycho-security measures in schools to identify likely perpetrators (Reiss 2011). This paper considers how language can indicate mental disturbance grounded in psychologically-supported research.

Dr. Peter Langman is an expert in the psychology of school shooters. In 2009, he developed a typology of rampage killers. Ten case studies were considered, and the killers were categorized as either traumatized, psychotic, or psychopathic (Langman 2009). Eric Harris was one of two killers considered psychopathic. Dylan Klebold was considered psychotic. Klebold's misuse of language was cited as one indication of his disturbed thinking, as it seemed out of character for a young man of his intelligence (Langman 2009, 83). An example of his misuse of language is his use of neologisms—words and expressions he created himself (Langman 2009, 83). Langman used the personal writings of the rampage shooters in his sample as one source of data for his typology.

Another text-based method for determining the state of mental wellness is the Gottschalk-Gleser content analysis method developed in 1969. The technique categorizes words and attitudes used in the natural language of the subject to measure various psychological dimensions (Galor and Hentschel 2009). The Psychiatric Content Analysis and Diagnosis (PCAD) software I use in this study tests for anxiety, hostility, personal disorganization or schizophrenia, depression, hope, hopelessness, human relations, support, health–sickness and quality of life, among other dimensions. An important limitation of the Gottschalk-Gleser Verbal Content Analysis Scales is that they are designed for white males. While two of the subjects of this analysis are white males, Elliot Rodger is biracial with a white father and a Malaysian-born Chinese mother.

Methodology

This paper uses a multi-method approach to analyze Harris, Klebold, and Rodger's language for toxic masculinity along with various psychological dimensions. I explore how toxic masculinity and its components, including hypersexuality, entitlement, and power, manifest in the natural language of the shooters through a word-level analysis of their writings. In order to study the language of three rampage shooters, the first step is creating a word-level index of their writings. This required assembling a corpus of primary sources written by the subjects of this analysis. Elliot Rodger wrote and published a 107,000-word manifesto online, called *My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger*, which forms part of the corpus. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office collated various journal entries and other writings from both Harris and Klebold during their investigation, which forms the remainder of the corpus. These text files were uploaded to the text-analysis software Atlas.ti, which generated a full list of the words used in the corpus and their frequency of use for each individual and across the sample. Key terms around entitlement and sex that emerge from the word-level index were tagged and become the focus of further analysis. Neologisms were also tagged and analyzed in their original context for meaning.

To consider the mental health and psychological dimensions of the three shooters, I also tagged words related to mental health as they appear in the word-level index for further analysis. For example, any mentions of the word "depressed" would be subject to contextual analysis. Then, the corpus was run through the PCAD software to determine how the subjects fare on the Gottschalk-Gleser Verbal Content Analysis Scales. This helps us understand the mental state of the perpetrators; since all committed suicide during their rampages, a post-attack mental evaluation was not possible.

The Language of Toxic Masculinity

One component of toxic masculinity is hypersexuality. Among the three subjects of this paper, Elliot Rodger was the only one who extensively used the words "sex," "sexuality," and "sexy." This is no surprise, as the focus of his manifesto was how his status as a "kissless virgin" justified his desire for revenge against women (Rodger 2014). He declared that he wanted to "punish all females for the crime of depriving me of sex" (Rodger 2014, 132). He uses the adjective "sexual" often to describe "sexual urges," "sexual desires," "sexual starvation," "sexual attraction," "sexual experiences," "sexual lives," and "sexual impulses." He believed that "The ultimate evil behind sexuality is the human female. They are the main instigators of sex. They control which men get it and which men don't" (Rodger 2014, 136). In contrast, neither Eric Harris nor Dylan Klebold mention the word sex at all. Klebold mentions pornography and masturbation a few times, but mostly with a sense of shame, "I'm forever sorry, infinitely, about the pornos. My humanity has a foot fetish & bondage extreme liking. I try to thwart it sometimes to no effect. Yet the masturbation has stopped" (Klebold 1999). This seems unexpected in the context of hypersexuality. Harris, on the other hand, wrote, "I want to grab a few different girls in my gym class, take them into a room, pull their pants off and fuck them hard….Call it teenager hormones or call it a crazy fuckin racist rapist" (Harris 1998). This shows the sexual aggression characteristic of toxic masculinity, except to a much more violent degree. Harris also uses the word "flesh"

when describing sex with women, a symbol of his dehumanization of women and their bodies. His belief that women are inferior to men is confirmed when he writes, "Women, you will always be under men" (Harris 1999).

Another aspect of toxic masculinity is a deep sense of rejection when a man does not get what he feels entitled to, a reaction Kalish and Kimmel call "aggrieved entitlement" (2010, 454). All three young men appear to embody this. One way this seems to manifest is in the way they compare themselves to other men, as if they are superior and their greatness is misunderstood by society. Dylan Klebold expressed: "I am GOD compared to some of those un-existable brainless zombies" (1997). Harris, too, believed this. He wrote "Ich bin Gott," which is German for "I am God" (Langman 2009, 84). Rodger also, made this comparison, "Once they see all of their friend's heads roll onto the street, everyone will fear me as the powerful god I am" (2014, 133). Rodger further laments, "The most beautiful of women choose to mate with the most brutal of men, instead of magnificent gentlemen like myself" (136). Rodger's voice in his manifesto attempts to be academic and detached in places, as if he's dispassionately recalling everything in his life that led to his rampage. The use of the word "mate" is an example of this almost scientific analysis of the dynamic between men and women, an attempt to persuade his audience that his perception of the world is based on fact and not on his own "twisted" interpretations (Rodger 2014). His obsession with sex has one caveat: he does not equate masculinity with *indiscriminate sex*. He is consumed specifically by the idea of sex with "beautiful women." He uses this phrase 127 times in his manifesto. Rodger is enraged that he is denied sex by these women and believes they do so because he is half-Asian.

The language of aggrieved entitlement continues in discussions of virginity or the absence of physical affection in their lives. Rodger notoriously refers to himself as a "kissless virgin," but the word "kissless" is part of a pattern of language used by all three killers. All three men frequently use words that end with the suffix "-less," which indicates a lack of something they feel entitled to. Examples of such words include "worthless," "hopeless," "powerless," "pointless," and "helpless." This is similarly evident with the use of words like "sex-starved" (Rodger 2014). Harris mentions as an aside, "You know what maybe I just need to get laid" (Harris 1998). Their discussions of sex, and feelings of both entitlement to and rejection of sex, align with the definition of toxic masculinity laid out by The Good Men Project. However, toxic masculinity also projects the idea that emotions are a weakness, and that anything feminine is a sign of inferiority. It is noteworthy that Dylan Klebold's writings are mostly from his personal journal. His use of neologisms that he does not define and his style of writing make it clear that his writings are mostly personal attempts to make sense of the world, and do not constitute a manifesto. Klebold's journal reveals a side of him that might be considered unexpected; he writes extensively about love, using the word 62 times. He even titles an entry "My 1st Love????" (Klebold 1997). In this entry, he goes on to write, "If soulmates exist, then I think I've found mine." He talks about cuddling—he even writes about happiness: "I want to find a room in the great hall & stay there w my love forever" (1997). This is in stark contrast to the depressive entries in his journal.

One distinct feature of the rhetoric men use to talk about their violence toward women is the use of *axiom markers* (Adams et al 1995, 393). These are "global assertions" about how

the world works or how it should work that are used to justify actions and qualify other statements. Rodger was self-aware of his worldview, writing: "I formed an ideology in my head of how the world should work. I was fueled both by my desire to destroy all of the injustices of the world, and to exact revenge on everyone I envy and hate" (2014, 57). His language fits most neatly into the rhetorical devices Adams et al. discuss. Rodger writes about the struggle of being a non-alpha male in the adult world; "No one had unfair advantages. This was perfect, and this is how life should be" (2014, 13). Klebold's journal contains more philosophical musings about the afterlife and the nature of human existence rather than assertions about how the world should work. Harris, on the other hand, refers to natural selection as a means to justify shooting people that he deems are unworthy of life: "People that only know stupid facts that aren't important should be shot, what fucking use are they. NATURAL SELECTION. Kill all retards, people with brain fuck ups, drug addicts" (1998). He believed that society and its institutions were meant to curb an individual's gift of free-thinking. Harris also states, "The human race sucks. Human nature is smothered out by society, job, and work and school. Instincts are deleted by laws" (1998). He feels no need to substantiate this claim with evidence, instead he states it with the conviction of something he believes to be self-evidently true. This is the function of the use of axiom markers by violent men, to persuade others that their beliefs are valid, objective truths.

There is a stream of media discourse around the Freudian association of guns, sex, and masculinity (Pierre 2018). In this narrative, discussions of mass casualty violence center on the symbolism of guns, and weapons as proxies through which men prove their masculinity. I searched the world-level

index for references to weapons, murder, and suicide, and then analyzed them in their original context to see if there was a connection. Dylan Klebold's obsession with violence seems to be about self-inflicted violence—he talks about suicide more than the other two men combined: "If, by fate's choice, [redacted] didn't love me, I'd slit my wrist & blow up Atlanta [the name of a bomb Eric Harris built] strapped to my neck" (Klebold 1998). While Klebold occasionally talks about hurting others, his obsession with violence seems to consider it as an escape. He does, however, reference the plan for their rampage often, referring to it as "the holy April morning of *NBK*," which shows how he revered violence and killing (Klebold 1998). NBK is a reference to *Natural Born Killers*, a film written by Quentin Tarantino, about "two victims of traumatized childhoods [who] become lovers and psychopathic serial murderers irresponsibly glorified by the mass media" ("Natural Born Killers" 2019). Both Harris and Klebold were known to be fans of this movie (Langman 2018, 211). Klebold uses it as a code name for the attack, among other things.

Harris wrote extensively about weapons, usually in a practical sense. He complained about the Brady Bill (Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act), and ruminated over how they would procure the weapons they needed (Harris 1998). He mentioned shotguns, firearms, pipe bombs, bayonets, swords, axes, and other weapons. The connection between these weapons and his own sense of power and masculinity is clear: "I am fucking armed," he wrote, "I feel more confident, stronger, more God-like" (Harris 1998).

This sentiment is echoed in Rodger's writing, "After I picked up the handgun, I brought it back to my room and felt a new sense of

power. I was now armed. Who's the alpha male now, bitches?" (2014, 113). Like Harris, Rodger also equated the sense of power he would feel while carrying out his rampage to one of superhuman or god-like strength:

> To see them all running from me in fear as I kill them left and right, that would be the ultimate retribution. Only then would I have all the power. They treated me like an insignificant little mouse, but on the Day of Retribution, I would be a God to them. (110)

The killers' use of words such as power and strength with reference to their possession of guns clearly ties masculinity to aggression, dominance, and violence.

There is substantial evidence of toxic masculinity in Rodger and Harris's accounts. Klebold's writing, on the other hand, is saturated with references to his feelings, his longing for love, and his desire to be happy. Toxic masculinity is generally associated with shaming men and boys when they express their emotions. Klebold seemed to write his journals for himself. It is possible he felt these gendered constraints in his daily life, but in his journal he seems to express his feelings freely. In all cases, violence is seen as a countermeasure to powerlessness, and there is a sense of aggrieved entitlement that plays out in their rampages. It can be concluded from this analysis that their writing is rife with toxic masculinity.

> That's where a lot of my hate grows from. The fact that I have practically no self-esteem, especially concerning girls and looks and such. Therefore people make fun of me … constantly … therefore I get no respect and therefore I get fucking PISSED. As of this date I have enough explosions to kill about 100 people, and then if I get a

couple bayonets, swords, axes, whatever I'll be able to kill at least 10 more. And that just isn't enough! Guns! I need guns! Give me some fucking firearms!

> – Eric Harris' journal (1998).

Mental Health and Language

Diagnosis of mental health disorders are directly addressed in the writings of all three killers. The first line in Klebold's journal mentions his perceived mental illness, "Fact: People are so unaware…well, Ignorance is bliss I guess… that would explain my depression" (1997). Dylan Klebold was never formally diagnosed as depressed, but he chronicled his struggle with hopelessness and suicidal thoughts in his journal. He wrote, "I don't fit in here thinking of suicide gives me hope, that I'll be in my place wherever I go after this life…that I'll finally not be at war with myself, the world, the universe" (1997).

Elliot Rodger wrote about bouts of depression, but he seemed to approach suicide as something he had to do to avoid arrest. In fact, he only mentions "suicide" and killing himself a total of five times. He wrote, "I didn't want to die, but I knew that I had to kill myself after I exacted my revenge to avoid getting captured and imprisoned" (Rodger 2014, 118). Rodger wrote about seeing psychiatrists, psychologists, and being prescribed medication. He had concerned parents. It seems from his writing that he was calculating and self-aware. Eric Harris also wrote about being prescribed medication: "My doctor wants to put me on medication to stop thinking about so many things and to stop getting angry" (Harris 1998). He did not seem to have any suicidal ideation or at least did not constantly write about it like Klebold did.

Following the rampages, the mental health of the shooters was widely discussed. Eric Harris was largely reported to be the mastermind of the Columbine shooting. In the media, he was known for his rage, his sadistic tendencies, and his fascination with violence (Cullen 2004). Dylan Klebold, on the other hand, was referred to by Denver journalist Dave Cullen, who wrote the seminal book, "Columbine," as a "quivering depressive who journaled obsessively about love and attended the Columbine prom three days before opening fire" (History. com 2009). The connection between mental health issues and mass casualty violence perpetrated by young white males often dominates media coverage of such cases. There is a compulsion by the mainstream media to find some kind of mental illness at the root of such atrocities. In an article for *Vox*, titled "Stop Blaming Mental Illness for Mass Shootings," Dylan Matthews pushes back against this dominant narrative. This is indicative of how the conversation around mental health has become divorced from medical diagnoses. For example, when Cullen describes Klebold as "depressive" it is unclear whether he is referencing a diagnosis, or if he is invoking it to describe Klebold's despondent nature. There are cultural definitions of what it means to be mentally disturbed that neglect to consider formal diagnoses. This section will apply rigor to cultural ideas of mental illness by focusing on psychologically supported risk factors as well as the formal mental illness diagnosis tool, the Gottschalk-Gleser Verbal Content Analysis scales.

Psychologists have shown that narcissism is a risk factor for school shooters (Bushman 2017, O'Toole 1999). Bushman in particular concluded that Eric Harris' writing exhibits narcissistic traits (2017, 234). If this is reflected in the texts, it would manifest as an inability to empathize with others,

fame-seeking tendencies, and an obsession with self. All three accounts are intensely personal and subjective. There are over 6,332 mentions of the word "I," comprising a total of 5.2% of the total words in these writings. It was the most commonly used word in the word-level index, more than the next common word, "the," which was used 4,957 times. Considered along with associated words like "me," "my," and "mine," these words comprise a staggering 8.8% of the total text. On the other hand, words such as they/them/their comprise a total of 1% of the words used. Instead of *other-ing* the "enemy," these killers instead focus on their own experience as the misunderstood or mistreated "other" and respond in intensely personal ways.

In *Rampage School Shooters: A Typology*, Langman notes that Klebold would use neologisms, or "[distort] actual words into words that do not exist" (2009, 83). This is seen as a suggestion of mental disturbance (Langman 2009, 83). Examples of neologisms in Klebold's writings include "depressioners," and "preceivations." He also created new meanings out of existing words and expressions by using them in unusual ways. Klebold refers to "the everything" ten times in his journal. "The everything" is, according to a fan-site created as a tribute to Dylan Klebold, "Seeing, experiencing, and existing within the expanded frame of consciousness of the all-encompassing, vast multi-verses. The blissful 'big picture' true, pure reality that is the universe in its entirety beyond the fake realities/existences that are part of this limited dimension here on earth. Spirit is of The Everything too" (The God of Sadness 2015).

Using the PCAD software, Rodger, Harris, and Klebold's natural language was evaluated using the Gottschalk-Gleser Verbal Content Analysis scales. The program detects words

and attitudes that correspond to anxiety, hostility, depression, hope, hopelessness, human relations, and quality of life, among other dimensions. The analysis produces a series of results for each individual describing where they fall on the Gottschalk-Gleser scales. For Elliot Rodger, the Gottschalk-Gleser method reveals only one abnormal result: he is found to be *slightly high* on the Social Alienation-Personal Disorganization scale. This scale was intended to measure the tendency for schizophrenic patients to isolate themselves socially, and also a tendency to be inconsistent when it comes to logical coherence (GB Software 2016). This is particularly interesting because Elliot Rodger was in and out of therapy for much of his life, and yet no treatment was successful. However, it is important to remember that the Gottschalk-Gleser method was designed to evaluate the psychology of white males, rendering it possible that it is less effective when measuring non-white men like Rodger. This is because the test was designed in the 1960s with white men as the assumed subjects. The Gottschalk-Gleser analysis of Eric Harris's language also returned a result of *slightly high* for Social Alienation-Personal Disorganization. In addition to this result, it also revealed a *slightly low* result for the Human Relations scale. This is a measurement of a person's "interest in and capacity for constructive, mutually productive, or satisfying human relationships" (Gottschalk and Gleser 1969, 220). It is unsurprising that this would be *slightly low* for Eric Harris, who showed little to no interest or capacity to form meaningful human relationships, except with the few people he said he would not shoot, writing "I want to kill everyone except about 5 people" (1998).

The Gottschalk-Gleser results for Dylan Klebold's writing provides much more insight into his mental health. He is found

to be *moderately high* for the Hostility Outward (Overt) subscale, which involves themes including killing or hurting others, or threatening to, and "adversely criticizing, depreciating, blaming, expressing anger, dislike of other human beings" (Gottschalk and Gleser 1969, 33). He is found *very high* for the Hostility Inward scale—more than three standard deviations above the mean. This scale measures tendencies toward self-harm, suicide, and criticism of oneself. It includes feelings of worthlessness and deprivation (Gottschalk 1969). Like Eric Harris, he is both *slightly high* on the Social Alienation-Personal Disorganization scale and *slightly low* on the Human Relations scale.

It is interesting that Harris and Klebold would be found to be slightly low on the Human Relations scale because Klebold wrote in detail about his desire for love and a meaningful human relationship. However, this scale also measures the individual's capacity to realize these desires, which is perhaps why Klebold has such a low result. The analysis of Klebold's writing also returned a result of *very low* for the Quality of Life scale, which is a composite of other results. This reveals that Klebold was suffering from very poor mental health. His score on the Depression scale was, as expected, very high. This takes into account seven subscales within the broader unit of depression: hopelessness, self-accusation, psychomotor retardation [a slowing down in thinking, feeling, or doing], somatic concerns [hypochondria or changes in physical health], death and mutilation depression, separation depression [feelings of abandonment], and hostility outward (Gottschalk 2001, 226).

These three young men were not socially well-adjusted or mentally healthy. However, given the challenges in posthumously

assessing their mental health, conducting language analyses such as the Gottschalk-Gleser method is a reasonable way to evaluate their mental states. Much of the conversation about mental health and rampage killings is around the lack of mental health care available in the United States. However, Rodger was receiving care and still carried out an act of violence. It is also critical to emphasize that while many rampage killers have mental health issues, few people with mental health issues are violent. In fact, mentally ill people are more likely to be the victims of violence than to perpetrate violence themselves (Brekke et al. 2001). This is why it is so critical to understand the particulars of each individual's mental state, so that any conclusions drawn from that are made responsibly.

> We will have our revenge on society, & then be free, to exist in a timeless spaceless place of pure happiness. The purpose of life is to be happy & be with your love who is equally happy. Not much more to say. Goodbye.
>
> –Dylan Klebold's Journal (1998).

Conclusion

This study shows that the narrative rationalizations of these rampage killers convey the influence of toxic masculinity and mental illness on the killers' states of mind prior to the attacks. There is a lot to be learned from closely analyzing the writings of three young men who killed a total of nineteen people between them, and non-fatally injured thirty-eight more. Neither the attack on Columbine High School, nor the killings in Isla Vista were spontaneous acts of rage. They were thoroughly planned, vengeful attacks conceived by young men who felt as though the world was unfair to them, and that they were entitled to punish and kill those who had wronged them,

whether directly or symbolically. Moreover, all three men had incredibly low self-esteem, and felt victimized because they did not conform to societal norms, particularly around gender. We see clear evidence that Klebold, Harris, and Rodger all subscribed to the idea of toxic masculinity, whether they were aware of it or not. They embodied Kalish and Kimmel's definition of "aggrieved entitlement," albeit to different degrees. We also have clear evidence that Klebold, Harris, and Rodger showed abnormal psychological dimensions on the Gottschalk-Gleser scale.

There are countless possibilities for research that uses narrative rationalizations to explore the sociology of school shootings, as well as the individual pathology of violent offenders. Future research could compare word-level indexes of school shooters' writings to the writings of their non-shooter peers, including those who also display signs of mental illness. Similarly, the writings of school shooters can be compared to the writings of other mass killers, including terrorists with a variety of ideologies—from radical Islamist terrorists to right wing white supremacists.

Finally, these school shooters' paradoxical personalities—as evidenced by their paradoxical writings—would benefit from further scholarly analysis. For example, while Dylan Klebold was obsessed with his own death, he also believed he would find true love. Eric Harris was violent, obsessed with weapons, and filled with hate, yet he didn't want his homicidal plans to be blamed on anyone else. He insisted, "It's MY fault! Not my parents, not my brothers, not my friends, not my favorite bands, not computer games, not the media. IT is MINE! Go shut the fuck up!" (Harris 1998). Elliot Rodger hated beautiful women for having the power to determine a man's status. He also believed he was superior to some of the men

who were romantically involved with these women. He was self-aggrandizing and self-loathing all at once.

As part of a broader effort to prevent these sorts of killings in the future, we need to understand the specific ways gendered attitudes towards violence and power affected these three school shooters. Examining the writings they left behind is just a start. We need to address the inherent paradoxes of toxic masculinity, not least the contradictions between low self-esteem and self-aggrandizement. Moreover, we need to challenge the ease with which violent individuals can successfully obtain weapons and carry out acts of mass violence. Toxic masculinity, mental health issues, and the availability of weapons are just three of the known factors that led to the deaths of almost twenty people at the hands of three young killers—but there could be additional factors that we have yet to uncover. For this reason alone, it is critical to expand on the research outlined in the paper and continue studying the opinions and psychological traits of known school shooters.

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No More Games: An Intersectional Approach to Geek Masculinity and Marginalization in Video Gaming Culture

Anna Cameron

The 2014 Gamergate controversy, where white men gamers targeted feminists for harassment and abuse in response to perceived attacks against the "real gamer" identity, demonstrates the importance of video gaming culture as a site of gender inequality that requires scholarly study. Research has demonstrated the ways in which the domination of geek masculinity in gaming culture has produced an environment in which women are demeaned, harassed, and relegated to marginalized positions. In order to continue to make meaningful progress in the study of gender inequality and its relationship to "gamer" culture, intersectional research must become the standard approach. I argue that while previous work on gender and the marginalization of women has been critical for the development of an understanding of these inequalities, a more intersectional approach is necessary for a complete understanding of all of the systems of oppression that collectively produce the persistent social inequalities in video game culture.

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In recent years, video gaming culture has begun to attract interest as an important subject for serious social research. The widespread harassment and marginalization of women in particular has led many scholars to examine the various structures and practices in place that serve to perpetuate gender inequality in gaming. However, this emphasis on gender ignores the intersectional dimensions of video gaming culture, and the ways in which systems of oppression interact in order to marginalize some players and privilege others. Much of the previous research has focused exclusively on the gender—and less frequently, on the race—of those who play video games. I argue video gaming culture must be studied from an intersectional approach that centers the experiences of marginalized groups in gaming. Only through this approach can the dominance of geek masculinity by fully analyzed. Intersectional analysis will enable researchers to more fully understand the ways in which mechanisms of marginalization function within the field and how players navigate this potentially hostile environment.

For much of 2014, the online controversy known as "GamerGate" dominated news cycles and Twitter feeds across the country. The dispute began when an ex-boyfriend of Zoe Quinn, the designer of the critically-acclaimed game *Depression Quest*, claimed that several of the positive reviews of the game were the result of Quinn engaging in sexual relationships with game critics. These allegations quickly spread throughout gaming circles on social media and some members of the gaming community reacted strongly to the idea that the video game press was biased, ideological, or being censored.[1]

While anti-Quinn proponents positioned their attacks as a defense of ethics in journalism, in practice the GamerGate movement was characterized by violent threats and vitriolic sexual harassment against women involved in gaming. Scholars have described GamerGate as "a misogynist claim to games and gamer identity" (Braithwaite 2016, 3). GamerGaters viewed themselves as the real victims, as the so-called "social justice warriors" they opposed were attempting to change gaming by making it about feminist ideology rather than the "purity" of the games. Braithwaite writes, "For GamerGaters, more diverse and inclusive games can only come at the expense of their own sense of identity. This feels less like an industry's evolution and more like an attack" (6). According to Braithwaite, this gaming identity is particularly contentious because it has become the site of conflict between the men who have traditionally dominated gaming and the women who are fighting for acceptance and respect in a community they love. Both the rise in casual games popular with women, such as *Candy Crush*, and the gaming industry's increased acknowledgment of the diversity of players, began to threaten the white man geek status quo (3).

While the accusations against Quinn proved to be false, the debate over her legitimacy as a game designer belied broader issues of toxic masculinity in gaming—i.e., cisgender male gamers wanting to protect their gamer geek sub-culture and, in the process,

reject the feminists who were supposedly ruining it. Anita Sarkeesian, whose video series "Tropes vs. Women in Video Games" critiques games for their sexist depictions of women, became another prominent target of the GamerGaters. Both Quinn and Sarkeesian had personal information released online (a practice known as "doxing"), received numerous highly graphic threats, and were forced to leave their homes. Other women who spoke out about GamerGate, including journalists and game designers, were also subjected to threats and the publication of personal information. Some women ultimately left the industry as a result. While many GamerGaters claimed that they were merely advocating for stronger ethical standards in gaming journalism, in reality these arguments became a way to frame themselves as the real victims of the situation and as the true defenders of "real gaming" (Braithwaite 2016).

Although the GamerGate movement itself has largely subsided, the perception that greater diversity and representation within game design and gamer online communities threatens the white masculine identity is still visible. Since the election of Donald Trump, numerous media outlets have drawn connections between the election and the GamerGate movement (Martens 2017; Hess 2017; Marcotte 2016), with one writer calling GamerGate the "canary in the coalmine" for the rise of the alt-right (Lees 2016). Others argue that GamerGate and Trump were both "responses to the gains that women, LGBT people, and people of color made in mediums and genres historically dominated by white men" (Rosenberg 2015) and appealed to similar "deep-seated notions of entitlement and privilege–mixing in fear-mongering, racism, and misogyny through the scapegoating of marginalized people" (Sarkeesian 2017).

GamerGate revealed several key issues in modern culture that cannot be ignored, and therefore require further study.

In this paper, I discuss the existing research that has sought to interrogate the social inequalities present in the communities and culture surrounding video games, beginning with work focused on the marginalized position of women in gaming. While work on gender and the marginalization of women has been critical for the development of an understanding of these inequalities, an intersectional approach is necessary for a more complete picture of the divisions within gaming. I argue that the primacy of men and exclusion of women in gaming culture has always been about more than gender alone, as elements of race and sexuality are central to the ideas of identity that dominate gaming culture. Rather than white men opposing white women, we can understand this central division as white cisgender[2] heterosexual men performing a specific kind of masculinity that oppresses and opposes all other groups.

Marginalization of Women

Much of the existing research on social inequality in gaming culture has focused on the position of women. This work has shown that women have three possible roles and are punished for stepping outside of them: they are rendered invisible, seen as sex objects, or seen as the enemy (Herring 1999; Taylor 2006; Taylor 2012; Salter and Blodgett 2012). Three main reasons have been proposed for the marginalization of women in gaming: the rise in popularity of casual versus "hard-core" video games (Crawford 2012; Juul 2010; Taylor 2012), the perceived ownership by men of gaming technology (Jenkins and Cassell 2008; Crawford 2012; Taylor 2012; Salter and Blodgett 2012),

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[1] As Suellentrop (2014) describes the controversy in the *New York Times*, "After targeting Ms. Quinn, GamerGate widened its scope to include others perceived to be trying to cram liberal politics into video games. The movement uses the phrase 'social justice warriors' to describe the game designers, journalists, and critics who, among other alleged sins, desire to see more (and more realistic) representations of women and minorities. That critique, as well as more accusations of collusion among developers and journalists, attracted some conservative gadflies to GamerGate, like the *Firefly* actor Adam Baldwin [who coined the GamerGate hashtag] . . . The movement's supporters say they want to improve video-game journalism. But their actions look a lot more like an orchestrated campaign of harassment against women who make or write about video games." For more information, see Suellentrop (2014), Kain (2014) and Dewey (2014).

[2] The term "cisgender" refers to people whose biological sex assigned at birth corresponds to their gender identity.

and the structure and content of the games themselves (Burrill 2008; Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009).

First, women tend to be most associated with the so-called "casual" games that can be downloaded onto a mobile device and played for short periods of time. These games are considered low-status in video gaming culture. Women often have more restricted leisure time than men, and so they have fewer long blocks of time to fill and more social and economic constraints on their choices of activities (Crawford 2012). As a result, long hours spent dedicated to gaming are impossible for many women who are disproportionally responsible for the care of others and are more likely to spend time and money on family members than on themselves (Crawford 2012). These constraints contribute to the higher rates of women who play casual games rather than "hardcore" console and PC games that require greater time commitment (Crawford 2012; Juul 2010). While some mobile games have become wildly popular in recent years, such as *Candy Crush, Pokémon Go,* and *Fortnite,* casual games have come to be seen as a shift towards the feminine and therefore are perceived as a threat to the future of dominant masculine hardcore gaming (Vanderhoef 2013). Due in part to their association with the feminine, these games are conferred a lower status than the more time-consuming console games, and the players of casual games are disparaged accordingly by many in the gaming community (Taylor 2012, 112). In the same way women's work and average wage suffer under patriarchal systems (England 1999), women's leisure is marred by both segregation and devaluation.

The second reason that has been given for the marginalization of women in gaming is due to the perceived ownership of the technology. Computers are coded as masculine technology, a reason marketers attempted to rebrand them for girls through the "girl games" movement of the 1980s (Jenkins and Cassell 2008). During this time, the gaming industry attempted to attract girls by making "pink games" like *Barbie Fashion Designer* that used traditional values of femininity and "purple games" like *Nancy Drew* games that used girls' real-life interests. While commercially successful, both of these types of games used essentialized notions of the likes and dislikes of boys and girls that ignored what they had in common (Jenkins and Cassell 2008). In their analysis of the "girl games" movement, Jenkins and Cassell (2008) argue that the movement failed to show that computers were not just for boys, which has made it difficult to change gender stereotypes in gaming even with game designers attempting to take a more fluid approach to gender.

Even in households where technology is shared by all members and is located in a common space, video game technology is viewed as symbolically belonging to the men in the household—who occasionally allow the women to access it (Crawford 2012). The assumption of ownership by men is also perpetuated by the video game industry, which predominately designs gaming technology for the imagined man gamer. One example of this is in the design of Xbox controllers, which are designed for men and are therefore too large to be easily handled by smaller hands (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009, 81).

The third reason for the marginalization of women in gaming is about the types and content of games that are produced. The proportion of characters appearing in games who are not white men is very small. Among all characters who appear in video games,

one study (Williams et al, 2009) found that 86% were men and 15% were women, with an even greater difference for primary characters. The same study found that 85% of primary characters were white, 10% were black, 4% were biracial, and 2% were Asian. Hispanics and Native Americans did not appear as primary characters in any of the games (Williams et al. 2009). Another study (Downs and Smith 2010) found that in the Xbox, PlayStation 2, and GameCube games they sampled, 41% of the women wore sexually revealing clothing and 43% were partially or totally nude, while of the men, 11% wore sexually revealing clothing and 4% were partially or totally nude. This study found a similar overrepresentation of men to the Williams et al. study, with 14% of the characters being women and 86% being men. This shows that in addition to appearing far less frequently than men characters, women characters were also much more likely to be hypersexualized (Downs and Smith 2010, 727). Despite some innovation in representation and game structure in recent decades, it remains a norm for video games to center on a man protagonist in a combative situation, and players are encouraged to identify with this "man of action" (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009, 81). Violence is often central to this type of game, just as it is presumed to be a central experience of men (Burrill 2008). The wildly popular *Halo* series is the perfect example of this form, where gamers are exclusively allowed to occupy the position of a masculine warrior in a militaristic science fiction environment (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009, 82).

In summary, the lower status of casual, women-dominated games compared to "hardcore" men-dominated games, the belief in men's ownership of gaming technology, and the gendered structure and content of games all contribute to the marginalization

of women in gaming. However, research shows that 41% of people who play video games are women (Entertainment Software Association 2016, 3), and GamerGate demonstrates that the presence of women in gamer culture and gamer spaces is pervasive enough to seem threatening to some men players. Evidently, there is a substantial number of women who overcome these sociocultural barriers in order to participate in so-called hardcore gaming. However, these women gamers then face an additional persistent problem: widespread online harassment.

Online Harassment

The prevalence of sexism and harassment within online games and in online communication is well-established by scholars. On average, in games where players communicate over microphones, feminine voices receive three times as many negative comments as masculine voices (Kuznekoff and Rose 2012, 541). Additionally, players who conform to masculine norms such as a desire for power over women, heterosexual self-presentation, and a drive to win are more likely to have sexist beliefs about gender and gaming (Fox and Tang 2014, 314). Many players use linguistic profiling, meaning determining someone's identity through auditory cues in how they sound, to identify other players as women and people of color, which causes women of color to be at unique risk for intersecting oppressions in online gaming (Gray 2012). Women gamers, and women of color in particular, utilize a variety of strategies including camouflaging their gender and aggressively demonstrating their skills and experience in order to manage harassment. While these strategies are at times successful, they require constant work and displace the responsibility of handling harassment onto the victims (Cote 2015).

In order to understand this widespread sexual harassment and the continued marginalization of women even after they overcome initial barriers to playing video games, it is important to understand how game spaces and gamer identity have been coded as masculine. In the following section I examine the specific type of masculinity typically associated with video games—geek masculinity—which has been discussed by Connell (1995) and Taylor (2012).[3] In particular, an understanding of geek masculinity as the basis of gamer identity will further elucidate why women's presence in gaming is seen as a violation of masculine spaces.

Geek Masculinity

Geek masculinity is most fully elaborated by T.L. Taylor in her work on the professionalization of e-sports. For Taylor (2012), geek masculinity is a form of masculinity that provides an alternative to more traditional forms of masculinity linked to athletic culture. Instead of knowledge and proficiency in physical sports, in geek masculinity the mastery of technology, science, and gaming are valorized. In geek culture, boys and men gain status, social connections, and pleasure by performing skills and expertise in specialized areas (Taylor 2012, 111). As Taylor writes, "Facilitating an interest in competition or fraternal relationships but via activities like playing computer games thus becomes a powerful alternative modality for geek masculinity" (111).

Geek masculinity has two potentially contradictory connections to hegemonic masculinity. The first is the geek as a subordinated identity within the hegemonic project. As defined by Connell, hegemonic masculinity is "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (1995, 77). What this consists of depends on historical context and can shift depending on who is most powerful in society, but it is rarely fully enacted and remains an impossible goal against which men measure themselves. Within the same framework, other masculinities are subordinated, complicit, or marginalized (Connell 1995, 77).

The most common subordinated masculinity is the homosexual man, subordinated due to the perceived close associations with femininity (Connell 1995, 78). However, some heterosexual men can be oppressed through the labels of "nerd," "dweeb" and "geek." These other identities are linked to femininity, which relegates men to positions at the bottom of the gender hierarchy (Taylor 2012). As a result, geek masculinity can dovetail with potentially subversive constructions of sexuality and identity. "This can range from simple disruptions of the objectifications of women to making room for queer identities or alternate sexual and intimacy practices like polyamory or BDSM" (Taylor 2012, 112). While heterosexual geeks may be just as homophobic as non-geeks, geek masculinity has the potential to be accessible to queer identities and practices that are repudiated by hegemonic masculinity (Taylor 2012).

However, geek masculinity can also be complicit in hegemonic masculinity. It is difficult to fully place geek masculinity in either category exclusively, as "the nerd stereotype includes aspects of both hypermasculinity (intellect, rejection of sartorial display, lack of 'feminine' social and relational skills) and perceived feminization (lack of sports ability, small body size, lack of sexual relationships with women)" (Kendall 1999, 356). Connell (1995) describes complicit masculinity as men who receive social rewards and dividends from their domination over other—typically more feminine—groups gained from the framework of hegemonic masculinity, while failing to fulfill many of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. In this view, rather than being more welcoming to marginalized groups, geek masculinity also has the potential to be particularly motivated to reject them. Therefore, in the case of gamer culture and the negative reactions of many men gamers to the rise of women and people of color, geek masculinity can be seen as a form of complicit masculinity.

Within complicit masculinity, we can understand geek masculinity as generating power and status for men through the rejection of other groups of people. In a study of "nerd" users of BlueSky, an online interactive text-based forum, Kendall (2000) finds a conflicted relationship between nerd masculinity and hegemonic masculinity. The participants rejected and mocked certain elements of hegemonic masculinity, particularly regarding violence against women. However, they accepted the hegemonic gender order that "depicts women as inferior and not acceptable gender identity models [that] nevertheless requires that men desire these inferior (even disgusting) creatures" (Kendall 2000, 267). Many of the participants viewed themselves as being the victims of previous mockery, manipulation, and rejection by women and as a result no longer attempted heterosexual relationships—despite continuing to identify as heterosexual. Also, while homosexual and bisexual men were accepted within the BlueSky community, they were still required to engage in conversations depicting women as sexual objects. This suggests that "at least for some men, distance from women comprises a more important component of masculine identity than sexual distance from men" (Kendall 2000, 271). While the participants challenged some elements of hegemonic masculinity, they ultimately derived the most power from the subordination and objectification of women.

From the point of view of men who have successfully used geek masculinity to gain power and control of gaming spaces, "arguments for inclusivity are understood as attacks on men" (Braithwaite 2016, 6). This is because making video games more accessible to other groups would lead to a loss of their domination over these other groups, and would lessen their primary source of social capital and identity. For otherwise subordinated men whose dominance over women in gaming remains their closest tie to hegemonic masculinity (Kendall 2000), ongoing hostility towards women in gaming is a key factor in maintaining their status. While geek masculinity may have initially been a less desirable alternative to more dominant performances of masculinity, it now generates power and status. Salter and Blodgett (2012) write, "For a long time, geeks' mastery of social media enabled them to form and control their own gaming publics. This mastery and technology helped them to turn their isolation into a powerful social network" (413).

Furthermore, geek masculinity is about race and sexuality as much as it is about gender. As a result, it is not only women who are marginalized by these mechanisms, but anyone who does not fit the image of a

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[3] Following Taylor (2012), I will argue that culture is dominated by geek masculinity, but this work is situated more broadly in the Sociology of Masculinities. For example, Halberstam (1998) demonstrates how female masculinity as a queer subject position is able to challenge hegemonic models of gender conformity, which will likely be useful for understanding the positions of women in gaming. Also, Bridges and Pascoe's work (2014) on hybrid masculinity shows recent transformations in masculinity have incorporated elements associated with marginalized identities while still sustaining existing systems of gender inequality.

stereotypical white, cisgender, heterosexual "geek." Burrill connects the popularity of ultraviolent videogames to a backlash "against feminism, non-normative sexualities, economic pressures, racial mixing, the 'weaknesses' of the metrosexual, and so on" (2008, 33). The previously discussed mechanisms of marginalization in gaming are reinforced, reproduced, and made more difficult to eliminate by their ties to—and embeddedness within—a culture of masculinity, and specifically geek masculinity.

Intersectionality and Future Research

While previous research has successfully identified some important factors contributing to the continued marginalization of women that has become significantly more nuanced since the 1980s, an intersectional approach is necessary for a more complete understanding of marginalization in gaming culture.

An intersectional approach understands that dimensions of identity such as gender and race cannot be separated analytically. This approach means scholars cannot give more importance to one element of a person's identity, or analyze them separately as if systems of gender, race, class, and sexuality-based oppression have additive effects. Instead, these elements "interact to shape the multiple dimensions" of the experiences of women of color that make their experience "qualitatively different than that of white women" (Crenshaw 1991, 1245). Furthermore, an intersectional approach "focuses not just on differences but also on the way in which differences and domination intersect and are historically and socially constitutive of each other" (Zinn and Dill 1996, 74). A key contribution of intersectional feminism is the contestation of universalizing white, middle-class,

Western women as the experiences of all women, which allows for a more complex analysis that takes into account intersecting experiences of oppression (Choo and Ferree 2010; Collins 2000; Zinn and Dill 1996). Treating white, middle-class Western women as the universal category of "woman" renders all other groups invisible and prevents their voices from being heard (Choo and Ferree 2010). To render non-white women invisible has been one of the effects of the overemphasis on gender in much of the scholarly work on video games, as illustrated by the focus of the GamerGate movement.

It is well known that supporters of the GamerGate movement primarily targeted women, particularly self-identified feminists. Richard uses Patricia Hill Collins' work on the intersection of gender and race to argue that the media coverage of GamerGate—as well as the GamerGate harassers themselves—largely focused on white women as a result of the "historical conflation of gender as being embodied by white women" (Richard 2016, 71). However, the attacks were based on perceived threats against a very specific gamer identity: the "real" gamer, associated with the white, cisgender, heterosexual man (Evans and Janish 2015, 130). The identity of the "real" gamer "is reified in the overwhelming number of popular games that feature a white, heterosexual, masculine, male protagonist" (Evans and Janish 2015, 130). As Kendall notes, "Women and men of color are excluded entirely from this category, protecting the superior economic and technological status of white men" (2011, 519).

In addition, the GamerGate controversy highlights the ways in which race is marginalized even within spaces created by women as a response to GamerGate. While white feminists used online forums as a space

of resistance against the movement, Gray (2016) found that they were unwilling to engage with women of color who supported the Black Lives Matter movement, resulting in women of color's creation of the hashtag #SolidarityisForWhiteWomen. The white feminists' lack of knowledge of the women of color's lived experiences "originates in the inability to recognize common oppression among women" (Gray 2016, 66). In other words, white feminists did not recognize the racialized oppression faced by women of color as a problem facing all women, and as a result, "essentially replicated" the exclusionary practices they created the forums to escape (Gray 2016, 66). Even the Entertainment Software Association's annual report on players' demographics ignores race (2016). While this report shows data on a variety of dimensions including age (the average gamer is 35 years old), gender (59% of gamers are men and 41% are women), and parental control (91% of parents are present when their child buys or rents a game), it provides no information on race, class, or sexual identity.

A limited amount of empirical work has taken an intersectional approach to the study of oppression of marginalized groups in gamer culture. Along with her work on the construction of the #SolidarityisforWhiteWomen hashtag, Gray's intersectional study of the experiences of black women using the Xbox Live (2014) is pioneering in this area. She finds that these women repurpose the existing virtual infrastructures of Xbox Live to organize opposition in response to the inequalities they face in this space. Examples include "resistance griefing," where they disrupt the game in response to oppression, as well as using Xbox Live discussion forums to advertise their mobilization efforts (Gray 2014).

Other work has also used an intersectional approach successfully. Richard (2016) analyzes the experiences of a diverse group of players and finds that harassment and gatekeeping limit the participation of marginalized players, and that more work is required to dismantle the assumption of the white man player as the norm. Kendall's work on geek masculinity, which she refers to as "nerd masculinity," shows how the hegemonic gender order as well as hegemonic ideals of whiteness led to the BlueSky forum, which was an online interactive text-based forum, becoming a space that is welcome to "a few women, nonheterosexuals, and Asian Americans" because they have learned how to perform white masculinities in order to fit in. (Kendall 2000, 272). Shaw (2012) argues that the question of marginalized people identifying with the "gamer" label is a separate one from if marginalized people play video games. Gender, race, and sexuality can shape conversations about games in the right circles, and separating marginalized players into distinct markets is not the solution to the problem of marginalization. Instead, Shaw (2012) argues that the entire gaming market must be constructed as diverse. When research on gamer culture is primarily focused on gender alone—rather than concurrently considering players' race, class, and sexual identities—important questions remain unexamined. The examples of intersectional research outlined above serve as critical models for how to move beyond this type of gender-focused approach, but there is still much work to be done.

Conclusion

In order to continue to make meaningful progress in the field of gender and video games, intersectional research must become the standard approach. To continue to produce work that draws uncritically on

the idea of the typical gamer as a white cisgender heterosexual man is to promote the idea that this is an accurate reflection of gaming culture, and that this is a natural and normal state of affairs. While the existing research on gender in gaming has been influential in identifying games and gaming as a site of oppression against certain groups of people, it is limited by its lack of intersectional considerations. Widespread emphasis on gender tends to neglect the race and sexuality dimensions of both the games themselves and the communities that develop around them, as well as the ways in which these identities contribute to gamers being either marginalized or privileged in their community. Regardless of what identities seem most salient to players at any given time, the race, sexuality, and gender of players must be taken into account for researchers to fully understand why video gaming remains such a visibly hostile place for players outside of the white cisgender heterosexual male paradigm.

To accept the dominance of geek masculinity as the status quo in gaming culture is to perpetuate the problem. Assumptions about who plays video games need to be challenged at every stage of research if this field is to continue to grow more inclusive and listen to the voices it has historically marginalized. Industry professionals, game researchers, game journalists, and anyone involved in gaming culture's public sphere must consider their own role in perpetuating white man "gamer geek" stereotypes that continue to control the kinds of games that are made and the experiences of those who play them. Despite the sociocultural and technological barriers, gamer culture is already diverse. In order for traditionally marginalized players to finally be heard and accepted as equals, gaming scholars must move beyond their outdated assumptions and undertake research that accurately reflects this diversity.

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Sound and the Fury: Affect, Disability, and Sound in Christine Wilks' *Tailspin*

Meenakshi Srihari

Christine Wilks' fictional tale *Tailspin* traces the life of an old man affected by tinnitus, a hearing disability characterized by a ringing sensation in the ears. *Tailspin* stands out as a multimedia interactive text in its use of sound as a metaphor for communication. By simulating the sounds of tinnitus for the reader, Wilks' aurally visceral tale asks the reader to listen to the listening of the disabled "other"—i.e., to listen as if one might have tinnitus. The multimedia interactive design of *Tailspin* makes a case for reimagining the cultural scripts assigned to hearing disabilities. This article traces the ways in which sound in Wilks's narrative acts to situate the audience in the lived experience of disability. The self and the "other" merge as the visceral sounds in *Tailspin* blur the lines between the actual world and the story world, such that the reader and the characters are no longer confined to their respective diegetic levels. While sound in *Tailspin* is a part of the characters' lived experience and furthers the readers' understanding of the characters, it is also "noise" that interferes with the readers' understanding of the tale. The excess sound acts as a necessary supplement—a prosthesis to completing and understanding the narrative. By intentionally presenting a non-linear narrative—and then telling it through a layering of images, sound, text, and temporalities—*Tailspin* provides readers with an innovative way to read trauma. Through an analysis of the sensorial variant of metalepsis present in *Tailspin*, this article discusses how the use of interactive media can expand ideas of diegesis and promote new ways of imagining and understanding the lived experience of disability.

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If no sound is possible without hearing, then sound studies—but also many forms of politics —begins with hearing the hearing of others."

- Jonathan Sterne (2015)

Literature and popular narratives often present disabled characters in ways that disregard their full humanity and complexity.[1] For instance, in Belgian cartoonist Hergé's popular *Tintin* series (1929-1976), although Professor Calculus is a genius inventor with two doctorate degrees,[2] the trait about him that stands out most is that he is extremely hard of hearing. His misheard sentences and large hearing aid add comic relief to Tintin's adventures. This stereotypical depiction of Professor Calculus is emblematic of a long literary tradition of using disabled characters as props rather than fully developed, complex human beings. This notion of "otherizing" the disabled character is subverted in Christine Wilks's *Tailspin*. Using a multimodal electronic medium, *Tailspin* simulates the lived experience of its disabled protagonist and enables the reader to hear the hearing of the "other."

Tailspin is a flash-enabled, interactive, fictional electronic narrative in the second volume of the Electronic Literature Collection. Created in 2008 by Christine Wilks, the narrative traces the life of an old man, George, his daughter Karen, and Karen's children. One cause of friction in their lives is George's inability to deal with his tinnitus and growing deafness, and his refusal to use a hearing aid. Tinnitus is an impairment of the ear wherein one suffers from partial deafness and is privy to a constant high-pitched ringing sound as well

as the sound of one's heartbeat. George's temperament steadily grows worse as he tries to grapple with traumatic memories of war, his worsening tinnitus, and his noisy grandchildren. Karen and her children struggle to deal with a furious grandfather they cannot always understand.

This essay examines *Tailspin* within the context of discourses of illness and disability. Sound in *Tailspin* embodies a disabled character, both pointing to the character's deviance from the "normal" and attempting to supplement this lack through representation. However, this act of "representation" foregrounds that the way narratives portray disability is often artificial, drawing attention to the discomfiture between the portrayed and historical reality. This is analogous to the artificiality of a prosthetic that makes up for what is missing but also draws attention to an anomaly. This essay makes the overarching argument that sound serves as the narrative prosthesis in *Tailspin*. People have always looked to stories and imagination to foster empathy and recognition of the "other." Interactive media takes this a step forward, and in *Tailspin*, the haptic nature of sound and immersion acts to create a form that expands metalepsis and diegesis sensorially by blurring the distinction between normativity and disability. Interactive media provides a new means of representing disabilities such as deafness. New media narratives instill narrative empathy through their immersive properties and reinforce fundamental values such as recognition of the self and the "other."

Metalepsis – Breaking Down Diegetic Layers

The essay relies heavily on the concept of metalepsis to make its point. Hence, I take a brief look at the term and place it in relation to sound. In Gerard Genette's formulation in *Narrative Discourse* (1986), metalepsis is defined as: "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe, (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse, produces an effect of strangeness that is either comical...or fantastic" (235). By this, Genette is referring to the movement of entities (narrator, characters, reader etc.) from the narrative world to the actual world or vice versa. The narrative forms the diegetic universe, and the narrator or the reader are extradiegetic entities. This transgression of narrative boundaries has, since Genette, (who only meant metalepsis as a rhetorical strategy) been probed in detail and expanded to include several kinds of diegetic transgression. Marie-Laure Ryan's popular distinction (2006) between rhetorical and ontological metalepsis argues that the former "opens a small window that allows a quick glance across levels, but the window closes after a few sentences, and the operation ends up reasserting the existence of the boundaries" (207). In line with Genette's definition, for example, the sudden appearance of an author in the narrative and then their disappearance is rhetorical metalepsis. The latter, ontological metalepsis, is a more "literal" crossing of boundaries that shows the difference between metalepsis at the narrative and discourse level (2012). The transgression that most immersive media makes is at its point of origin: the metaleptic slide is realized by the reader, and not by the narrator. In *Tailspin*, for instance, it is the reader who encourages immersion by

interacting with the text, and hence makes the metalepsis possible.

1 "The sonorous is tendentially methexic": Sound and Metalepsis

1.1 User Engagement

This section will explore how the effect of the sound creates a metaleptic slide, that is, the reader and the characters are no longer confined to their respective diegetic levels. While the reader becomes privy to both the consciousness of the characters and the characters' memories of past worlds, the visceral sound of the tinnitus seeps through into the reader's world—marking the crossing of narrative boundaries.

For the purposes of this paper, the person engaging with *Tailspin* will be referred to as the reader, even though the multimodal form makes interaction more complex than a typical book. *Tailspin*'s interactive interface works as such: each screen of the narrative fades in with several images of spirals on them. The reader is urged to move the cursor over each of these to uncover a section of the story. Each spiral leads to new text, new animated images, and new sounds which are visually associated with images on the screen. When all the spirals on the screen have been uncovered, the reader hovers on a central spiral to move to the next screen. A tiny circular clock icon on one corner tells the reader how much longer each scene will last. The reader doesn't see Karen, George, or the kids, but only the objects that embody them—George through the fighter planes, Karen through the domestic landscape (the sound of cutlery, a tablecloth, etc.), and the children through their toys.

Through the changing sounds and images, one sound remains constant: a high-pitched ringing, and the sound of one's heart beating.

These sounds simulate the experience of tinnitus for the reader. The combination of the interface and the sound—that is, the spirals, changing visuals, the tinnitus, and the excess sound—is a sensory overload for the reader, producing a vertiginous effect. Both the structural device of sound and the interface will play an important role in this analysis of *Tailspin*.

As the paratextual introduction on the homepage announces, sound is imperative to *Tailspin* both as "theme and structural device" (Wilks 2008). While the sound is imperative to a complete understanding of the narrative, it is not unavoidable: the reader could choose not to hear these sounds by simply turning the sounds off or not using earphones; the reader still possesses some agency over the choice of immersion (a reflection of the self-conscious nature of the electronic medium). Ryan theorizes the mediating device—the mouse, the pointer—as being a "representation of [the reader's] virtual body in the virtual world" (2006, 122) that is, the cursor serves as a tool engaging the user in immersion. Alice Bell in her essay on interactional metalepsis builds on the theorization of the navigational tools in human-computer interaction as places where metalepsis occurs (2016, 7). In the same essay, Bell discusses various interactional moves on the part of the readers: navigational devices such as a mouse or controller, physiology, webcams, and hyperlinks as creating the metalepsis. Therefore, the first instance of metalepsis occurs as the reader navigates the interface using their cursor in order to uncover the story.

The second instance of metalepsis occurs through the use of sound. Sound as an important part of the subjective experience of the listener has been studied extensively through the lenses of cultural history (Schafer 1977), semiotics (Van Leeuwen 1999), and politics (Attali 1977). The corporeal sounds of *Tailspin* invoke a feeling of "being there" for the reader, and thereby enable a shift of diegetic levels. The sound in *Tailspin*, mediated through material appendages like earpieces/speakers, serves as a *corporeal* metaleptic device, one that establishes a haptic connection with the reader that extends beyond the screen-as-interface.

Even before the title *Tailspin* slowly fades away from the screen, the reader finds themselves being situated aurally in a kitchen. The sounds of a woman humming and cutlery merge with a strange ringing sound and heartbeats. As the narrative begins, the reader realizes that while the humming and clinking of the cutlery have ceased, the ringing and heartbeats remain constant. Spirals appear on an anatomy of the ear, evoking a startling realization—that while the sound has succeeded in locating us spatially in the diegetic space, it has also located us within the consciousness of George and his tinnitus. The reader becomes George, or in metaleptic terms, George is the reader.

Metalepsis could be considered a precondition of immersion in most interactive new media. In *Tailspin*, sound as a non-narrative diegetic device seeps into the reader's world, the metaleptic event being that of a shared somatic process—the heart beating. This commonality induces in the reader/listener an awareness that extends outside the normal subjective experience of immersion, in that it draws attention to a corporeal function that readers are not usually paying attention to. Talking on similar terms, Astrid Ensslin (2011) brings to light the physicality of select cybertexts, terming them physio-cybertexts. The term physio-cybertexts calls

attention to the "complex interplay between the reader's physical and mental interaction with the text" where "the reader's direction of thought is refocused back onto his or her own physical condition and the relative (im) possibility of controlling the body's sub-cortical functions" (3-4). While the function Ensslin focuses on is breathing, in *Tailspin* it is the sounds of the heart that cause the reader to direct attention to both one's own heartbeat and the text.

Readers identify with and mime the movements on the screen and emotions they see others experiencing because of the presence of mirror neurons. Mirror neurons, which were discovered by Giacomo Rizzolatti to explain the mimetic nature of apes, are "neurons in the brain that fire for motion when one is simply watching someone else in motion" (Driscoll, qtd. in Francis 2013, 102). Going by this concept, the heartbeats engage the reader to imitate, at least neurologically, George's actions. Since this is a somatic process already in motion without voluntary action, readers become aware of an event that they do not usually pay attention to. In this way, the use of sound in *Tailspin* falls into Ensslin's physio-cyber texts.

1.2 Sound and Diegetic Levels

In *Tailspin*, the use of sound is a haptic device that positions the sick body outside the realm of medicine and science, and within that of the lived experience of disability. The first screen establishes George's low tolerance of external sounds. It begins with George scowling at the noise his grandchildren are making. Karen, meanwhile, is unable to understand his ill temper. The tinnitus is layered with the sound of laughter and toys until George can no longer bear it. As the reader reaches the last of the spirals[7] George screams. The accompanying text says: "He

shouts. Shocks them into silence" (Wilks 2008). It is only at this point in the entire work that the reader experiences silence. At that particular point, the sounds of tinnitus are absent so that the metaleptic movement occurs between the reader's world where there is (presumably) no tinnitus and the world that George desires but does not inhabit, i.e. a world without tinnitus. The shift is not explicitly between narrative levels as much as it is between two sensory levels: that of the verbal text and that of the sound. The break jolts the reader's concentration of both the sound and physical process they have been taking for granted, and the textual effect that the lines on screen ought to convey—that the family is scared into silence when George shouts. George's persona as someone with tinnitus is conveyed by the sound, and George as the senile old man in his family unit is conveyed by the verbal text. The break signifies the conjuncture of the two, foregrounding the use of sound as a narrative prosthesis to the lived experience of disability.

The sound that is shared between the reader and George situates the reader as being—in some ways—closer to George than his own family. Neither Karen nor George listens to each other in *Tailspin* (as George cannot hear most of the time, either). In one of the defining scenes of the narrative, Karen and George sit next to each other to eat with the family. Karen purposely positions herself on her father's bad side, the side of the affected ear:

The place she always sat since childhood. Her husband, Richard's on his good side. She keeps the conversation flowing with Richard and his mother, in that direction only, as if there's a blank side on her left, a blank wall. She's aware she's doing it, but she won't stop herself. She thinks she can't. (Wilks 2008, my emphasis)

Karen's deliberate actions do not go unnoticed. Though George cannot hear her speaking, he notices what is happening: "What's that they're saying? What are they planning now? He might as well be bloody invisible" (Wilks 2008). He tries to draw their attention by asking for things, but they hand him what he asks for, and get back to their conversation.

Karen's actions and George's feelings are incomprehensible to each other, and it is the reader who is burdened with both their discomfitures. The reader is doing what the family isn't: listening. By putting us inside George's head, and making us privy to the thoughts and memories of both daughter and father, the reader fulfills the position of the priest in the confession box, a voyeur, a connoisseur of secrets. Readers can both hear and listen to what the characters cannot, or do not, making the reader an invisible character in the narrative. Similarly, when George loses the ability to be listened to and to listen, he slowly becomes invisible as well.

Screenshot from Tailspin: George's lack of hearing slowly renders him invisible

Another instance where the metaleptic slide is noticeable is at the end of the narrative. The credits come on screen and the visuals shift to that of a tuning fork, but the sound of the tinnitus remains unchanged. The reader still shares George's consciousness, even after the narrative has ended and the diegetic level has shifted to the extradiegetic. The difference between the "world in which

one tells" and "the world of which one tells" (Genette 1980, 236) no longer holds, and politically, this might be the author's way of questioning if these narrative worlds—the world of the physically challenged and the world of the (assumed) normative reader—ought to be considered different worlds at all. Genette's quote from Borges is especially of interest here: "such inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators can be fictitious" (236). The reader has been looking at the narrative through George's lived experience, and even when Karen is focalized on, it is *through* George's body that the reader encounters the narration. That the reader is still in George's body when the narrative concludes serves to imbue the reader with a feeling of entrapment in a body that they have no control over. The reader's lack of agency, realized metaleptically, is a comment on the corporeal entrapment that George faces.

2 Sound as Narrative Prosthesis

2.1 Sound and othering

Jean-Luc Nancy (2002) defines listening as an introspective act. To listen, he says, "will always, then be to be straining toward or in an approach to the self" (9). Taken in the context of the deaf or the hard of hearing, the word strain almost seems like a pun: the introspective journey for the auditorily impaired means that they strain towards understanding the self through physical infirmities worsened by cultural discourses.

One of the major distinguishing elements of the ear from the eye is the lack of the eyelid, thereby taking away from it the choice to deny the entry of external sound. The presence of a hearing aid specifically helps the person with the infirmity tune in to the frequency of sound they cannot hear, and only masks the corporeal sounds

that signify tinnitus (American Tinnitus Association 2019). That is, the tinnitus is always present, the hearing aid merely helps the wearer become less conscious of the sound by making external sounds more prominent.

The earpiece sets into motion an aural regime, to parallel Lev Manovich's "visual regime" (2001, 72), where sounds outside the space of the screen do not exist—this is, ironically, an internal sound for the tinnitus patient. Using a speaker or earphones puts the reader—at least on a sensory level—within the realm of experience of the tinnitus patient. The earphones mask outside sound, so that the only sounds the reader can hear are those of the tinnitus world. The earpiece in this case serves literally as a prosthetic device for the reader as well, but one that also doubles as an "ear-lid," which can prevent the annoying sounds of the tinnitus from reaching readers. However, this move leaves one handicapped to interpret the narrative only visually, reflecting the lived experience of the deaf and foregrounding the narrow borders between the able and the deaf that George occupies.

Sound—classified as both normative and non-normative—is used to produce the lived experience of a disabled character, and thereby acts as the narrative prosthesis that *Tailspin* relies on. In their work on narrative prosthesis (2000), David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder assert that "disability has been used throughout history as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight. Bodies show up in stories as dynamic entities that resist or refuse the cultural scripts assigned to them" (206). The presence of a disabled character is the narrative's contribution towards both shaping cultural beliefs around disability and challenging

these very beliefs, as George is the most visible and aural character in *Tailspin*. The reader/listener believes that it is George's impairment that leads to his fury, assigning to him an irritable and intimidating persona. The disability *defines* his character, overriding other aspects of his personality that contribute to but are not definitive of his character—except for his experience in the war, which ambiguously shows up throughout the narrative. Disability marks a literary character who is visible because of these marks of deviance, someone who "overencumbers the visual scene" (Mitchell and Snyder, xii). The omnipresent sound of tinnitus is a constant reminder that George is a disabled character. Tinnitus is also an integral plot device: it leads to the collapse of familial bonds, and it is hinted that perhaps it also took away George's opportunity to be a fighter pilot.

George's inability to subscribe to normative modes of hearing and Karen's inability to come to terms with George's tinnitus question the rather narrow definition of hearing itself. Specifically referring to tinnitus and other hearing disorders, Jonathan Sterne (2015) recognizes the limitation of sound studies in understanding disabled hearing experiences:

> *Sound studies has a creeping normalism to it—that is, an epistemological and political bias toward an idealized, normal, nondisabled hearing subject (see Davis 1995; Siebers 2008). If we are to believe Nancy and his fellow Romantics, the Deaf, the hard of hearing, and all of us hardening-of-hearing (one might say those of us who continue to live) are doomed to receding relations to authenticity and intersubjectivity. We should hold onto the idea that the ways people can hear, the limits of that hearing, and the conditions of possibility of hearing all provide points of*

entry into what it means to be a person at a given time or place (Erlmann 2010: 17-18). *To study hearing is to study the making of subjects, which means it is also to study the denigration and unmaking of subjects.* (73)

In other words, hearing and listening are dependent on the surroundings in which the person lives, and cannot be studied purely based on a culturalist historicism. Cultural historicism here refers to the manner in which the act of hearing is seen historically as the hearing of a non-disabled person, without due consideration to subjective experience.

2.2 SOUND AND AFFECT

Sterne's emphasis on the role of the environment in shaping a person's hearing brings the focus to George's life during the war. While the reader initially attributes George's anger and loneliness to his disability, his exposure to the trauma of war also contributes to his (mis)behavior. It becomes clear as the narrative progresses that while George loved flying, the trauma he encountered during the war scarred him: "He still dreams of flying a glider—peaceful quiet flight, like the birds / He can't ignore how many don't come back,/ Working on spitfires—the damage they sustain, / the holes he has to patch.../ bloody glad he doesn't fly this crate/ keep a lid on it/ careless whispers" (Wilks 2008). George's relief that he is not a fighter is often juxtaposed with the guilt and shame he fosters about the same fact, since being a fitter—someone who services airplanes—meant George did not see combat.

Was George's tinnitus caused due to the sounds of the war?[8] The reader can only guess. At one point towards the end of the narrative, George thinks, "If not to the grace of .../ cowardly relief/ he failed/ thank God/ for his dud ear." The narrative ends with the sentence "hang onto deafness for dear life" (Wilks 2008). This could also mean that George is thankful for his disability so he did not have to fight and ultimately die.

Tailspin illuminates both the aurally-disabled subject's position in ableist historical narratives, and the ways in which they are constantly tested and dehumanized by non-human objects that standardize hearing. The affective power of *Tailspin* derives from the juxtaposition of the sensuousness of the sound and the materiality of the images. For instance, the image of the tuning fork at the end could be a reflection of the assumption that objects external to the human body prove to be better receptors of sounds than the human ear.[9]

The sonic instruments here perform a sonic-gaze: they objectify the hearing subject and attempt to create a lexicon of the subject's lived experience through numbers and measurements. The use of a hearing aid proves to be a major point of contention for both Karen and George. Karen grumbles, or rather *thought*-grumbles, "He won't even entertain the idea of a hearing aid. What more can she do to explain? She's shown him the pictures, how discrete it is. It's infuriating. Doesn't make sense. It makes her so mad it hurts" (Wilks 2008) and while Karen thinks this, an image of the anatomy of the ear fades into the

background. George's response to that is two-pronged: he is concerned about being "conned" by salesmen selling perhaps faulty or useless hearing aids, and he also fears the hearing aids amplifying his tinnitus. This is a reversal of the sick role, where the disabled build up corporeal fear of the institutions that ought to help them— what Arthur Frank (1997) calls embodied paranoia, when "people fear for their bodies not only from natural threats such as storms or disease and from social threats such as crime or war. People are also threatened by institutions ostensibly designed to help them...the sick role is no longer understood as a release from normal obligations; instead it becomes a vulnerability to extended institutional colonization" (172). This is a double-marginalization for the disabled subject: marginalized both by disability and the use of technology that is engineered to work as a prosthetic device but only worsens the condition.

3 *"But really, it's not so noisy, is it?"*: Noise and its Dehumanizing Effect

This section focuses on how the sounds in *Tailspin* together subscribe to various formulations of noise and argues that the use of noise leads to the dehumanization of the protagonist. The word "noise" derives from the Latin *nausea*, which meant sickness, disgust, and loathing, and though meanings vary from disturbances caused by sound to dissonant music, the word comes loaded with a feeling of discomfort about the sound it describes. Sound scholars define noise around the concept of organization. For instance, Jacques Attali calls music an "organized manner of noise" (1985) and David Novak (2015) provides a useful taxonomy of noise when he classifies it into three different categories: aesthetic, technical, and social noise, resembling

Murray Schafer's social, technical, aesthetic, and simply loud sound (1977).

Social noise—which describes the acceptability of sonic behavior in society— is of special relevance here. Hugh Pickering and Tom Rice (2017) emphasize noise as being "sound out of place." Pickering and Rice delineate several characteristics of noise, which this essay finds convenient for its purposes. Drawing from Mary Douglas, Rice and Pickering, describe noise as being anomalous, ambiguous, and dangerous. By anomalous, they mean a sound that does not fit a series, by ambiguous, sounds capable of several interpretations. They propose that noise is recognized also "by its propensity to be felt as *dangerous*" (2017).

Tailspin has two separate consciousnesses: that of George and that of Karen. While to the family—which the reader understands through Karen—it is only George's screaming that is "out of place," for George, both the tinnitus and the sounds of the children playing with toys are "out of place." Right from the beginning, what Karen and the children consider anomalous— or noisy—is considered normative and appropriate by George, and vice versa. George categorizes the sounds of the children playing as "noise" both because they make his tinnitus worse and because they do not fit his conception of how children ought to behave. However, Karen finds the sounds of her children playing with toys to be perfectly normal. To the reader, the sounds of both the toys and the tinnitus are noise because they disrupt both narratives: the toys are jarring for George, and the tinnitus does not belong to Karen's consciousness. Thus, defining sounds as "noise" is subjective, and depends on who is listening.[10]

Both Karen and George find the sounds they cannot understand disruptive. George

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[8] The website of the American Tinnitus Association draws one's attention to the link between Tinnitus and war: "The repetitive stutter of a machine gun, shocking boom of mortars, the deafening drone of helicopter rotors; the sounds of war are hard to ignore and can leave many Veterans with permanent hearing damage. Tinnitus is the number one disability among Veterans and it affects at least one in every 10 American adults." ("New Treatment Options for Tinnitus Sufferers," July 25, 2018)
[9] Hertz used the tuning fork to study hearing in the nineteenth century; similarly, in the twentieth century, scientists used telephone equipment to study hearing (Sterne 2015, 69)

cannot hear what Karen is saying to his family, and in his fear of the unheard, of the not-understood, thinks they must be plotting something. At the same time, Karen and the children do not understand George's furious anger and are sometimes frightened by it. As the text states, "A sharp hissing word... Karen turns, catching a fleeting glimpse of hateful anger on her father's face. He was looking at Chloe. She sees fear in her youngest child and the mystifying shame of having provoked such wrath. But it's only there for a moment. Gone now...all gone" (Wilks 2008).

The loudness of the tinnitus in *Tailspin* adds to its metaleptic nature. It incorporates the reader into the narrative, and the reader, far from being passive, is actively encouraged to pick a side. Discussing the politics of using sound in film, Anne-Cranny Francis says, "Film sound is a technology of the body designed to embed the viewer in the narrative world of the film and also into the discursive world that underpins that narrative" (2013, 89). While the loudness initially makes the reader confused as to which character's side to take—since it depends on whether the reader identifies with the discourse of disability or the experience of the able-bodied family—at the end of the narrative the reader realizes that both Karen and the reader can walk away from the noise while George cannot. We (the reader) are angry and anxious when George is, and calm when he is—creating a fully realized experience of walking in George's shoes and empathizing with his struggles.

Dehumanization through noise is an act that can be traced through the discourse of torture. Torture victims and torturers record sounds that are corporeal and used as a technique during interrogation. In *At the Mind's Limits*, Jean Amery, a survivor of Auschwitz, gives a harrowing account of the bodily acoustics of torture as he receives the first blow: "acoustical, because he believes to hear a dull thundering" (29). The "acoustic dimensions," he says, lend to the act of bodily pain an *aesthetics*, a word that seems at odds with the violent act itself. Here the sound is from within, a sound that reverberates and echoes within the self. In his account of torturers using noise to intimidate the victim, Alan Connor in "Torture Chamber Music" (2008) talks about the use of repetitive phrases and loud music. The dehumanization occurs because the victim experiences a lack of agency and control over their environment. Elaine Scarry traces agency as a major factor of resemblance between the tortured and the sick in *The Body in Pain*: "Even when there is an actual weapon present, the sufferer may be dominated by a sense of internal agency. It has often been observed that when a knife or nail or pin enters the body, one feels not the knife, or a nail or pin but one's own body, one's own body hurting one" (1985, 53). Similarly, George's lack of agency in controlling both the external and internal sources of noise—and the acute awareness of the concrete existence of his body without agency—dehumanizes and erases him. "I might as well be bloody invisible," he thinks (Wilks 2008).

Conclusion—A Case for Rhetorical Listening

This reading of *Tailspin* attempts to be free of the guilt/blame logic. Ultimately, the reader blames neither George nor Karen for the noise and emotional turmoil in *Tailspin*, and instead tries to understand the discourse as it plays out. The immersive form of *Tailspin* also ensures that the readers understand their own role in the discourse. The reader understands that they come (presumably) from a culture that has prescribed definitions of deafness and is largely occularcentric. This realization occurs because the reader is put into George's shoes, where they suddenly can hear as he does. In Krista Ratcliffe's beautiful treatise on rhetorical listening (1999), which she advocates over a mere intentional reading of a text, she explains how "standing under the discourses of others means first acknowledging the existence of these discourses; second, listening for the (un)conscious presences, absences, unknowns; and third, consciously integrating this information into our world-views and decision-making" (13). Her deliberate inversion of the term understanding insists that standing under a narrative enables one to both listen to and ethically judge it—to conduct a *hearing* of it. The metaleptic reading of the narrative helps us locate commonalities in both similarities and differences that one might share with the deaf. In other words, one recognizes not just the textual claim that is made through George's story but also the "historically grounded cultural logic" of deafness from which the claim rises. The able-bodied readers can now see themselves in George rather than seeing George as an "other," and can use this realization to inform their worldview on sound and hearing moving forward: "*we* in *they* and *they* in *we*" (219).

Rather than subscribing to the notion that hearing is either normative or non-normative—and that hearing impaired people are therefore inferior—*Tailspin* attempts to acknowledge sound, hearing, and deafness as being subjective. *Tailspin*'s immersive articulation of the lived experience of tinnitus helps rectify the stereotypical characterizations of disability that are often found in literature and popular culture. Finally, *Tailspin* expands the possibilities for narrative metalepsis and offers new ideas for how to accurately and empathetically represent differently abled characters like George.

[10] For that matter, all descriptions of sounds are merely labels, for as Barthes has said, sound is either ineffable or adjectival (180). Whether one is listening is similarly an enactment of power, as Tripta Chandola (2012) points out. Her argument, drawing from Murray Schaffer is that the listener, by deciding who to listen to, automatically deems all "other" sounds as a nuisance and dominates the soundscape (60)

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Things You Wouldn't Believe: Predicting (and Shaping) the Future in *Blade Runner* and *Minority Report*

Jordan Moeny

This paper considers two deeply influential science fiction (SF) films: *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Minority Report* (2002). While their plots share relatively little overlap, the films' directors both made concerted attempts to build detailed visions of the future, particularly in their approach to setting and cinematography. This paper analyzes the similarities in world-building between the two films and argues that their respective visions of the future helped influence sociotechnical developments in the world beyond the screen.

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The honest truth is that when I talk to people about the film, the thing that they remember is not the plot, it's the world.

- Futurist Peter Schwartz, on *Minority Report* (Wired Staff 2012)

When it was released in 2002, Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* was a commercial and critical success, opening at the top of the box office. In the months following its release, *Minority Report* won a Saturn Award for best science fiction (SF) film and appeared on numerous lists of the year's best movies. Renowned film critic Roger Ebert called it "mainstream moviemaking at its most sublime" (Ebert 2002). Yet one of the most fascinating aspects of the movie is neither the premise—that "pre-cognitives" with the ability to see into the future would enable the end of murder—nor Tom Cruise's acclaimed performance as Department of Precrime head John Anderton. Rather, as Peter Schwartz suggests above, the deeply intricate world that the production team created draws at least as much attention—and arguably has the more lasting impact.

By contrast, seminal SF film *Blade Runner*—Ridley Scott's 1982 story of androids, detectives, and the nature of humanity—started off as a flop. Though film critics and audiences were underwhelmed at the time of its release, the film has since come to be recognized as one of the most influential movies of all time—SF or otherwise—particularly in its portrayal of a future version of Los Angeles. Released twenty years apart, the two films offer fairly different visions of the future. Yet these visually divergent settings ultimately reveal countless similarities in theme and in the dystopian societies they depict, and both claim cultural

staying power and significant influence on real-world sociotechnical developments.

Building the Future

Both *Blade Runner* and *Minority Report* occupy a particular role in SF film in that they represent specific forms of the future. Both are based on writings by Philip K. Dick[1], who worked almost exclusively with the near future. Neither post-apocalyptic nor set in a galaxy far, far away, both films present a future that is, if not *probable*, at least *possible*. *Blade Runner* takes place in Los Angeles 2019, 37 years into the future at the time of release; *Minority Report* shows us Washington, D.C. in 2054, 52 years post-release. In grounding their narratives in real cities and within the possible lifetimes of the audience, both films force their visions of the future to carry more weight than those that are more distanced from the here and now.

Spielberg and Scott took similarly thorough approaches to worldbuilding. Scott, known for the layered approach to set design that he demonstrated in *Alien*, hired Syd Mead first to design the film's vehicles, and later as the guiding "visual futurist" (Bukatman 2009, 29). Mead focused largely on the idea of retrofitting old technologies into new ones and mixing styles from a variety of eras in everything from clothing to cars. The city was an imaginative and richly detailed one; Bukatman reports that Ridley Scott's vision:

> was informed by a range of sources: engravings by Hogarth and paintings by Vermeer, photographs by Jacob Riis of New York's Lower East Side, the urban nightdreams of Edward Hopper and the baroque visual science fiction of Heavy Metal. (29)

Sweeping panoramic views of the city and architecture involved a multitude of miniature sets and painted backgrounds, assisted by ninety separate special effects shots (30).

The result is a future that is simultaneously spectacular and bleak. Seen from above in the film's opening sequence, Los Angeles 2019 is somewhat terrifying, with bursts of flame shooting from looming black towers. At the same time, the soaring Vangelis score tells us that we're looking over something majestic and awesome, and the endless expanse of glittering lights makes us believe it. Reflected in a close-up of an eye, the lights and flames look as much like a city as they do an expansive galaxy, swirling in the darkness of space.

From street level, Los Angeles is a cyberpunk mess of a city, reflecting Scott's philosophy of packing each shot with detail. "This is a *dark city* of mean streets, moral ambiguities and an air of irresolution," writes Bukatman (2009, 59). Smoky and dim, full of crowds and shadows and accompanied by endless chatter in an unintelligible blend of languages, this is a place where nothing is ever quite clear. Yet for all that, there's something sexy and attractive about it, with its neon lights and street food and see-through clothing. Vivian Sobchack (1988) writes that the L.A. of *Blade Runner* is "experienced less as base and degraded than as dense, complex, and heterogeneous with its multinational and marginal populace, additive architecture, sensuous 'clutter,' and highly atmospheric pollution" (15). There's an exhilaration that comes at the thought of exploring this chaotic, striking version of the future. Ultimately, *Blade Runner* is a film that asks a lot of questions and offers few answers, both for its audience and for its characters. The future Los Angeles is reflective of this, offering plentiful distractions and places to

hide. As in the plot, few things are exactly as they seem.

Minority Report's Washington, D.C. is in many ways the opposite of this, but like Scott, Spielberg took pains when it came to designing his future. "One of the things that Steven was pointing out, correctly, was that we all live in yesterday's future," production designer Alex McDowell has said. "We're not living in crazy sci-fi buildings, we're living in buildings that were 100 years old" (Brew 2010). To put together a plausible version of future Washington, Spielberg called an "idea summit" of experts from Hollywood and from a variety of scientific fields to brainstorm. Futurist Peter Schwartz, who was part of the summit, described it as such: "We would ask questions: What about advertising? What about transportation? What about newspapers? What about food?" (Wired Staff 2012). Fellow attendee and design scientist John Underkoffler emphasized that the goal was always to create a realistic, believable future. The outcome of the multi-day meeting was the "2050 Bible," an 80-page stylebook that McDowell and his team used to construct the world of *Minority Report* (von Stackelberg 2015, 40).

The result is a striking vision of the future. If, per Bukatman (2009), *Blade Runner* rejects "the rational city," then *Minority Report* embraces it (59). The city is clean and bright, made of glass and metal, with natural light streaming in everywhere. The editing emphasizes this bright look; the film was put through a "bleach bypass" process to desaturate and lighten the final images. The scenes are bright to the point of being washed out and overexposed, with light obscuring as much as it reveals.

Minority Report's vision of Washington, D.C. in 2054 is a marvel of technology laid over the existing structure of the city and

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[1] The novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and the short story *Minority Report* (1956), respectively.

its suburbs. The bulk of the action actually takes place in Northern Virginia so that the film could portray skyscrapers and other taller structures—experts at the idea summit maintained that the District's height limits would persist well past 2054 (Wired Staff 2012). Highways filled with self-driving cars run up, down, and around cement and glass buildings; unlike in *Blade Runner*, there is no congestion to speak of. Set in the real-life Ronald Reagan Building in downtown D.C., the Department of Precrime, is a swirl of transparent walkways and glass walls. In fact, there are few buildings in the city that don't have floor-to-ceiling windows.

Or at least, this trend is true of the buildings in the upgraded part of the city. But there's another side to D.C.: a darker underbelly that McDowell describes as "a kind of tenement, decaying dark city which exists underneath the new city" (Barlow 2005, 48). Barlow notes that at this level of the city, the setting evokes *Blade Runner*. For the first time, we see trash and mud and broken-down cars; a layer of grime seems to coat every surface. As Anderton jogs through the run-down area known as the Sprawl, constant shadows echo the darkest corners of *Blade Runner*'s L.A. Even in many of these darker scenes, though, there is still plenty of light. In the apartment/office of the skeevy Dr. Solomon Eddie, who surgically swaps Anderton's eyes for a new pair, the windows are covered in gauzy curtains that still allow the room to fill with natural light, black-and-white films are projected in the background, and translucent walls reveal wiring that glitters with star-like pinpricks of light.

The pervasive light is key to one of the central visual metaphors of the film. McDowell explains: "[Y]ou've got the sense that the whole thing is transparent. That architecturally and metaphorically the transparency is hiding this core dark loss

of civil liberties for the population because of the existence of pre-cogs" (Brew 2010). Just as the glass walls of the Precrime headquarters disguise the dark and hidden spaces where Anderton does his work, the public narrative about Precrime hides its dark secret: that the pre-cogs' predictions are merely possibilities, not certainties as the public has been told.

Blade Runner and *Minority Report* also grapple with the ethical and social implications of a future that is deeply integrated with technology. While there are certainly some differences—Precrime's eye-scanning devices probably would have made Deckard's job a lot easier—similar threads run throughout both films. Both are, at a greater or lesser level, about the humanity of genetically modified persons, which is echoed both in *Blade Runner*'s market of artificial animals and in Precrime inventor Iris Hineman's venomous zoo of a garden. New-and-improved vehicles add to the ambience of both films, reminding us with each SF whoosh and whir that we're somewhere—or rather, some*when*—unfamiliar.

One scene in each film solidifies the linkage between the two technological worlds. In *Blade Runner*, we see Deckard investigate a photo on a computer screen, zooming in on minor details until the photograph reveals its secrets. Bukatman explains, "The classic scene of searching a room for clues is now played out on a terminal. The screen, that frontier separating electronic and physical realities, becomes permeable; the space behind it, tangible" (2009, 56). The same description could be applied unchanged to Anderton's "scrubbing" of a virtual crime scene for clues in the opening of *Minority Report*. Though he manipulates the image using gestures rather than his voice, the process itself is a direct parallel.

However, advanced technology plays a larger and more obvious role in the plot of *Minority Report* than in *Blade Runner*. As Cynthia Bond (2006) notes, "All aspects of the culture are cinematized: newspapers bear moving images rather than photographs; telephones are videophones; logos on cereal boxes are moving pictures; and cameras are ubiquitous" (29). Meanwhile in *Blade Runner*'s L.A., street-level technology seems to be mostly confined to neon signs and glowing umbrellas. This makes a certain sense, as Bruce Sterling notes that cyberpunk rejects the "careless technophilia" that *Minority Report* seems to embrace (qtd. in Bukatman 2009, 58). ("Careless" is perhaps not a completely accurate descriptor, given the detail in *Minority Report*'s worldbuilding, but "technophilia" is certainly applicable.) Yet both worlds offer omnipresent reminders, in the form of video advertisements in all parts of the city, of their respective central technologies: *Blade Runner*'s off-world colonies—the "golden land of opportunity and adventure" that wouldn't be possible without the replicants—and *Minority Report*'s Precrime program.

Dark City, Bright City

The visions of the future laid out in *Blade Runner* and *Minority Report* fulfill very different roles in the realm of science fiction futurism. John Gold (2001) posits that there have only been two significant trends in how urban settings are portrayed in the genre. The first is the "vertical city," laid out by films like *Metropolis*. Sobchack describes such films as employing the "architecture of 'aspiration'": "Emphasis in these images is on the vertical, lofty, and aerial quality of the city rather than on its pedestrian and base horizontal dimension" (1988, 8). The other is "future noir," a style of which *Blade Runner* provides the ultimate example: "The

future noir city was quintessentially dark: sometimes a city of perpetual night lit only artificially; sometimes one where the sombre [*sic*] skies constantly teemed acid rain; and frequently a city in which the air was heavily stained by industrial pollution" (Gold 2001, 339-40).

Minority Report has trouble fitting into either of these classifications. Among other things, future noir is characterized by an excess of darkness (Staiger 1988). While there is certainly a high level of visual contrast in the film, it is more often caused not by overwhelming shadow but by overwhelming light, reflecting the film's themes of transparency and obfuscation. Even in the most traditionally noir settings, such as Dr. Eddie's slum apartment, characters' features are obscured not by shadows but because the light behind them is so strong that they become silhouettes. *Minority Report* also lacks the "urban-design chaos" Staiger describes as key to future noir (24). Writing a full fourteen years before *Minority Report* came out, she specifically highlights Washington D.C. as a prime example of how urban planners have attempted to create utopias through ordered city structure (24). Where *Blade Runner* leans into urban chaos, *Minority Report* maintains the city's order in a way that is antithetical to future noir.

For all the high-rises and skyscrapers we see in *Minority Report*, it is also not quite the vertical city. For one, the action happens primarily at ground level or below. In the scenes that do take place on higher floors, the camera remains focused on the characters and discourages the audience from dwelling on what Sobchack might call the "transcendent" aspect of the city. What's more, the film blurs the very definition of vertical. In a classic Cruise action scene, Anderton is forced to escape from his car

onto a busy highway; as he climbs out the window, the scene suddenly shifts and his car begins driving vertically rather than horizontally. In a way, *Minority Report* forces even the vertically oriented city into mundane horizontality.

Perhaps *Minority Report* escaped the traditional portrayals of the future city, then, in avoiding in large part both the vertical city and future noir. The film's creators certainly believe so. According to Schwartz, that was the goal from the start:

> Steven [Spielberg] and I talked specifically about creating a new set of vernacular images of the future. Before then, the only images that anybody ever referred to were either Blade Runner *or* 2001 [A Space Odyssey]. *It was a very dark vision. Our goal was to get on screen a really amazing vision of the future that people would talk about. We achieved that overwhelmingly.* (Wired Staff 2012)

By looking beyond the tried-and-true settings for science fiction films, *Minority Report* expands audiences' views of what future cities might look like.

Life in the (Fictional) 21st Century

Blade Runner and *Minority Report* offer such fascinating worlds that it is easy to forget about their inhabitants, but the lives of these future city-dwellers add a crucial layer to the films. One key subject that both films address is that of anonymity and privacy. In *Minority Report*, anonymity is only rarely possible. No one is allowed to disappear in this city; "eye-dents" scan everyone as they enter buildings, get on the Metro, or walk through shopping districts, and Anderton doesn't even attempt to hide his face from them, suggesting that such a thing is impossible to accomplish. Even in "private"

spaces, Precrime can disperse eye-scanning "spyders" without a warrant, invading homes to make sure no one goes undiscovered. Indeed, the film repeatedly depicts the violent dissolution of the boundary between public and private, with Precrime officers smashing through glass in the opening sequence and jetpacking through apartment floors and windows when Anderton tries to escape them. Not only does the government track everyone, but so do corporations. Advertisements identify Anderton constantly, demonstrating that no one can ever be a nameless face in the crowd.

Where a baseline level of anonymity does exist, it is by accident rather than design. The advertisements make this clear. The digital ad systems can talk to Anderton by name, but they can't tell anything about his situation, and when his eyes are surgically replaced, a display in a GAP store demonstrates the superficiality of its technology by addressing him as "Mr. Yakamoto." Mark Garrett Cooper (2003) describes this scenario as "preserv[ing] a discomfiting anonymity in the very moment of identification" (38). Nor do the advertisements help Precrime find Anderton, as the first "eye-dent" they are able to use occurs when he enters the Metro. Privacy exists through great effort—see the creator of the Precrime program Dr. Iris Hineman, who isolates herself by weaponizing the landscape around her home—and full anonymity is achieved only through even greater effort, as Anderton's surgery demonstrates.

The film's ending speaks to the connection between isolation and privacy. Cooper draws a distinction between the traditional Hollywood ending and that of *Minority Report*, with the latter merely imitating the former:

> *Rather than prove that the world has been made safe for romance (again), the film envisions the private sphere as an isolation zone. To be even remotely secure, the family must have no contact whatsoever with the intrusive world of bureaucrats, policemen, and advertisers that exists outside. This solution seems all the more inadequate given that the film spends most of its running time showing such seclusion to be a practical impossibility.* (2003, 24-5)

While John and Lara's contentment seems intended to reflect the social freedom that comes with the end of Precrime, it is hard to believe that all governmental overreach will fade out in the same way. The government may no longer be looking into citizens' very futures, but presumably the rest of the invasive technology—the "spyders," the "eye-dents"—will stick around. Anderton's security and comfort in the final scene of the movie is as much an illusion as it ever was.

If anonymity in *Minority Report* is a bug in the system, in *Blade Runner* it's closer to a feature—though it's still quite complicated. Anonymity exists in the crowd in *Blade Runner*, and in the ability to get lost in the mass of humanity; a *Minority Report*-style surveillance society is missing here, as evidenced by *Blade Runner*s like Deckard being required in the first place. Those who play their cards right, can disappear forever.[2] The possibility of anonymity in the crowd does not, however, imply full personal privacy. For replicants, even such deeply personal things as feeling and memory aren't private. The replicant Rachael's memories are not her own, as shown when Deckard recites them to her, having learned all about them from Tyrell. It is similarly implied that Gaff, one of the police officers in charge of the

case, knows Deckard's memories, even though Deckard believes himself to be human.

Tied into anonymity in both films are issues of class and power. In *Blade Runner*, privacy and open space are privileges that are conferred only on the wealthy and powerful. In a city that is crowded and congested, one of the only wide-open spaces is the Tyrell Corporation headquarters, where the scale of the building dwarfs anyone who enters it—including Eldon Tyrell himself, indicating that while his company may hold vast amounts of power, he personally is limited. Indeed, his final scene, where he exists primarily as an individual rather than as a representative of the company, is far more visually cluttered. The camera keeps quite close to Tyrell here, depriving him of personal space in his final moments. In J.F. Sebastian, we see this as well. While he has a level of power—a genetic engineer, accomplished at a young age—he is confined to Earth by his medical condition and finds it difficult to stand up for himself against the replicants. This is mirrored in his Bradbury Building apartment, where he has copious amounts of space—"No housing shortage around here," Sebastian tells Pris—but is surrounded by endless piles of books, toys, and other clutter. His apartment is filled with the dirt of the street rather than the polished surfaces of Tyrell HQ; cleanliness, too, is something afforded only to the well-off.

Returning to *Minority Report*, we can see the same patterns. The dark, older part of the city, the Sprawl, is as crowded and full of grime as the modern neighborhoods are free of it. However, even Anderton's spacious, modern apartment is covered in dirty dishes and old food, reflecting that no matter how successful he may be professionally, he is brought low in his personal life. Privacy,

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[2] Of course, Gaff is inexplicably able to find Deckard time and time again, even swooping in right after the climactic scene on the rooftop—so perhaps the surveillance society is a bit more robust than it appears.

too, is indicative of status, although the upper class is no less surveilled than the lower. In fact, they have arguably more surveillance due to corporate interests. After Anderton's initial escape, one of his pursuers predicts that he will hide in the Sprawl because "there's fewer consumers there, which means fewer scanners" (Spielberg 2002). However, when the less-privileged Washingtonians are surveilled, it is more violent and disruptive when "spyders" are set loose in a tenement building, causing chaos as they burst into apartments. Privilege in this society is embodied in the ability to ignore that one is being watched, to let it fade into the background of ordinary life. As Anderton is hunted, he shifts from one part of the city to the other—from clean to dirty, and from passive privacy violations to active ones—reflecting his shift from a "have" to a "have-not."

Guidebooks to the Future

In a genre filled with everything from aliens and lightsabers to superheroes and mutants, films that envision a concrete future play a special role. Gold (2001) writes, "The city … is often as much part of the action as the actors themselves. ... [Cities] can be the expression of a dysfunctional society or even the vehicle through which oppression is practiced" (342). The latter of these possibilities neatly sums up *Minority Report*'s Washington, D.C., where the technology that controls the populace is embedded in the city itself. The "dysfunctional society" descriptor applies to *Blade Runner*, where a semi-controlled chaos has grown out of a society that shifted its sights away from Earth and away from the sticky ethical question of whether or not replicants ought to be treated as human.

Gold also writes that such films "are intended less as projections than critiques…

They warn what might happen *if*, rather than forecast what will happen when" (2002, 338-9). While both *Blade Runner* and *Minority Report* do carry warnings of dystopia, it is also true that they have served as previews of— or perhaps guidebooks to—the future. Only fifteen years later, many of the technologies so painstakingly dreamed up for *Minority Report* have become commonplace or, at the very least, possible: self-driving cars, smart homes, mobile video calls. Facial recognition today is becoming commonplace both in the home and, more controversially, in law enforcement. Microsoft's now-discontinued Kinect functioned quite similarly to the touchless screen Anderton uses to "scrub" crime scenes, and as it turns out, Jaron Lanier—who attended Spielberg's "Idea Summit" and helped brainstorm the film's predictions of future technologies—later went on to work on developing the Kinect (Wired Staff 2012).

Blade Runner, though designed with less predictive intent, has had even more of an impact, especially on SF cinema itself, which it would influence for decades to come. Mamoru Oshii, director of *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), has said, "When you create a film dealing with humans and cyborgs, you have no choice but to refer back to Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, as this movie is probably the foundation of movies with this theme" (Rucka 2004). The cyberpunk noir aesthetic the *Blade Runner* brought to life so memorably is today so familiar that many moviegoers don't think twice when cluttered neon cities show up in Spielberg's *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (Spielberg 2001) or a Star Wars film.

As the real world catches up with the film's timeline, Scott's vision of 2019 Los Angeles continues to resonate in both positive and negative ways. Urbanism writer Colin Marshall (2016) explains that in the real

Los Angeles, "To this day, the term 'Blade Runner-ization' gets tossed around by those looking to block buildings they consider too big, or that would mix elements, functional or human or hybrid, that they don't want mixed." On the other hand, *Vox* contributor Peter Suderman (2017) argues that the film provided a positive model for real American cities. "Walk through Midtown Manhattan and it's hard not to see it as a better-lit cousin of Ridley Scott's LA," he writes. "In attempting to show us how cities would decay, the movie inadvertently ended up offering a reminder of many of the ways they are attractive and appealing. … *Blade Runner*, in other words, helped set our expectations for what cities should look like" with all their life and energy. Though the film raises questions about its characters' humanity, the city itself has an undeniably human feel.

Ultimately, the two films take very different approaches to portraying the future but converge on a shared thematic vision: one of corporate and governmental overreach, in which the best option is to trust nothing and no one—perhaps not even yourself. While they both do an admirable job of warning against this type of highly surveilled dystopian state, their true legacies exist in the thoughtfully designed fictional worlds they built. It is those worlds that have shaped our present technologies and our expectations of the future, and that will continue to do so for years to come.

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"Beyond the Homeland": Diasporas Re-imagine Cultural Identity and Gender Roles

Deborah Oliveros

Studies of the transnational and cosmopolitan diasporic experience often romanticize the idea of returning to the homeland—and in the process, position this desire as being central to the diasporic individual's identity. However, connection to an imagined homeland does not fully encompass the spectrum of hybridizations and multicultural identities that diaspora communities experience. This perspective is colonialist and patriarchal and defines diasporic people as the "other," which in turn cannot be separated from "otherizing" based on gendered social roles, since individuals in a diaspora have different experiences depending on their gender. This paper offers a critique of previous diasporic identity studies and employs concepts from both gender studies and postcolonial theory in order to propose new frameworks for analyzing how diasporas define their cultural identities. Through a decolonialization of the terminology and a closer examination of gender dynamics, these communities can be analyzed beyond previous researchers' patriarchal, nation-centric lens.

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Introduction

Diasporic communities negotiate and redefine concepts of cultural identity, ethnicity, gender, representation, multiculturalism, politics, and media in an environment that is built on intense interaction with a diversity of cultures and identities. They often find ways to connect to, but also question and redefine the principles and values of their own culture in comparison with the ones in which they are immersed.

However, it is challenging to understand the transnational and cosmopolitan lives of diasporas, both as individuals and as a collective, because traditional studies of the diasporic experience often romanticize the idea of returning to the homeland, which does not fully encompass the spectrum of multicultural identity in migrant communities. This generalization comes from the colonizers' attempts to "otherize" the colonized through dehumanization and subjugation.

Developments in gender studies, second wave feminism, and feminist politics have significantly impacted the way scholars understand and approach diasporas. A gendered lens highlights not only how different the diasporic experience might be between men and women, but also how gender roles impact individuals' levels of agency between cultures – this applies to non-binary individuals as well since these binary gender roles also inform the performance that is expected and accepted from them in these environments. However, in "Diasporas and Gender" (2010), Nadje Al-Ali says that "as in other fields of study, large segments of diaspora studies continue to either pay only limited attention to frequently narrow conceptualizations of gender or even display complete gender blindness" (118). Therefore,

diasporas cannot be fully understood and studied without taking into account how the control—in terms of laws, rights, and political dynamics—and representation of women's bodies and sexualities inform and impact the context in which fluid diasporic individuals build communities and cultural identities.

In order to better understand multiculturalism, transnationality, and a fluid cultural identity, it is necessary to break from the nation-centered and gendered binary perspective and assess the multiple ways in which diasporic individuals assert themselves in interconnected societies. Media spaces in which representation is available and possibilities of expression are allowed, such as film and television, not only serve as a sounding board for how society is able to re-imagine its current state, but also serves as a mirror for expressing and realizing the self and the concept of belonging across different spaces and identities.

Lexicon

In order to understand how these binaries and categorizations were created and what it means for media representation of diasporic communities, a few key terms should be introduced into the conversation.

Cosmopolitanism: "Comprising a combination of attitudes, practices and abilities gathered from experiences of travel or displacement, transnational contact and diasporic identification" (Vertovec 2010, 64).

Culture/Cultural Identity: "The mass of life patterns that human beings in a given society learn from their elders and pass on to the younger generation, is imprinted in the individual as a pattern of perceptions that is accepted and expected by others in a society (Singer 1971, 6-20). Cultural identity is

the symbol of one's essential experience of oneself as it incorporates the worldview, value system, attitudes, and beliefs of a group with which such elements are shared" (Adler 1997, 24-25).

Diaspora: "Ethno-national groups whose members reside out of their home country (moved from there either forcibly or voluntarily) and who retain a sense of membership in their group of origin and a collective representation and concern for the wellbeing of their homeland which plays a significant role in their lives in both a symbolic and normative sense" (Morawska 2011, 1030)

Hybridity/Hybridization: For the purposes of this paper, hybridization refers to the combination of related cultural elements of two or more different backgrounds "[it] characterize[s] the dual forces of globalization and localization, cohesion and dispersal, disjuncture and mixture, that capture transnational and transcultural dialectics" (Kraidy 2002, 14)

Intersectionality: An analytical frame challenging previous gender studies which tend to generalize the marginalization of minorities in regard to gender while failing to address race as a categorization of oppression within the marginalized, "to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis (Crenshaw 1989, 140)."

Multicultural/ Multiculturalism: "A person whose essential identity is inclusive of different life patterns and who has psychologically and socially come to grips with a multiplicity of realities. [They embody] a core process of self-verification that is grounded in both the universality of the human condition and the diversity of cultural forms. The multicultural person is

intellectually and emotionally committed to the basic unity of all human beings while at the same time recognizing, legitimizing, accepting, and appreciating the differences that exist between people of different cultures" (Adler 1997, 24-25).

Otherize: View or treat (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself. Referring to them in these terms strips them of their identity and 'otherizes' them as foreigners (Oxford Dictionary, 'otherize').

Post-colonialism: The analysis of the effects of colonialism and imperialism in the exploitation, erasure and control of the colonized. For the purpose of this paper, post-colonialism refers to the power structure between colonizers and colonized resulting in the otherization of the latter. Often in conversation with themes of resistance, cultural identity and hybridization.

Transnationalism: Assumption that society and the nation-state tend to be coterminous, many recent approaches to globalization and transnationalism pose a research agenda that implicitly and often explicitly rests on interactions among nation-states as societies and propose that the task of a transnational studies is to examine such exchanges between national societies. (Robinson 1998, 566)

A Revision on the Colonial Terminology of Identity

Post-colonialism theory has helped scholars understand the gendered nature of power structures. In *History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (1990), Michel Foucault writes, "The primary concern [of colonialism] was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that

'ruled'" (123). Foucault argues that the colonizers' desire to preserve their own life provoked four focuses of knowledge and power: 1) the feminine body; 2) children's sexuality; 3) the regulation of births; and 4) the psychiatrization of perversions (104-5). This gendered categorization works by valuing certain bodies over others; it consists of a series of institutional and regulatory interventions—a pattern of biopolitics. It is through this framework that diasporas, and particularly diasporic women, have to navigate their agency and cultural identities.

In "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (2010), Maria Lugones proposes a decolonizing of gender to enact a critique of a racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexual gender-oppressive system. Building on Foucault's work, Lugones exposes the hierarchical dichotomies imposed by colonization that strive to differentiate between human and non-human, and specifically between men and women, in favor of the Western cisgender heterosexual man. Introducing the term "coloniality of gender," Lugones (2010, 743) refers to the classification of people in terms of power and gender, and the process of dehumanization and subjectification, that attempt to "otherize" the colonized. She argues that it is a global, capitalist, colonial system successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, and relations. This is important to understand in order to analyze how diasporas are able to navigate this power structure. Lugones states that the dialogue and negotiation in the colonial difference is critical for resisting that dehumanization and exclusion. To that effect, she proposes feminism as an instrument toward the destruction of those constrictive worlds of meaning. In this fractured space, resisting the coloniality of gender occurs through an understanding of the world that is shared and understood by others as well, providing recognition. In

that sense, a decolonial feminism, she says, aides to see each other as resisters without necessarily binding themselves to the worlds of meaning in which these spaces of resistance occur.

Lugones argues that, in spite of its efforts, colonization did not encounter a submissive and malleable group of people ready to be shaped. Instead, coloniality—attempting to reduce the colonized to being less than human—has always been in tension with complex cultural, political, economic, and religious individuals whose practices were not replaced but instead put in dialogue with the colonizers' practices. This implies that the process of colonization was not always passive for the colonized, and that these communities are always re-imagining, re-defining and re-negotiating meanings within this clashing space of resistance.

Many authors have debated the concept of hybridity to the point that it has become a catch-all word. However, if applied to the dynamics previously expressed by Lugones, hybridization specifically "characterize[s] the dual forces of globalization and localization, cohesion and dispersal, disjuncture and mixture, that capture transnational and transcultural dialectics" (Kraidy 2002, 14). In this way, hybridization surfaces as a type of resistance to the colonial project of binary subjugation.

Understanding the dichotomy between the powerful and those without power is critical in order to analyze how diasporic women are often represented in film and television and how that representation impacts the process of redefining their cultural identity. Through self-representation in film and television, diasporas are able to reimagine themselves and thereby challenge this constrictive colonial perspective.

"Where Are You From?" Beyond a Nation-Centric Approach to Diasporas

Building on the idea of colonization as a binary-enforcing and otherizing mechanism that encompasses culture and ethnicity, in the essay "Nation, Ethnicity and Community" (2010), Gerd Baumann agrees with Lugones, but further delves into the idea of a nation-centered lens for the colonized, often referred to as "the people without history," as one of the main issues around how these concepts are socially constructed:

> Europe around 1500 […] invented the hyphen that transformed the state into a so-called nation-state, thus translating an efficient form of multi-ethnic organization into a purportedly cultural identity, and hence starting up entirely new, and often self-destructive, mechanisms of civic and cultural inclusion and exclusion. (45)

This nation-centered outlook is present in diaspora studies that tend to generalize a binary between country of origin and country of residence as the main filter through which diasporas create new cultural meanings in these environments. Some authors talk about "an allegiance to and romanticizing of the ancestral homeland", or the "meanings of return" as in "living in exile, constantly thinking of the homeland" (Brinkerhoff 2009, 55) or, as Morawska challenges, the perspective that "their relations with the host country are inherently distant—they are in it but not of it; and that diasporism and (im)migrant transnationalism constitute two distinct phenomena" (2011, 1031).

Morawska describes the work from previous scholars such as William Safran (2004), Gabriel Sheffer (2003), Rogers Brubaker

(2005), and Stephane Dufoix (2008) who offered various concepts of the term. Morawska combines some of these aspects to present a unified concept of diaspora and later, challenge it:

> Ethno-national groups whose members reside out of their home country (moved from there either forcibly or voluntarily) and who retain a sense of membership in their group of origin and a collective representation and concern for the wellbeing of their homeland which plays a significant role in their lives in both a symbolic and normative sense. (2011, 3)

The etymology of the term dates back more than 2,500 years and originates in Greek *speiro* (to sow) and *dia* (over). Georgiou's article, "Transnational Crossroads for Media and Diaspora: Three Challenges for Research," describe the work of Marienstras (1988), Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997) as having reconceptualized "diaspora in addressing the diverse experience of populations who have moved and settled across the globe throughout human history" (Georgiou 2007, 13). Research like this, Georgiou finds, suggests epistemological and conceptual approaches that challenge the traditional generalizing angle of past studies.

Even though the analysis of the term is still historically based and maintains the link to the homeland, the diversification of spaces and media have an impact in how we analyze and study these communities. As Cohen puts it:

> Transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind,

through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination. (1997, 26)

Cohen's shared imagination relates to Femke Stock's work on memory. In the essay, "Home and Memory," Stock states that the focus on memories as the heart of a collectively shared past neglects that memories of home are not necessarily accurate reproductions or settled experiences, but they are flexible reconstructions overshadowed by the current environment of the person and their own recollection and notion of home —referring to both the homeland and the home as physical spaces and symbols of belonging at the same time. "The act of remembering is always contextual, a continuous process of recalling, interpreting and reconstructing the past in terms of the present and in the light of an anticipated future" (Stock, 2010, 24). Film and television are part of this process of remembering. How a community is depicted can reinforce or challenge historical ideologies.

Bailey et al. agree with Lugones in analyzing the phenomenon of diaspora through a postcolonial angle. Specifically, the authors take a closer look and describe the works of Bhabha (1996), Brah (1996), Gilroy (1991; 1993), Hall (1990), Spivak (1987), among others and find that there have been previous attempts to look deeper into the cultural diasporic experience beyond the particular groups directly engaged with it. Bailey et al. suggest that these studies showcase the fact that, in the postcolonial world, hybridity is inescapable and characterizes all cultures, even the ones that are not diasporic.

John Hutnyk, in his essay "Hybridity" (2010), examines how different authors have debated the concept and the advantages and disadvantages of using it to study and understand diasporas. Hutnyk argues that "hybridity appears as a convenient category at 'the edge' or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration" (2010, 59). He quotes Nikos Papastergiadis who sees hybridity as the "twin processes of globalization and migration" (Papastergiadis 2000, 3). These authors present hybridity not necessarily as a mix of two worlds but as a third space in which modern societies find themselves interacting, stating that hybridity is not solely belonging to the diasporic but to other groups who encounter this communicational exchange that impacts them as well.

Furthermore, film and television offer opportunities for diasporic women to redefine their cultural identity without completely binding themselves to the meanings of both the homeland and the current home. For example, diasporic women can be represented in these spaces beyond "this or that" (i.e., Cuban or American) and instead represented as "and/and" (i.e., Cuban and American and queer).

To further develop the idea of hybridity, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of transnational culture flows. Peggy Levitt, in her essay "Transnationalism" (2010), states that although transnationalism regularly focuses on the interconnectivity between people and the significance of nation-state boundaries, this conceptualization implies that the interest and benefits of study are placed in the nation-centered dynamic: "By transnational, we propose a gaze that begins with a world without borders, empirically examines the boundaries that emerge, and explores their relationship to unbounded arenas and processes. The analysis does not assume a fixed spatial unit of analysis" (40). Transnationalism is not a new concept, neither is it solely inherent to the diasporic experience. However, when these characteristics are highlighted and freed of national and physical borders it broadens the spaces and the impact of transnationalism for both the diasporas and the societies they encounter.

Georgiou delves further into the transnational concept describing past studies from scholars such as Boyarin (1994), Durham Peters (1999), and Hall (1990, 1992) as also emphasizing the idea that the formation of diasporas showcases "the mobility of ideas, artefacts and people in time and space" (Georgiou 2007, 14). Furthermore, these interactions are not firmly set entities defined by blood relations, they are decentralized cultural formations that sustain real and imagined connections spread across populations and/or a country of origin (14). This mobilization of ideas and people in time in space is fluid. Stock describes the work of Al-Ali and Koser (2002) as well as Salih (2003) in order to emphasize the argument that "rather than referring to one single home, in diasporic settings feelings of belonging can be directed towards both multiple physical places and remembered, imagined and/or symbolic spaces" (Stock 2010, 27).

In *Peoples, Nations, and Communication* (1966), Deutsch, referring to the concept of "peoples," says "the community which permits a common history to be experienced as common, is a community of complementary habits and facilities of communication"(96). What other challenges might exist in the intersectional relations of new generations product of diasporas that may have a different experience of their culture—or hybridization/multicultural—than the one passed on through generations using these "facilities of communication" such as language, symbols and customs? How do culture and common history as "shared experiences" evolve through time, especially in terms of forming an individual identity and sense of belonging in a cosmopolitan, and highly mediated, world? How does that affect an individual's agency to negotiate and redefine the categories in which they have to exist in a society?

Georgiou (2007) expressed that, within the field of cosmopolitanism, scholars continuously debate the intent of using a nation-centric lens as the angle for research on diasporas. The cosmopolitan global city cannot be understood by this limited viewpoint:

cosmopolitanism is partly shaped in these urban settings, as their migrant and diasporic dwellers establish a dynamic cultural and financial presence. Such creative practices (e.g. music, [film and television]) sometimes allow urban dwellers to develop a common cosmopolitan language of communication in the city and in transnational spaces. (Georgiou 2007, 20)

There needs to be greater recognition that the processes and connections within these societies go beyond and outside of the linear order of nations and/or nationalities. In agreement with what Lugones previously expressed, Georgiou reflects on the influence of this approach in diasporas studies so far. This duality of territorial origin and destination prioritizes, on one side, the concept of nation as the main category and, on the opposite side, the Western capitalist model as the destination that all "others" should strive for.

This does not mean that we should completely abandon the concept of nation. After all, we live in a world with borders and with laws and policies that are directly linked to nationality. However, national politics cannot avoid the dynamics and the interaction with an international context. In order to break from the binary

angle of previous studies of diaspora, it is necessary to take the nation concept not as the center but as one of the themes, filters, and/or categories through which these communities can be analyzed.

Representation of these communities in film and television play a critical role in either reinforcing this nation-centric perspective or successfully offering scenarios in which it can be challenged. With the aid of technological advancement in production and distribution, diasporic communities are creating their own original film and television content in which they are able to re-imagine their cultural identities while breaking away from a nation-centric and Westernized perspective. However, this is not a phenomenon attributed uniquely to the technological progress in the field. Instead, these have only enhanced a cultural process that was already in place.

In "El Hilo Latino: Representation, Identity and National Culture" (1993) Chon A. Noriega delves into the history of Latino identity and film in the United States and its connection to the civil rights movement. Noriega proposes that the reason behind the surge of alternative Latinx film festivals in the early 1970s from Chicano, Puerto Rican and Cuban American communities was a direct response to the activism of the time and a form of resistance to the invisibility in the mainstream film market. Most of the creators behind the productions were activists and the projects presented at these forums had an impact in introducing new perspectives to the conversation around issues of:

> *Latino representation and self-representation within historical, cultural, racial and political contexts […] The initial demands for access to the mass media sought a 'tool' for communication that crossed the boundaries between political action, intercultural dialogue, cultural heritage, and artistic expression.* (45-50)

Re-defining Gender Roles in Diasporas

The impact and contribution of the women's movement and second-wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s in every field is sometimes overwhelming to grasp, but specifically the challenge to systematic exclusion of women, and the normalization of gender ideologies, presented the opportunity for a much broader analysis in diasporas studies about one or two decades afterwards.

Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* (1949), was one of the first to articulate and describe the oppression that women face as they are categorized as the "other." She explored, among other aspects, the importance of the concept of slave labor and how it related to women's position in society to understand the oppression and subjugation of women. However, when applying this lens to the experience of diasporic women, a follow up idea arises: going back to the argument of "otherization" in colonialism presenting the Western cisgender heterosexual man against the "other", it is also valid to propose that the categorization of Western cisgender heterosexual can be applied to women as well. In that sense, non-white, non-heterosexual women suffer differently because gender is just one of the many categories in which they are being oppressed.

In "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," Crenshaw proposed the term intersectionality to address the issues around a gender-centric analysis that disregards the other axis through which women are marginalized, principally race in addition to others. This "erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group" (Crenshaw 1989, 140).

Nadje Al-Ali highlights the importance of a gendered perspective in order to demand a more accurate depiction of diasporas: "1) including the experiences of women, and 2) exploring the multifarious ways women might experience and contribute to diaspora formations differently from men" (118). To complement this idea, issues such as race and class also make the experience of these women different not only from men but among themselves as well.

The underlying issue that many scholars from interdisciplinary backgrounds, and particularly feminists, often question is if the diasporic experience enables an environment or contextual background that provides opportunities to challenge, reproduce or even reinforce previous patriarchal colonizing gender norms. As it appears, that is the case, then how do film and television representation of women in these communities play a role in that process of redefinition and resistance?

The commercialization of the female body as a dichotomy has been analyzed before by feminist scholars. In "The Uses of Erotic: The Erotic as Power" (1978), Audre Lorde conceptualizes the erotic as a "resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (53). This concept, Lorde says, has been corrupted, distorted and used as a source of female oppression, often removed from all areas of women's lives, except for sex.

This happens simultaneously and in collaboration with the post-colonial binary determinism that represents diasporic women in media as a commodity: "The economy…requires that women lend themselves to alienation and consumption, and to exchanges in which they do not participate" (172), shares Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985). Women as commodities are "divided into two irreconcilable 'bodies': [the] 'natural' body and [the] socially valued, exchangeable body" (180). In this sense, diasporic women's bodies retain value in the pleasure—visual, physical, metaphoric—they provide to heterosexual men.

It is crucial to take into account how the control—in terms of laws, rights, and political dynamics—and representation of women's bodies and sexualities informs the context in which fluid diasporic individuals build ethnic and cultural identities. Nadje Al-Ali, in "Diasporas and Gender" (2010), states that we must understand the various levels in which women contribute and participate in this process:

> *1) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; 2) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic and national groups; 3) as actors in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; 4) as signifiers of ethnic and national groups; and 5) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles* (Yuval-Davis 1989, as cited in Al-Ali 2010, 120).

Based on this, and drawing from patriarchal and colonial ideas brought up by Lugones (2010) and Bailey (2007), we can add "the body" to the list of spaces in which diasporic mediation and negotiation happen through representation and categorization: "Women brought up in patriarchal societies have their bodies defined and represented by a

masculine orientation in social symbolism. The 'Latina' body has a double signifier; it is free but also signifies a reproductive body working for the patria, the fatherland. Conversely, while subordinated to British values, the Latina's body becomes an exotic, racialized body or an impoverished, health-risk body" (Bailey 2007, 217). These women often have to negotiate their identity based on patriarchal stereotypes, reproduced by film and television.

In spite of successful stories of women broadening their participation in society through effective engagement with diasporic context, Bailey says the reality of the issue goes deeper than that. Drawing from the colonial terminology of "otherization," the racialized body of the Latina woman, the body of "women of color", masks the reality of their multicultural configuration:

The label lies on a binary opposition between white and non-white, in which it is assumed that unless a woman is white, she is a woman of color. The maintenance of this binary reproduces the superiority of 'whiteness' and brown, yellow, red, black, and mixed race become marks of difference. This way of thinking […] limits the Latina's voice to demand for inclusion in an order of representation marking her as "other." (Schutte 2000, 71)

In *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality* (1984), Gayle Rubin says, "We never encounter the body unmediated by the meanings that cultures give to it" (149). Rubin documents and analyzes the many ways in which political institutions have served as a weapon to oppress socially-constructed "punishable" sexuality. Building on Foucault's work, in addition to other scholars' thoughts on radical theory of sex, Rubin wonders how we should talk about sexuality if the only terms

we have are products of a homophobic, misogynistic, and racist perspective. For the purpose of this analysis, that question can be extended to how can we talk about diasporic women's experience and agency if the only terms and meanings we have are products of a post-colonial, binary, misogynistic, and racist perspective?

How do we break from this mold and find the correct terms to have this conversation? Rubin says that as long as race and gender are thought of as biological instead of socially-constructed, it won't be possible to analyze the politics of them (149). Until we deconstruct these stereotypes, we'll just continue to read between the lines, and these communities will continue to exist in the space between.

Studying the Representation of the Diasporic Experience

Audience and media consumption studies' use of ethnographies to determine habits opened the door for many scholars to, through this interdisciplinary approach, analyze diasporic and migrant uses of media and communication technologies in relation to identity formation; as noted by the description and analysis performed by Georgiou on the work of scholars in the field such as Aksoy and Robins (2000), El-Nawawi and Iskandar (2002), her previous work on 2002 and 2006, Gillespie (1995), Kolar-Panov (1996), Morley (1999), Naficy (1993), and Ogan (2001). In the last two decades, there has also been great interest in researching new media technologies and their impact on the formation and maintenance of communities and network for diasporas. In a highly mediated and globalized context, diasporic individuals constantly navigate both physical and online spaces which have specific codes of conduct that allow them (or restrict them) from exerting their

agency. These characteristics are also present in the contemporary production of film and television representing these communities.

With the integration of new technologies of communication and a wider distribution of these texts, new transnational and borderless spaces have appeared. In this context, the production of meanings through media has changed from being controlled by media corporations to being an ongoing negotiation with the consumers who, in the case of diasporas, now have new ways of participating in their own representation. Georgiou establishes four characteristics that describe this new environment:

1. Media production is more diverse and includes corporate, public, community, niche media

2. Media corporations are less able to predict audiences' interests as they are geographically and culturally dispersed

3. Content is produced locally and globally, in different languages and by people who might be professional or amateurs

4. A growing number of audience members are more media literate than ever. Their consumption includes different media (local, national, transnational; corporate, public, alternative; large and small). Thus, the way they relate with production and text of each medium is far from linear and predictable. (Georgiou 2007, 23)

In "Diasporic Mediated Spaces," Sonja de Leeuw and Ingegerd Rydin (2007) take on a case study performing an analysis on data collected between 2001-2005 of the European CHICAM (Children in Communication about Migration) project through which they interviewed more than sixty children ages 10-14 and their families

in six European countries about media practices, in addition to a similar set of data on media use among migrant adolescents in the Netherlands (de Leeuw, 2006).

Among the results, they found that television served as a platform for negotiating the "identity of being different," as children watched productions about the home country while also watching local productions to understand and adapt to the host culture more efficiently. Through sharing the viewing experience with their parents, "[homeland] media consumption […] reflects both a discourse of nostalgia focusing on the there and then, and a discourse of desire, focusing on the there and now" (Dayan 1999 and Christopoulou and de Leeuw 2004, as cited by de Leeuw 2006, 191). Within this discourse, the children perceive the function of media as providing them with feelings of belonging. But the opposite could also be the case, as when the culture of the home country was perceived as foreign and remote to the children who have been in the new country for almost their entire lives (de Leeuw and Rydin 2007, 191).

In this case, after analyzing various forms of media use, the authors found that all media is used in the process of construction and reconstruction of identity, just in different ways. In some cases, the same media was used to both keep up with the past and to connect to a new future, participating actively in both spaces:

media use reflects a continuous dialogical negotiation of identities within and outside the family; within the family context, in the micro public sphere of the living room between parents and children, and in relation to the macro public sphere of the new country. The media may thus construct

dialogical spaces, mediated spaces. (de Leeuw 2006, 192)

Even though the study effectively addresses that these results are not bound to a nationality-centric approach, one aspect that the study fails to acknowledge is how gender roles and their representation in both the homeland and the new home inform the cultural identities of the children and their perceived and actual agency in challenging them, especially considering how different those might be between the culture of their origin and the western European countries that are their new home. How might a more thorough analysis of gender roles broaden the findings of this study (and similar ones)?

In "Transnational Identities and the Media," Olga Guedes Bailey addresses issues of ethnic identity and diaspora in the specific case of Latin American women in Liverpool, England, and the role of diasporic media in shaping a transnational identity (Bailey 2007). The author states that diasporic media is a key part of the experience of hybridity as it presents "a third cultural space where diasporas are creating sites for representation and where different forms of resistance and syncretism are valued" (212). The study consisted of interviews of thirty-five individuals and visits to six families over six months. The participants included recently arrived immigrants, older immigrants (now British citizens) and British-born of immigrant parents. Despite bonding via a local Latin American association, the group continues to argue constantly due to "internal tensions regarding their own perception of themselves as 'diasporic' [and] their own social, economic, and gender positions" (214). This is not surprising given all the nuances and variations within the Latin American ethnic category. In that regard, Bailey writes, "The signifier 'Latin American' encompasses a

large and diverse geographical region, with different histories, languages, cultures, and political systems. Latin American identity is typified by cultural diversity which makes problematic to attempt to fit a particular group in a homogeneous category such as 'Latin American' that hides the complexity of its people" (Bailey 2007, 214).

For women in this community, navigating the diasporic context consists of "picking and choosing" (216). They maintain patriarchal traditions and roles brought from the homeland until they are no longer useful for adaptation to the host culture. Additionally, in this new environment, these women are constantly required to re-define themselves as independent and 'bread-winners,' which broadens their level of participation in the public sphere to an extent that was not possible in the homeland. As Baily notes, this is the idea of "shopping around" for cultural cues without losing "Latinidade" (215). Bailey describes the work of Bhabha (1994), Badrioti (1994), and Clifford (1994) in order to contextualize how this post-modern approach to the identity of nomads and hybrids suggests that the bonds of ethnic ties and the fixity of boundaries have been replaced by shifting and fluid identities (Bailey 2007, 216). However, this negotiation is not without tension or cultural appropriation from political, economic, social and religious forces. Particularly, the commercialization of 'Latin' identity by multinational companies and media, i.e., "a stereotype of 'Latin women'…as [being] 'exotic' and 'sensual' […] in adverts, film, television, and music" (216-7).

In order to move beyond this binary scholarly approach, it is important to recognize Latin American identities —in the specific case of these women in Liverpool—and diasporic identities in general as not exclusively relating to "ethnicity" or "homeland" or

"either/or" but instead as being "and/and." In other words, diaspora studies must embrace this new "and/and" space in which multiple identifications co-exist (Bailey 2007, 219).

Conclusion

It is challenging to understand the transnational and cosmopolitan lives of diasporas, in part due to the colonialist classification of people as being either normative or "other." Another challenge comes from previous researchers' failure to address not only how different the diasporic experience might be between men and women, but also how gender roles impact individuals' levels of agency between cultures. In order to better understand hybridization, multiculturalism, transnationality, and a fluid cultural identity, it is necessary for diaspora research to break from its traditionally patriarchal, nation-centered perspective and begin to assess the multiple ways in which diasporic individuals are "and/and" (219).

To that end, further studies will need to approach diasporas by taking the following recommendations into account:

• Consider how the control—in terms of laws, rights, and political dynamics—and representation of women's bodies inform and impact the context in which fluid diasporic individuals build community and personal identity.

• Consider the many ways in which diasporic individuals inhabit a highly digitalized world that allows for virtual, non-border spaces. For example, studies would benefit from further analysis of how diasporas engage with representation in digital media (including film and television) in order

to redefine and reimagine their cultural identity.

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About *gnovis*

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Beginning with the 2007–2008 academic year, the Journal has been published bi-annually, during the fall and spring semesters. Prior issues of *gnovis* were published on a rolling basis.

The front cover of this edition of *gnovis* Journal was designed by CCT's Jill Fredenburg.

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gnovis is committed to providing students with new venues to explore key themes in communication, culture, and technology. Events, such as gnoviCon, bring together leading thinkers, students, academics, and practitioners from across disciplines to discuss the cutting-edge socio-technical issues that shape our future.

gnovis (nō vĭs)

derived from *gnosis*, Greek for "knowledge." The 'v' indicates vision and our commitment to exploring new pathways of scholarship.