

MEDIATIONS 2019

THE FIMS UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC JOURNAL

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A Note From the Editor

Mediations is an annual student-run academic journal which showcases the works from writers, artists, and makers whose contributions encourage us to think beyond the parameters of our current social model. Students within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS) have submitted pieces which are indicative of their understanding of the world they live in. Whether it be an analysis of the relationship between race and wealth, or a reflection on the complexities of climate change in the digital age, each submission confronts an aspect of our world that we seek to change. It is the role of Mediations is to inspire deeper analysis and foster meaningful dialogue. Our faculty is filled with phenomenal talent that produces meaningful work and challenges ideologies in our world today, and it is my honour to showcase this work surrounding the central theme of **CTRL, ALT, DEL**.

Selected submissions hold a mirror to the ways in which:

we seek to **control** our own narrative,

to find **alternative** ways to thrive within society,

and to **delete** human ignorance through empathy
and understanding.

Hence the theme CTRL, ALT, DEL.

On behalf of the Academic Portfolio of the FIMSSC, we thank you for continuing to support the Faculty of Information and Media Studies and liberal arts degrees across campus.

Welcome to CTRL, ALT, DEL.

Kianah Dames, Vice President Academic of the FIMSSC 2018-2019

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The Ideology Factory: Submission Through Schooling

Asha Sivarajah

MIT 2200- Mapping Media and Cultural Theory

Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser argues that “the school ... teaches know-how, but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its ‘practice’” (Althusser 1971, 128). He theorizes that the education system is an instrument of ruling ideology which reproduces labour power. The assumption then, is that the ruling ideology is preserved and maintained by the school system. In this essay, Althusser’s ideological theory will be used to demonstrate how the school system subjects workers to the ruling ideology while empowering the ruling class to master the ‘practice’ of administering submission, further reproducing the capitalist class structure. The school system teaches students the behavioural qualities for success while initiating the succession of labour. Althusser would argue that these ‘qualities’ guarantee submission while the succession of labour ensures class-based inequality.

The education system conditions future workers to adhere to the ruling ideology because it teaches students not only how to work within a capitalist society, but how to act. Althusser states that the school system works in two ways to ensure submission: (1) by teaching students tangible skills for future jobs, and (2) by imposing the behavioural ethics of obedient workers (Althusser

1971, 127). He states that students “learn to read, to write and to add...which are directly useful in the different jobs in production” (Althusser 1971, 127). Workers who have diversified skills are important within the workplace, but obedient workers are vital for bureaucratic institutions to function. In this sense, school acts as a catalyst for the reproduction of the capitalist class structure rather than an institution for enlightenment and innovation.

The structure of the classroom, for example, is a valuable tool to instill submission. First, students are familiarized with the bureaucratic organization of the scholastic system where teachers regulate students and school administrators manage teachers. Students are then taught to obey the authoritative force that governs them without question. Althusser states that children are taught the “‘rules’ of good behaviour...which actually means the rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour” (Althusser 1971, 127). The structure of educational institutions train young children to instinctively act in accordance to behavioural norms that are expected of them. The school system is thus an ideology factory, enforcing submission to the ruling powers and furthermore preserving the class structure.

The school system also empowers future rulers to master the practice of ideological submission by initiating the succession of labour. Schooling begins the process of dividing people into different labour relations. Althusser defines this process: “a huge mass of children are ejected ‘into production’: these are the workers”, “another portion ...fills the posts of small and middle technicians [and] white-collar workers” (Althusser 1971, 147). The “last portion reaches the summit” and becomes “the agents of exploitation” (Althusser 1971, 147). In this passage, Althusser describes the cycle of employment, where every child starts on the same playing field and every student finishes in their own class cohort. School is furthermore a vehicle for preserving the ruling ideology by churning out students for all levels of production.

Student summer jobs for example, expedite the succession of labour by separating students while they are still in school. The future labour force often work minimum wage jobs while the future white-collared workers may have hereditary credentials for office jobs. Lastly, the agents of exploitation may have either financial influence or an aptitude for power, and therefore access to high-level job experience with the intentions of ruling the working class in the future. The education system empowers the ruling class by initiating their ejection into the highest levels of power and wealth. As potential CEO's and political bureaucrats, future rulers

understand the necessity of the cycle of employment and the importance of having workers on every level of production. Market forces and ideological institutions may therefore influence the education system through sponsorships, capitalist propaganda, and influence over the school syllabus. Such practices allow for the reproduction of the ruling ideology and furthermore illustrate how educational institutions empower the ruling class.

In conclusion, the education system practices the rules of submission and initiates the succession of labour, subjecting future workers to the ruling ideology while empowering future rulers. The school system thus enables the reproduction of the capitalist class structure. Schools construct the way people think and behave. Educated societies respect the structure of bureaucratic institutions; they instinctively submit to higher powers, and they accept their inevitable class division. The school system calls into question how much control educated individuals have over their lives and how much control they have been conditioned to believe they have.

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“Buzz-Fed Up”: Juxtaposing Digital media Company BuzzFeed Video to Hesmondhalgh’s theory of the Complex Production Era

Julia Sebastien

MIT 2100 - The Culture of Consumption

In his book, *The Cultural Industries*, David Hesmondhalgh (2013) describes the modern age of cultural production as a “complex professional era” (71). This means that--rather than Adorno and Horkheimer’s (1944) simplistic vision of monopolistic conglomerates micro-managing cultural commodities from start to finish on an assembly line of vertically integrated businesses--Hesmondhalgh characterizes the modern production process of cultural commodities by complex and dynamic relations between creators, executives, marketers, and multiple labour forces of various sizes (77). Hesmondhalgh identifies several key changes and developments indicative of a professional era: the commodification of cultural products; relations of business ownership and production; organization, management and creative autonomy; the quality of cultural work; internationalization; dominant technologies; and textual change (69-89). In this paper, I explicate Hesmondhalgh’s observations, focusing on dominant technologies, the commodification of cultural products, creative autonomy and the quality of cultural work. I then use this analysis to determine whether media mogul *BuzzFeed Video* aligns with Hesmondhalgh’s description of the

complex professional era. I argue that while *BuzzFeed Video* does, in part, align with Hesmondhalgh’s views on the commodification of culture, business ownership and dominant technologies, the commodification of modern digitized media distinguishes *BuzzFeed Video* from Hesmondhalgh’s vision of the complex production era; *BuzzFeed*’s need to make as many viral posts as possible--a necessity to make profit in the modern digitized age--pressures the corporation to filter and restrict editors’ creative autonomy according to the demand of viewers and sponsoring companies, often at the expense of quality, originality, and diversity. In this way, it seems Hesmondhalgh’s model does not account for digital media’s share-based marketing and the effects it has on media content and creative personnel’s autonomy.

First, I will unpack what Hesmondhalgh means in calling modern systems of creating and commodifying cultural commodities the “complex production era” (70). Since the commodification of cultural products¹, Hesmondhalgh and

¹ Commodification is when, under capitalism, cultural products become “transform[ed] ... into a commodity” “for

Williams observed that the cultural production market transformed from “market professional” to “corporate professional”, or what Hesmondhalgh prefers to call “complex professional” (73). Hesmondhalgh calls our production era “complex” rather than “corporate” because of the growing importance of smaller, externally-owned companies alongside corporations “as [contrasting] sites of creative independence” (73) and because the “increasing complexity of the division of labour involved” in creating cultural commodities dilutes the regulating authority of any single corporate executive (67). This dynamic negotiation between creative and executive forces is but one of many developments Hesmondhalgh observes of the modern production era that leads him to call it complex.

Another complexity Hesmondhalgh observes of the modern production era is the division of labour involved in producing cultural commodities, which he depicts as a pyramid of positions with varying statuses and salaries (79). At the top of the pyramid are the executives and owners who “hire and fire” but do not contribute creatively; then come the creative managers, who “mediat[e] between ...[the] interests of owners” and “creative personnel”; then come the marketing personnel, who “promote [the] work”, “act[ing] in the interests of owners

[monetary] exchange” between manufacturers and consumers (69).

and executives”; then come the primary creative personnel, who create the “symbols” and products; then come the technical workers, who operate machinery but do not contribute creatively; and then lastly, the unskilled or semi-skilled labourers are “involved in [the] creation, circulation and reproduction of products” but are usually “poorly paid” (79). The dynamic interaction between all of these creative and productive forces, Hesmondhalgh claims, creates a “complex” rather than “corporate professional” era of cultural production, since no single product is micromanaged by any one authority from its conception to its final release to the public (67). As a result of this division of labour in our complex production era, Hesmondhalgh also theorizes that executives grant “project teams involved in creation and conception ... a large degree of [creative] autonomy” since “creativity [is] necessary to make profits” in a competitive capitalist system (79, 81).

Since Hesmondhalgh believes the division of labour preserves creative personnel’s autonomy, he dismisses Horkheimer and Adorno’s claim that monolithic corporations mass-produce formulaic cultural commodities on an assembly line of deteriorating quality as a “simplistic ... assumption” (69); instead, Hesmondhalgh argues that while creative personnel do “experience ... constraints imposed on them in the name of profit accumulation” (82),

imposed limitations such as “genre[s] can ... allo[w] for creativity and imagination within a certain set of boundaries” (82). Furthermore, Hesmondhalgh insists that the majority of control executives exert is over “reproduction and circulation” rather than the creative process (81, 82). It is this belief in creators’ creative autonomy that prompts Hesmondhalgh to defend the quality of works produced by corporations, claiming that there is no standardized, evaluative system of aesthetic criteria to support the argument that the quality of modern creative products are in decline. (89).

The last feature of the complex professional era Hesmondhalgh discusses is the internet, our dominant technology, and how it affects the commodification and content of cultural texts (87): First, Hesmondhalgh claims that the internet “[erodes] barriers between production and consumption” (87) since online creative content is more responsive to and influenced by consumer activity. Second, Hesmondhalgh observes that in our internet-dominated era, more companies are undergoing internationalization and are marketing their products on an international scale (86). Lastly, Hesmondhalgh argues that the internet, which has facilitated the creation and spreading of cultural texts, has enabled creative industries to “increase the range and diversity of [their] cultural goods” (88).

BuzzFeed Video is an interesting case study since although it demonstrates Hesmondhalgh's complex theories about commodification, dominant technology, and the division of labour, it undermines Hesmondhalgh's belief in the creativity, diversity, and quality of modern creative commodities. First, *BuzzFeed Video* demonstrates how dominant technology, or “... the internet transform cultural production and consumption” (87). By making Youtube videos viewable online for free, the internet forces companies to generate profit in different ways, which, for *BuzzFeed Video*, means turning consumers into commodities and marketing personnel, thus eroding “boundaries between production and consumption” (87). Companies like *BuzzFeed Video*'s primary income comes from companies who pay *BuzzFeed Video* to expose viewers to their products in videos via native advertising and/or product placement (Turow 2013); in this way, the internet allows *Buzzfeed* not only to use viewers' “shares” as free marketing, but also to sell views as commodities to “the higher [business] class that owns them” (90).

BuzzFeed Video also seemingly supports Hesmondhalgh's model of the complex professional era because of its structure of ownership and complex division of labour: At the top is Jonah Peretti, *BuzzFeed*'s founder and CEO, and Scott Lamb, *BuzzFeed*'s

Vice President of International editorial growth (Griffith 2014). Whereas Peretti has “allocative control” over *BuzzFeed* and “define[s] ... [its] goals and scope” (75), Lamb reinforces Hesmondhalgh’s claim that executives maintain a “hands-off” attitude towards their editors, claiming *BuzzFeed* merely “taps into [editors’] personality and creativity” (Frieschlad 2015). Just as Hesmondhalgh theorized, *BuzzFeed*’s executives make the most money and hire a growing thousands of employees from all of Hesmondhalgh’s categories of labour, many of whom “perform more than one [labour] rol[e]” (79): *BuzzFeed*’s creative personnel include directors, editors and assistant editors who not only create and shoot *BuzzFeed* videos, but also act as Creative managers, working directly with external brands (“Work at *BuzzFeed*.” 2017). *BuzzFeed*’s marketing personnel include social media strategists and assistant editors, directors, and their technical staff comprises equipment specialists, engineers, and data scientists. At the bottom of *BuzzFeed Video*’s labour force are food coordinators, interns and other, lower-paid “unskilled labour[ers]”, none of whose salaries are protected by a labour union at Peretti’s discretion (Kasperkevic 2015).

Hesmondhalgh defends the creative personnel’s autonomy since executives manage products’ “reproduction and circulation” rather than creation (81); However, although Hesmondhalgh suggested ways the

internet democratizes the cultural production industry,² he seemingly did not predict how the digitizing media would allow the circulation process--sharing--to influence the creativity, diversity and quality of its content. It is possible that share-based media may be more democratic for consumers and coincide with Hesmondhalgh’s vision of a complex production era, since giving consumers the power both to market for *BuzzFeed* and to dictate what goes “viral” with their shares lets consumers influence *BuzzFeed*’s future content; however, native advertising--the new way of advertising on digital media (Turow 2013)--diminishes creative personnel’s autonomy because native advertising--the new way of advertising (Hamilton 2017)--forces creative personnel to serve “the interests [of] ... the higher class that owns them” (Hesmondhalgh 90). *BuzzFeed*’s “video tea[m] ... [which] work[s] with brands ... and agencies to craft custom social posts” (Peretti “Buzzfeed Advertise” 2017), generates hundreds of similar, monothematic videos sorted into formatted genres³

² By eroding “boundaries between production and consumption” and by diversifying media content (Hesmondhalgh 87).

³ such as “Ladylike”, a *BuzzFeed Video* youtube series in *BuzzFeed* staff try adventurous, esoteric, and often expensive experiences for the first time, and “the Try Friends”, a *BuzzFeed Video* youtube series in which women compare similar products from different brands.

that unmistakably showcase lesser known brands and companies. In this way, one could argue that the internet disappoints Hesmondhalgh's expectations of a creative and complex production era, since the pressure the internet places on creators to natively advertise brands in their content restricts their creative autonomy.

The internet further diminishes the autonomy of *BuzzFeed Video*'s creative personnel since relationship between popularity and profit drives Peretti to restrict editors' production and promotion efforts to only videos that will "go viral" (Peretti "How Ideas Travel" 2013). According to the formula Peretti uses to identify posts with viral potential, *BuzzFeed Video* profits most when small groups of viewers share their videos with large peer groups (Peretti "How Ideas Travel" 2013); accordingly, Peretti's editors generate formulaic videos that target African-Americans, the deaf, transsexuals, bisexuals, tall people, short people, and feminists to generate maximum revenue to keep up with the new culture of this age group (Kikuchi 2016). In this way, one could argue that digitized marketing differentiates *BuzzFeed Video* from Hesmondhalgh's theory of the complex production era because digital advertising allows the circulation process--and the corporate executives who manage it (81)--to confine editors within formulaic genres that maximize profit.

Even if genres do not damage cultural products' quality and do prompt "creativity ... within a ... set of boundaries" (82), *BuzzFeed*'s need to make viral videos to maximize profit diminishes the quality and originality of their products. In keeping with Peretti's (2013) statement that companies should spend less time improving a product's quality and more time planning how to spread it (Peretti "How Ideas Travel" 2013), *BuzzFeed*'s creative personnel often neglect the quality of their posts and often steal other creators' trending content (Gates 2016). Many of *BuzzFeed*'s more popular videos are simple compilations of recycled content "farmed" from external media⁴ (Gates 2016). Thus, although Hesmondhalgh denies any measurable decline in cultural commodities' quality (89), *BuzzFeed Video*'s fixation with rapidly generating a multiplicity of intriguing posts has caused a tangible deterioration in their videos' quality and originality.

One other negative outcome of viewers having so much influence over corporations' cultural content is that, just as Vincent Mosco (1996) predicted, viewers are presented with a limited multiplicity of similar videos espousing only their most "viral" opinions in an echochamber instead of diverse videos showcasing a range

⁴ For example *The Whisper App*, an external media platform to which users anonymously post titillating secrets (Griffith 2013).

of contrasting, non-viral topics and opinions (Mosco 222; Hesmondhalgh 89). Because *BuzzFeed*'s main viewer demographic consists of North American college-liberals between the ages of 18-35 (B&T Magazine 2013), a vocal yet relatively small percentage of America's overall population, *BuzzFeed* aligns itself politically and socially with the groups and ideologies that would maximize *BuzzFeed*'s popularity (and shares) amongst this outspoken group (Salz 2016; The Weekly Standard 2014). This involves unanimously supporting Hillary Clinton's campaign, mocking Donald Trump and the Republican party (Perlberg 2016; Stryker 2015), and promoting progressive values such as the legalization of marijuana (*BuzzFeed Video* "Weed at Trump's Inauguration" 2017). Thus one could argue that in its eagerness to please its viewers, *BuzzFeed Video* sacrificed diversity to become an ideological echo chamber that shows viewers "[what they] have already decided [they] are interested in" (Hesmondhalgh 89).

advertising and share-based marketing--a product of the internet's democratizing influence--separates *BuzzFeed Video* from Hesmondhalgh's theory by diminishing its products' creativity, originality, quality and diversity. Since *BuzzFeed*'s modern and progressive use of native advertising and "sharing" digitized media seems to be the direction in which the rest of modern media is headed, perhaps Hesmondhalgh should add this fourth type of commodification to his model and revisit his theories about creative personnel's autonomy and cultural products' diversity accordingly.

David Hesmondhalgh's description of the complex production era depicts an age in which cultural commodities are products of dynamic negotiations between various companies and teams rather than one corporate executive authority. Because of its multi-level division of labour, digitization and democratized elements, *BuzzFeed Video* partially aligns with this complex system; however, *BuzzFeed*'s reliance on native

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User-Generated (Dis)Content: Problematic Aspects of Automated Copyright Detection Systems on YouTube

Tyler Cheeseman

MIT 3133F – Net-Work: Labour and Profit on Facebook, Flickr, YouTube and Web 2.0

With nearly two-billion monthly active users, YouTube has become one of the largest social media platforms on the web, second only to Facebook (Statista, 2018). The website that was invented in 2005 as a convenient way to share video with online audiences has since turned into the single largest online video-sharing platform in existence with more than 400 hours of video content being uploaded to the platform every second. With this rise in popularity, YouTube has integrated automatic copyright detection and monetization features into the platform which give select content creators the ability to profit from their work. These features make YouTube an attractive platform for talented content creators seeking reward for their efforts in the production of user-generated content while simultaneously remaining attractive to corporate sponsors who have the ability to reach large audiences. Despite the development of this seemingly utopic platform, recent case studies suggest that the utilization of automated copyright detection systems are not wholly advantageous and have even been adopted to the detriment of some users. With reference to scholarly work from David Hesmondhalgh on user-generated content, Steve Collins on fair use, and additional work from

various authors surrounding the topic of online content, wrongful claims of copyright infringement mediated through the automated copyright infringement systems used by YouTube will be examined to show the potential for devastating outcomes in relation to individual video producers.

Analyzing the expansive body of work that is constantly uploaded to YouTube is an impossible task strictly making use of human labour. Offered as a solution, YouTube uses a two-pronged copyright detection system (Google, 2018). First, the “Content ID” system that allows select candidates (those who produce a substantial and pre-approved amount of work) to have their audio and visual material automatically cross referenced to the library of publicly uploaded videos. This system seeks to automatically prevent users from reuploading copyrighted content by immediately flagging the video and providing options for the copyright holder to block, monetize, or track the analytics of said video. The second process involves a direct “takedown notice” where the copyright holder may submit a claim against a user who wrongfully uses their work. The latter example involves direct human interaction to initiate a claim whereas the Content ID system may block a

video from being uploaded automatically. Although takedown notices involve human interaction, it has been noted that videos can be removed immediately, only resurfacing once an employee has resolved the situation. Both systems allow for those accused of copyright infringement to file a dispute that leads to further investigation with the potential for problematic outcomes as will be discussed further on. Additionally, YouTube offers a “Content Verification Program” to approved users where guidance surrounding the management of content is provided in a similar process as to that of a direct takedown notice, not necessarily utilising fully-automated systems.

Referencing the article *User-generated Content, Free Labour and the Cultural Industries* written by David Hesmondhalgh, the issue of online free labour is seen as a debate surrounding the discussion of nuance, especially in modern digital spaces where entertainment and labour often overlap (2010). According to Hesmondhalgh, the act of using social media platforms as entertainment does not necessarily reflect labour that should be rewarded with monetary gain. Specifically applying his idea to YouTube, watching free-to-access videos sufficiently supplies a user with value in the form of entertainment despite the fact that that same user may be subjected to advertisements or become tracked as a point of data in an analytic report,

potentially creating value for companies and producers alike. Hesmondhalgh then goes on to discuss types of free labour that may in fact justify a monetary reward, such as Wikipedia contributors who document and manage knowledge, generating a great deal of resources for public users around the world (2010). Using this idea to explain the sources of value on YouTube, it is clear to see that passive viewers of content are less worthy of receiving monetary gain for their labour when compared to the active producers who create content on the website, consequently attracting viewers. Additionally, Hesmondhalgh addresses the idea that critiquing the development of ownership, on platforms where user-generated content is integral, may be a worthwhile discussion where issues surrounding intellectual property would be more important than unpaid labour (2010). It is with this final notion where the issues surrounding intellectual property and copyright infringement on YouTube will emerge.

The production of a video where commentary on the work of another user takes place is often referred to as a “reaction video” or “remix video” on YouTube (Collins, 2014). These videos make use of direct visual reference to the original work while doing so in a manner that creates a new piece of media, effectively using older materials in ways to produce new information or present the information in a new way.

As outlined by Steve Collins in his article *YouTube and Limitations of Fair Use in Remix Videos*, “Exceptions to claims of infringement, such as the doctrine of fair use, allow uses of copyrighted works without the permission of the content owner, guaranteeing a degree of criticism and commentary.” (2014). The issue with using fair use as a defence mechanism against copyright infringement on a platform such as YouTube is that the use of the Content ID system leaves the initial legal judgment to be completed by a set of algorithmic-based code. The system has difficulty differentiating video content that falls into the fair use category or the copyright infringement category, resulting in numerous blocked and deleted videos that are not necessarily infringing copyright (Collins, 2014). Numerous instances have come to light over the last few years with notable YouTube personalities struggling to benefit from ad-revenue generated on remixed works.

Felix Kjellberg, owner of the most-subscribed-to YouTube channel and known on the platform as “PewDiePie”, recently discussed a copyright strike against his channel in a video titled *About A Copyright Strike*. A copyright claim against one of his videos that featured gameplay of an online videogame came from the original developer. Kjellberg, along with numerous news reporters, bloggers, and YouTube viewers critiqued the action of the game developer, who, publicly on twitter,

claimed that the imagery of the game shared in the video posted by Kjellberg was his intellectual property. Additionally, the developer stated that that the reason for filing the claim was more closely related to the hatred he had for the video creator. This obvious abuse of the takedown notice copyright detection system allowed the emotionally-driven developer to seize any monetary value Kjellberg would have made from the video. Among various critiques of the developer, Kjellberg discusses issues of fair use by explaining that the commentary he provided while playing the game was sufficient to mark the video as his personal work, altering the experience a separate entity would have while consuming the video and therefore rendering it original (2017). Although the developer never took further legal action, the video created by Kjellberg was removed on terms of violation by YouTube. Kjellberg opted against filing a dispute, later claiming that the process involved was more hassle than it was worth, even with notable legal experts taking his side on the matter.

In a similar yet more intense case, Ethan and Hila Klein, known on YouTube as H3H3 Productions, were struck with a copyright claim after posting a video in which they provided critical commentary on the video of a self-proclaimed comedian for the crude and confusing humour it contained. In a similar fashion to that of Kjellberg, the duo used imagery from the work of another user, adding

comments with intermittent cuts to their own original footage; ultimately creating an original work. After filing a counter takedown, the duo was faced with a lawsuit attempting to sue them for defamation, copyright infringement, and misrepresentations. After a lengthy legal battle involving significant crowd-funded legal fees and emotional support, all charges against Hila and Ethan Klein were dropped after a judge claimed that the video “constituted fair-use as a matter of law” (Klein, 2017).

As highlighted by Collins, Klein, and Kjellberg, YouTube is protected under The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), an American piece of legal legislature dealing with topics surrounding intellectual property and copyright infringement. Under the DMCA, YouTube is not to be held punishable due to the actions of a user who commits a violation of copyright so long as the platform takes immediate remedial action. In the case of Kjellberg and Klein (along with countless others who have not been mentioned for the sake of brevity), the action taken by YouTube saw the automated copyright detection system pull their video from the public before allowing either party to oppose the action. The system put in place by YouTube falsely allowed the videos to immediately be removed in an effort to protect the legal status of the platform under the DMCA. Although the system certainly removes cases of true copyright infringement, it can also remove

videos that have no inherent illegal characteristics. In this sense, it directly inhibited the video producers to display their work on the website, subsequently reducing one of their main revenue streams for an undisclosed amount of time.

The topic of fair-use and copyright infringement warrants further research as the creative remixing of cultural texts increasingly becomes part of modern internet culture. The difficulty lies within the empirical nature of study where copyright infringement and issues of intellectual property are masked behind complex systems of automated detection. Perhaps most problematic are the undiscoverable cases of wrongful monetization of original works by large media corporations or deletion of original works on false ground altogether. It is reasonable to believe, given the size of the YouTube platform, that the number of documented cases represents only a small percentage of total cases where video producers problematically generate money for companies or individuals who wrongfully get away with monetizing original fair-use content. The aforementioned YouTube creators have large audiences that offer a strong support network to depend on in times of need. The same cannot necessarily be stated for small creators with equally-important work but with less influence on the platform. As discussed with reference to Hesmondhalgh, issues of intellectual

property on platforms where user-generated content are integral to operation are significant and impactful. Referencing work by Collins outlining issues with the copyright detection methods used by YouTube and supplemental case studies surrounding some of the most popular video creators on the platform, it is clear to see that the automated system has the potential to be abused. As stated by Kjellberg at the end of his video, the fair-use regulations are supposed to exist to protect artists and their work (2017). Despite the benevolent action taken by YouTube to reduce the wrongful use of intellectual property by integrating automated copyright detection systems, numerous cases present evidence that show the ways in which individuals or companies manipulate the system to benefit from a manufactured state of further censorship.

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Critical Analysis – *Girl, Interrupted*

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James Mangold's 1999 film *Girl, Interrupted* explores themes of gender representation and the role of authority in mental health through narratives of regulated physical and emotional autonomy, over-medication, and feminized 'madness.' Based on the novel of the same name, protagonist and autobiographer Susanna Kaysen tells the story of her eighteen-month stay in the women's ward of Claymoore psychiatric hospital, detailing her encounters with the other patients displaying varying levels of "sickness," and their interactions with the pharmaceutically-driven medical staff. By my interpretation, investigating the intersections of gendered expectations, over-medication, and commanding mental health authority, allows *Girl, Interrupted* to illuminate how standardized representations of "mentally ill" patients construct a gendered, psychiatrically authoritative power dynamic that venerates the biomedical model of mental health (Konrad & Wick, 1999).

In *Girl, Interrupted*, 1960's era liberated women are portrayed as 'crazy,' persecuted for promiscuous or free-thinking behaviours but 'redeemed' by compliance to the biological model of mental illness. This is made clear in Susanna's first

experience at Claymoore, in which she tells the receptionist she isn't going to "burn [her] bra or march on Washington," but rather hopes to not end up like her mother, to which the receptionist responds, "women today have more choices than that" (Konrad & Wick, 1999). Because women are more prone than men to "describe their problems in psychological or social terms," as Susanna does by relating perceived mental illness to women's liberation, they are more likely to be presumed to have an actual mental disorder (Currie, 2005). Furthermore, liberated female sexuality is vilified and constructed as "self-destructive and aberrant" by authorities in the film, as Susanna is shamed for engaging in presumed sexual acts with her ex-boyfriend Toby and an orderly in the same day (Chouinard, 2009). By presenting the 'right' kind of feminine sexual desire, Susanna could dodge the diagnosis of "promiscuity" that is associated with mental illness by the governing psychiatrists (Konrad & Wick, 1999). Proof of this is demonstrated by Susanna and Dr. Wick's discussions on the double-standard for an 'appropriate' number of sexual partners, specifically the expectation that women should sleep around less than men to maintain their purity. Liberated women are ultimately

portrayed as inherently damaged and in need of treatment, as illustrated in the dichotomy between Susanna and Lisa's experiences at the end of the film; Susanna tempers her liberated views and independence by complying to biologically-modeled medical treatment and thus is portrayed as "morally redeemed and 'cured'," allowing her to return to the world of 'normal' people outside Claymoore's walls. Contrarily, Lisa, who has been declared "figuratively dead" due to her disobedience to Claymoore's biological model of mental health care, remains confined to the hospital (Chouinard, 2009). Lisa's unpredictable, liberated femininity is punished, while Susanna's reformed, compliant femininity is rewarded. Lisa's failure to adhere to 'appropriate' femininity, as evidenced by her aggression, overt sexuality, and failure to engage in nurturing acts with others, is constructed as the "unfeminine other," allowing the film to venerate Susanna's 'reformed' femininity as the more desirable expression of mentally ill womanhood (Chouinard, 2009). Thus, *Girl, Interrupted* establishes liberal femininities as 'crazy,' aligning them with instability, promiscuity, and overt threats to the clinician-sanctioned 'correct' version of mental health.

Gendered expectations of 1960s women are further evoked by the disproportional overmedication of women and gendering of diagnoses in *Girl, Interrupted*. Mental illnesses in the film are consistently gendered by

both authority figures and patients themselves, with Susanna's doctor referring to Borderline Personality Disorder as "not uncommon, especially among young women" and Lisa referring to her own sociopathy as "very rare and [experienced by] mostly men" (Konrad & Wick, 1999). The narrative also emphasizes the patriarchal interpretation of the female psyche as innately, biologically unstable, by purporting that normal emotional distress due to traumatic events is acceptable for men, but considered a "biological disorder" in need of pharmaceutical treatment when experienced by women (Currie, 2005). This narrative aligns with older pharmaceutical dialogues that capitalized on the fear of women "abandoning their [traditional] duties," such as motherhood, or "transitioning easily from drug addiction to prostitution", implying that women are more at risk for moral vulnerability and thus in need of pharmaceutical intervention (Prewitt, 2015). This over-medication of women plays a key role throughout *Girl, Interrupted*, evident through the standardization of medication-use as the 'norm;' the Claymoore residents' days are organized entirely around the schedule for doling out obligatory drugs. This is reflective of the real-world biomedical model of mental health treatment, in which female patients are "more than twice as likely" to be prescribed a drug than their male counterparts, and, when the medication is a painkiller, prescribed "at a higher dose and for a

longer duration” than men (Prewitt, 2015). As a result, women in *Girl, Interrupted* reflect how real-life women are treated in that they are construed as more needful of pharmaceutical medication through the gendering of diagnoses and assumptions about innate female mental stability.

The role of authority in mental health is evoked in *Girl, Interrupted* to further promote overmedication of patients under the biological model of mental illness. Susanna is transformed from person to patient through the narrative’s promotion of “disease mongering,” as authorities within the narrative use pharmaceuticals to control her supposedly abnormal behaviour (The PLOS Medicine Editors, 2013). The practice of over-medication is minimized to new arrivals like Susanna by characterizing dosages early on as a sleep-aid, eventually transitioning to overt hostility when she refuses medication as reflected in phrases like “We’ll just have to agree to disagree” and “Are we going to have a problem?” (Konrad & Wick, 1999). Thus, the film positions mental health authorities as omniscient decision-makers of how to ‘help’ those they deem ‘mentally ill,’ stripping away a patient’s agency in favour of pharmaceutically-induced control. The mental health authorities at Claymoore utilize common pharmaceutical advertising techniques to convince patients the drugs have an “obvious, objective, and scientific” relationship to their

symptoms, which grants them control over the patients and constructs their own authority as the ones with access to the medications (Greenslit & Kaptchuk, 2012). Authority in the film is also defined by one’s ability to prescribe. Psychiatrists like Dr. Wick are considered by patients to hold the highest level of power, while medical authorities who use more cognitive and behaviour therapy approaches, such as Melvin, are deemed incapable and powerless by patients. This is especially the case for the character Valerie, whose role as a medication-giver but not prescriber is used by Susanna as direct evidence of her lack of authority. Despite observing and working directly with the residents of Claymoore every day, Susanna asserts that Valerie “ain’t no doctor” because she only “sign[s] the charts and dole[s] out the meds;” her authority is undermined solely because of her inability to prescribe pharmaceuticals herself (Konrad & Wick, 1999). Mental health authority in *Girl, Interrupted* is thus established by the ability to overmedicate, supporting the biological model of mental health care and cementing pharmaceuticals as the ‘solution’ to mental illness.

Claymoore authorities in the film are further empowered by their ability to define ‘normal’ behaviour and ostracize those who do not fit its fabricated requirements. Susanna experiences this power in interactions with psychiatrists who claim her progress has “plateaued,” implying that a mental illness can and should be

overcome in linear, calculable manner, and who uphold a genetic link between behaviour and biology by claiming that Borderline Personality Disorder is “five times more common” with affected parents (Konrad & Wick, 1999). Stigma is used to construct “disability as identity” with Susanna’s diagnosis, even referring to her as a “recovered Borderline” upon discharge. Even when deemed ‘normal’ again by authority, her identity is still defined by her mental illness (Couser, 1999). While Susanna seems to accept the existence of psychiatrically-created categories of ‘normalness,’ Lisa undermines them through satirical mockery. Lisa describes the psychiatric process as standardized – “You lie down, you confess your secrets, and you’re saved. CA-CHING!.” Lisa recognizes both the normative power dynamic in having to “confess” one’s secrets to an authority figure as well as the authority’s capitalization from the normal/abnormal system of categorization (Konrad & Wick, 1999). As the figure who most disobeys authority, Lisa is portrayed as genuinely ‘insane,’ and the true antagonist of the film, framed as the result of her refusal to comply with authoritative, norm-defining persons who are trying to ‘help’ her. By escaping the hospital, refusing to take her medication, and forming manipulative relationships with medical staff (challenging their authority as a result), Lisa’s refusal to perform ‘normal’ behaviour is used to

reinforce the legitimacy of medical authority by contrast.

Susanna’s storyline authenticates the Claymoore medical authorities’ power to define normality, despite several instances of resistance. Her realization that the mental health authorities can fabricate what it means to be ‘healthy’ is clear in her comment “What the fuck do they know about being normal?”; however, this recognition is later undermined by her compliance with medical authorities after traumatic experiences with Lisa. Susanna’s eventual medication-taking and cooperative behaviour result in the resolution of her major conflict arc, finally achieving the doctor-sanctioned diagnosis of ‘normal’ mental health (Konrad & Wick, 1999). As a result, biologically-modelled and psychiatrically-created norms are substantiated in this film, establishing medical authority as the only group of individuals capable of branding someone as ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal.’

The role of medical authority in *Girl, Interrupted* is also constructed as the sole power for decision-making on behalf of the non-consenting patients they deem ‘abnormal.’ By structuring the biological model so that the medical authority “must decide where advice ends and therapy starts,” the autonomy of mentally ‘unhealthy’ patients is deprioritized in favour of authoritative ‘expertise’ (Lakdawala, 2015). This begins with Susanna’s admittance into Claymoore, which is

referred to as “[her] decision” despite it being thinly-veiled coercion at best and involuntary incarceration at worst (Konrad & Wick, 1999). Framing Susanna’s admittance as her choice represents the façade of patient-controlled treatment, when in reality individual agency is restricted in favour of unquestionable psychiatric authority. This dominance by medical authority reflects the unsuccessfulness of anti-pharmaceutical discourses in the 1960s, the film’s time period, which criticized medical drugs as “chemical straightjackets” and aimed to undermine the “institution of social control”: organized medicine (Greenslit & Kaptchuk, 2012). *Girl, Interrupted* sees its protagonist undermine this power dynamic, as Susanna proclaims to chief psychiatrist Dr. Wick that “you people don’t know what you’re doing,” thereby questioning the decision-making power of mental health authorities at Claymoore and in the wider biomedical model of authority (Konrad & Wick, 1999). However, Susanna’s eventual compliance to these authoritative figures, and release of control in regards to her treatment decisions, weakens her ideological criticism and once more bestows power upon the medical authority. Thus, Susanna’s inability or unwillingness to make her own decisions further establishes the role of mental health authority as all-powerful in the realm of diagnosis, treatment, and discharge at the Claymoore institution.

As an analysis of gender, authority, and mental illness, *Girl, Interrupted* promotes narratives that reinforce the linear model of biomedical authority and refutes those that encourage liberal femininity, agency, and dimensional models of mental health ‘normality.’ While characters at times challenge authoritative decision-making, normal vs. abnormal binaries, overmedication and perception of gendered ‘madness,’ the film’s resolution demonstrates that yielding to the authoritative regulation of medicalization and gender representation results in conflict resolution and objective redemption. *Girl, Interrupted* utilizes images of regulated autonomy, feminized diagnoses and treatment, as well as over-medication by gender and by psychiatrically-designated classifications of ‘normality’ to construct a gendered, medical authority-driven model of mental health treatment that rejects undermining counter-narratives and ultimately validates medicalized processes of etiology, prognosis, and cultural conceptions of what it means to be ‘mentally ill.’

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got guilt?



Class, Race, and the Limits of Identity Politics

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In *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class In The Age of Trump*, Asad Haider charts the historical basis of identity politics and calls on the reader to re-conceptualize class struggle as central to any self-proclaimed anti-racist movement. Rooted in the black freedom struggle of the 1960s and 70s, Haider puts forward a thesis which criticizes the revolutionary limits of social movements oriented exclusively around identity markers such as race. In Haider's view, identity politics only work to neutralize movements against racial oppression by reinscribing race as "real" and more importantly distinct from class (Haider 12). R.L Stephens illustrates the material impact of this artificial separation in their article "No More Walter Scott's," by exemplifying the limits of identitarian politics and its reduction of systemic racism to "personal attitudes and actions" (Stephens 2019). This essay will, therefore, use *Mistaken Identity* and the article "No More Walter Scott's" to assert the necessity of integrating class when theorizing about and subsequently organizing against racial oppression. Without a class-based approach to combating racial oppression, political movements committed to anti-racism will have neither the theoretical praxis or the solidarity necessary to

adequately challenge a highly racist capitalist system.

In *Mistaken Identity*, Haider establishes the socio-economic imperatives which contributed to the strategic construction of race in 18th century North America by the Euro-American ruling class. United by a common struggle for freedom, Irish indentured servants and enslaved African labourers fought alongside Nathaniel Bacon in a 1676 rebellion against the governor of Virginia, William Berkeley. In a conflict which lasted months, Bacon and his militia of exploited labourers fought and won against Berkeley and the Virginia elite, ultimately capturing Jamestown and burning it to the ground. Although Bacon died a month later, causing the rebellion to fall apart, the "insurrectionary alliance of European and African laborers was a fundamental existential threat to the ruling class, and the possibility of such an alliance among exploited peoples had to be prevented forever" (Haider 55). This was actualized through the artificial construction of whiteness and the gradual absorption of Irish indentured servants into said category. While the Irish had previously been portrayed as subhuman and categorized separately from Euro-American colonists, the Irish were beginning to be extended

certain social privileges in exchange for their cross-class allegiance (Haider 55-56). This worked to preserve “a super exploited African labour force” that was justified by newly produced hierarchical racial categories. The absorption of Irish indentured servants into whiteness demonstrates the unstable terrain of race, which has historically been used to produce racism for the benefit of the ruling class. By rendering white and black irreconcilable categories with no apparent shared interests, the production of race, and subsequently racism, obscured the possibility for class-based solidarity. In this way, racism is reduced to “personal attitudes and actions” caused by a moralizing hierarchy which pits working class peoples against each other instead of the ruling class (Stephens 2019).

Bacon’s Rebellion provides valuable insight into the disruptive and ultimately revolutionary potential of class-based political organizing precisely because of its ability to challenge the capitalist system. As Haider notes, it is essential to “constitute a common interest through class organization, which extends to an opposition to the whole capitalist society - because it is the structure of the capitalist system that prevents all people who are dispossessed of the means of production, regardless of their identities, from having control over their own lives” (Haider 51). As I have demonstrated, the Euro-American

ruling class recognized this in the 18th century, and so racism was and still is, used as a technology to protect systemic power and wealth.

Therefore, by treating race and class as separate categories of oppression we obscure the function of racism within a capitalist system. By taking the category of race as a given or as the only foundation for political analysis, the ideology of race is reproduced (Haider 43). Since it is racism which produces this ideology of race, organizing around a fixed racial identity only serves to mystify class. Afterall, race is arbitrary beyond its social effects, but class is inherently material.

By recognizing the ways in which racism is wielded to maintain class-based inequality through the stratification of working class power, we can begin to build strategies to disrupt the very category of race so as to allow for coalition building organized around anti-capitalism (Steele 2019). However, anti-capitalist movements are not actualized homogeneously. This means that organizing against anti-capitalism does not necessarily dictate the issues it must mobilize around (Haider 16). As Haider argues anti-capitalist movements must simply be able to “draw in a wide spectrum of the masses and enable their self-organization [...] in which people govern themselves and control their own lives, a possibility fundamentally blocked by capitalism” (Haider 16). The political activism of the Communist

Party (CP) in the 1920's provides significant insight into how anti-capitalist organizing can decentre the ideology of race while still addressing the very real consequences of racism. Through coalition building with organizations such as the African Blood Brotherhood, the CP was able to engage in anti-racist organizing which directly attacked whiteness as a parallel contribution to the labor movement (Haider 60). This anti-racist organizing took the form of educating white members to reject white chauvinism, interracial social events, sending organizers down into black communities to work on political projects, armed defense against lynching, legal defense for black victims of the racist justice system, and movements against unemployment, evictions and utility shutoffs (Haider 60). Similarly, the Combahee River Collective (CRC), which was a black feminist lesbian organization placed an emphasis on coalition building (Haider 8). Practically this meant CRC organized around domestic violence, reproductive rights, anti-war efforts and socialist and labour movements, among others. In this way, the CP and the CRC was able to build solidarity beyond racially constructed identity markers, displacing race as the foundational praxis for anti-racist organizing.

Without theoretical or political anti-racist praxis firmly rooted in class-based oppression, systemic racism is reduced to "personal

attitudes and actions." In doing so, addressing racism requires a moral appeal to individuals rather than a critical examination of class politics. Using the story of Walter Scott, a poor black man who was shot and killed by police officer Michael Slager, R.L Stephens argues that "racism is class politics in motion" (Stephens 2019). On April 4th 2015 Walter Scott ran from officer Slager because of aggressive welfare reform policy which left him vulnerable to incarceration because of an inability to pay child's support. While this welfare reform was "presented as a race-neutral policy," Stephens asserts that race "had long been a practical tool in the concerted ruling class effort to destroy welfare, a *class-based remedy to poverty*" through the strategic representation of welfare as a distinctly "black problem" (Stephens 2019). In this way, Stephens draws out the interplay between race and class as "fundamentally practical" (Stephens 2019), asserting that the racism that killed Walter Scott was "a manifestation of a class-based assault on the masses, both black and white" (Stephens 2019). This does not negate the individual and internalized racism which prompted officer Slager to shoot an unarmed black man six times, but it does place his actions within a context which renders the capitalist system equally culpable in his murder. Therefore, as Stephens argues, "ending racism requires us to take up class struggle, to shift the total social terrain that gives race practical meaning" (Stephens 2019).

Integrating class when analysing structural racism, and organizing to combat racism is essential precisely because race was created to stratify working class power. It is through the construction of whiteness, and thus the racialized person, that class solidarity is obscured and mystified. Race and class must therefore come to be seen as co-dependent. As Haider writes, "As long as racial solidarity among whites is more powerful than class solidarity among races, both capitalism and whiteness will continue to exist" (Haider 51). Without a strategy which fundamentally challenges the capitalist system and the class-based inequality it relies on, no anti-racist organizing will ever go far enough.

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“Saving” Muslim Women: Manufacturing Islamophobia in News Media

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RS 2285F - Gender and Islam

A common understanding of the news is that it is just that: unbiased, objective information regarding what is going on in the world. Thus, many consumers take information conveyed through popular news sources at face value which in part, shapes their understanding of the world. This is exemplified upon observance of how news media have aided in the construction and propagation of negative Muslims stereotypes in the twenty-first century. In this essay, I will explicate how a false dichotomy is produced through stereotypical representations of Muslim women as oppressed and needing saving, as Muslim men become implicated as the oppressors and thereby are demonized. Referring to Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s “propaganda model,” I will examine the motivation behind the demonization of Muslims as a “threat” to the West, as well as how news media have contributed to this designation.

In their 1988 book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media* Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky suggest that mass media’s role is not only to entertain and inform individuals, but also to instil them with cultural norms

and values that maintain the status quo. “In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda” (Herman and Chomsky). Hence, Herman and Chomsky introduce the concept of the “propaganda model,” which consists of five filters that influence raw news material, limiting and constructing what can be reported on by news outlets (Herman and Chomsky). All five filters, the “essential ingredients of [the] propaganda model” relate to political and economic power dynamics and the way the “inequality of wealth and power...[have] multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices” (Herman and Chomsky).

The first filter is the size, concentration of ownership and profit orientation of mass media firms, which they suggest essentially “encourages a more right-wing bias in mainstream media” (Klaehn 43-44). “Herman and Chomsky correctly observe that most mainstream media are themselves typically large corporations, ‘controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces’” (Klaehn 43; qtd. in Klaehn 42). Most or all of the five

filters correspond to this notion of media being a primarily corporate field. The second filter is the influence of advertising as a primary revenue source for mainstream media outlets, which results in “media discourses...[reflecting] the interests of advertisers and the market” (Klaehn 44). The third filter is the media’s reliance on elite or expert sources for information, which are often “institutionally affiliated sources that typically define what comes to be understood as ‘news’ in the first instance;” more broadly, “agents of power” (Klaehn 44). The fourth filter is a fear of ‘flak,’ negative commentary from influential outside sources, which Herman and Chomsky suggest leads to news sources self-disciplining themselves; not reporting outside of the consensus (Enoch 257). While these first four filters are noteworthy and relevant in establishing an understanding of how wealth and power influence the ways in which the world is discussed, this essay will focus primarily on the fifth and final filter in its exploration of media portrayals of Muslim women.

The fifth filter in Herman and Chomsky’s ‘propaganda model’ was originally “anti-communism as a control mechanism;” however, it can be interpreted in relation to the present-day western political climate as “an external enemy or threat”, or even simply “the dominant ideology” (Herman and Chomsky; Enoch 257; Klaehn 45). “Particularly in the post-9/11 political climate...this filter

mobilizes the population against a common enemy [such as] terrorism...while demonizing opponents of state policy as insufficiently patriotic or in league with the enemy” (Enoch 257-258). This filter influences the way certain news stories are framed, working to simultaneously reinforce the dominant ideology and the notion of a common enemy. According to Chomsky, this is executed in mass media through strategically invoking fear in individuals, “and/or redirect[ing] existing fear depending upon specific contexts, whenever it is ideologically serviceable to the interests of power” (qtd. in Klaehn 46). “Fear may be deployed as an ideological control mechanism and used to legitimize policies, mobilize resources and push specific agendas. How the fifth filter plays out – be it in relation to dominant ideological principles, power and/or othering – is upon specific time/place situational context” (Klaehn 46). As previously cited, this filter is particularly relevant in the context of the post-9/11 political climate; exemplified by the United States’ ‘war on terror’ and mainstream media representations of Muslim people (Enoch 257; Gatehouse).

The notion of news media perpetuating fear of a particular group, a sense of ‘other’ of said group, or a combination of both is particularly relevant in the context of how Muslim people; people from countries perceived as “Islamic,” are

represented in mainstream western media. Edward Said's *Orientalism*, as well as a brief examination of mid to late twentieth century cinema, demonstrates that orientalist (othering) stereotypes of Muslims or "Arabs" have existed for decades, if not centuries (59-60; Merskin 158). These stereotypes, which were attributed to most non-European ethnicities historically, characterize Muslim or "Arab" men as violent, barbaric, and uncivilized.

As a quick point of digression, I must note that throughout my research I came across various articles that demonstrate a difficulty of sorts in finding a term to accurately define this "group" that has come to be demonized as a whole. Different terms are used, such as Muslims, Arabs, or Middle-Easterners; however, the fact that there is no singular term that accurately represents this "group" elucidates that representing all Muslims as a collective is a severe overgeneralization. Debra Merskin uses the term "Arabs" because she describes how "stereotypes [have] constructed all Muslims as Arabs and all Arabs as terrorists" despite the fact that only twenty percent of Muslims are Arab (158; "Demographics of Islam"). Another common term, "Middle-Eastern" is also inaccurate, as at least half of the entire Muslim population lives outside of the vague geographical area of "the Middle East" ("Demographics of Islam"). In this essay I will refer to this over-generalized category as "Muslims," but

it is important to note the inaccuracy of using any one term to describe this vast range of people that are perceived as one and the same.

In "The Construction of Arabs as Enemies: Post-September 11 Discourse of George W. Bush," Debra Merskin explains how an "enemy image" of the vague category of "Arabs" was produced through political discourse and media representations following the events of September 11, 2001 (157-158). Merskin establishes that this "enemy image" has come to be applied to anybody of "Arab/Middle-Eastern descent," including the three million (in 2009, today the number is closer to 3.5 million) who live in the U.S, many of whom were born there or "have adopted America as home - Iraqis, Iranians, Palestinians, Egyptians, Arabs, Yemenis, and others" (157-158). Merskin contends that the construction of this enemy image, facilitated through a series of speeches given by then President George W. Bush, as well as through popular culture and mass media, have had, and continue to have "important human rights implications for Arab American citizens and non-citizens" (157-158). Merskin's article is an example of the fifth filter at work: as political speeches instigated the demonization of Muslim people, news reporting on these very speeches and subsequently produced news stories reinforce and strengthen the notion of this common enemy.

Building on the notion of this initial establishment of Muslims as the enemy, a fundamental aspect of the stereotypical violent, barbaric Muslim man is its binary opposition: the silenced, oppressed Muslim woman. In her article “Women, Words and War: Explaining 9/11 and Justifying U.S. Military Action in Afghanistan and Iraq,” Nancy W. Jabbra describes three “tropes” that “explain 9/11 and justify American intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. Each one is a contrast, a dichotomy, and each dichotomy is a hierarchy. In each case, the good is the American, and the bad, the Other, the deviant is the Arab or Middle Easterner or Muslim (they are all the same to most Americans)” (239). One of Jabbra’s tropes is “*Liberated American Women versus Oppressed Muslim Women*” which is illustrated by examples of images from the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper (240-241). The image on the left is an advertisement for the *Los Angeles Times* from Spring, 2000; the one on the right is an “editorial cartoon” from the Fall 2002 issue:



These images exemplify how news media have blatant reinforced negative Muslim stereotypes. The image on the left literally illustrates Jabbra’s abovementioned liberated versus oppressed trope, contrasting a bright image of white women in bikinis with a darker image of Muslim women almost entirely covered (240). The cartoon on the right demonstrates the active role that news outlets have played in propagating these harmful stereotypes, particularly in perpetuating the oppressed woman versus oppressive man dichotomy.

Furthermore, Jabbra notes the illogicality of the concept of “saving” women through military intervention:

Lila Abu-Lughod (2002), Saba Gul Khattak (2002), and Stabile and Kumar (2005) have pointed to the role of the United States in fostering the Taliban and other reactionary Islamic groups as a counterpoise to Soviet influence in Afghanistan, and reiterated the importance of oil to American interests in the country. But after

the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Afghan women had to be saved through American military action.... Khattak reminded us that "it matters little to Afghan women made refugees by the bombing whether the bombs were manufactured in the US or in the former Soviet Union; what matters to them is that bombs forced them to flee their homes (2002:22)". (qtd. in Jabbra 238)

The relevance of this quote is not only the paradoxical nature of saving women through military intervention, but also the fact that the justification of saving Muslim women only came into political discourse following 9/11 (Jabbra 238). Prior to 9/11, the American government wanted to ensure access to oil in Afghanistan; after 9/11, they wanted to "save" Muslim women (Jabbra 238). The stereotypical dichotomy of the violent, oppressive 'Middle-Eastern' man and the oppressed Muslim woman became widely accepted, conveyed through mass media and political discourse. This exemplifies Chomsky's fifth filter: reinforcing this dichotomy was a political strategy used to justify military intervention. It was about obtaining access to oil, not "saving" women.

Another example of how western media continues to perpetuate Islamophobia through reinforcing the stereotype of oppressed Muslim women (which subsequently produces

the dichotomy of the oppressive Muslim man) is the story of Malala Yousafzai and her rise to international fame. In 2012, fifteen-year-old Malala "was shot in the head by a member of the Tehrik-e-Taliban...in Pakistan" (Khoja-Moolji 539). Khoja-Moolji explicates how Malala has been effectively reduced to "the girl who got shot in the head for going to school," her story overgeneralized to represent the suffering of all Muslim women and girls as the details of what led to her being shot are ignored (544-545). Malala became a target not because she "wanted to go to school," but because she had been working with BBC Urdu since 2009, writing "explicitly about her life under the Taliban" (Khoja-Moolji 550). Khoja-Moolji describes how BBC Urdu approached Malala, as they specifically wanted these written accounts to come from a schoolgirl or a female teacher (550). This fact alone represents the pre-established agenda that news outlets have in how stories are to be framed; "[s]he was to write about the atrocities of living in Taliban-controlled spaces and as a schoolgirl-under-threat elicit feelings of anxiety from the audience" (Khoja-Moolji 550). Thus, as a letter from Taliban member Adnan Rasheed states, Malala was shot because of her "public oppositional stance against the Taliban," not because she went to school despite her narrative suggesting otherwise (Khoja-Moolji 550). A significant consequence of this oversimplification is that stories like Malala's contribute to the western

perception of Muslim women as a single oppressed collective, thereby legitimizing hatred for Muslim men as their violent oppressors (Khoja-Moolji 544). Additionally, the details of Malala's work with BBC Urdu demonstrate Herman and Chomsky's fifth filter at play again, as the narrative of the oppressed woman under the Taliban was already established; they just needed an insider voice to authenticate and perpetuate it (Khoja-Moolji 551).

In another example of the fifth filter, Khoja-Moolji describes how images of Malala on a stretcher after being shot repeatedly circulated in news media, blogs and social media platforms, invoking reactions of shock and anger at the thought of a young girl being shot for "just going to school" (543). Khoja-Moolji notes how these gruesome depictions of Malala trigger an emotional response in readers, thereby directing hatred towards the general mass of Muslim or brown men, as the specific gunmen who shot her were conveniently not discussed in the proceeding news stories (545). Thus, by invoking such a strong emotional response and portraying a general mass as violent and barbaric, sentiments of fear and hatred towards Muslim men or Islam as a whole are perpetuated by news media and essentially come to be seen as common sense. The spreading of Islamophobia through news story framing exemplifies the fifth filter at play, for if a population is mobilized against a perceived enemy or threat,

state actions that protect against said threat in some way are seen as legitimate. Whether in the case of ongoing drone strikes carried out by the United States, the aforementioned "war on terror" that the U.S. has spent trillions of dollars on, or even Trump's "Muslim ban" in 2017, the implications of the fifth filter are hard to ignore (Dilanian et al; Gatehouse; Yuhas and Sidahmed).

Khoja-Moolji explains that Malala's narrative, as well as her voice, have been picked up by numerous transnational advocacy campaigns, which rely on and reinforce the aforementioned dichotomy of oppressed Muslim women and "an imagined mass of Muslim men," as well as "the emancipatory promise of education" (539). She asserts that stories like Malala's become exemplary in the establishment of the overgeneralized collectivity of "oppressed Muslim girls and women in need of rescue," rescue in this context essentially being synonymous with adopting a western lifestyle (539). Moreover, Khoja-Moolji's notion of these advocacy campaigns being informed by "the emancipatory promise of education" demonstrates how this stereotype is used to valorize the West (539). This "emancipatory promise" alludes to a modern-day version of the "White Man's Burden," the supposed colonialist duty to "civilize" the inhabitants of their colonies with Western cultural values and practices (Khoja-Moolji 539; CollinsDictionary.com). The notion of

valorizing the West corresponds to Jabbra's abovementioned discussion of how the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman simultaneously idealizes the lives of western women (240). Khoja-Moolji and Jabbra illustrate how the establishment of a generalized category of oppressed Muslim women implies the existence of the oppressed Muslim woman/oppressive Muslim man dichotomy, as well as the good/evil binary opposition of the West versus the "Middle East" (Khoja-Moolji 540; Jabbra 238).

As per my earlier explanation of the propaganda model, the fifth filter can play out in a number of different ways, depending on the "situational context" (Klaehn 46). I have hitherto demonstrated how the use of fear and demonization of Muslim men in news media have been used to legitimize various state policies, and how these feelings of fear and hatred are invoked through portrayals of Muslim women as an oppressed collective. Beyond the legitimization of state actions however, I have explicated how, as Khoja-Moolji and Jabbra both note, the establishment of this dichotomy works to valorize western culture and values as superior and civilized. Thus, the focus in western news media on Muslim women as a suffering collective not only functions to justify western military intervention in the "Middle East," but also to reinforce the assumption that women in the West are liberated.

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The Hypocrisy of the Berry: How Kendrick Lamar Represents the 21st Century African American Structure of Feeling in “The Blacker the Berry”

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MIT 2200 – Mapping Media and Cultural Theory

In March of 2015, African American rapper, Kendrick Lamar, released his critically acclaimed and culturally significant album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*. Lamar was immediately met with praise for his ability to create a complex narrative examining his own upbringing, personal experiences with racism within the entertainment industry, and his interpretation of the intricate forms of oppression towards African Americans that are woven into American society. One single Lamar released prior to the album, titled “The Blacker the Berry”, acutely comments upon the ways in which the African American population as a whole is subject to institutionalized racism pervasive throughout America. However, the release of this single was steeped in controversy amongst the Black community, since in the months prior, after the murder of Trayvon Martin, Lamar spoke out about Black-on-Black violence, rather than addressing the police brutality that the Black community was experiencing (Edwards Jan 9, 2015). Despite this, within the lyrical content of “The Blacker the Berry”, Lamar explores the identifying history of African American racialization, the deep-rooted effects of institutionalized racism, as well as the proliferation of vicious stereotypes, all

of which constitute the 21st century African American structure of feeling. Lamar’s comments about Black-on-Black violence do not remain arbitrary though, as throughout “The Blacker the Berry” Lamar also recognizes the concept of colorism; that it exists as a discriminatory phenomenon within the Black community, undermines the goal of African American empowerment, and is yet another lasting consequence of dominant Eurocentric ideology (Harvey 1995, 3).

In his 1977 book *Marxism and Literature*, cultural theorist and critic, Raymond Williams, describes the history of and expands upon Marxist literary theory. An important concept that Williams illustrates in this work is the structure of feeling. To Williams, the structure of feeling is the shared values and experiences that are ubiquitous amongst a particular group of people, which is contingent on their current social conditions and historical factors, as they have “to find new terms [to describe] the undeniable experience of the present.” (Williams 1977, 128). Moreover, in relation to the structure of feeling, racial identity is formed through application of historical conflict, power, and politics onto certain kinds of bodies, in this case African

Americans (Hall 1997, 234) As for the African American community, there is a distinct focus on the historical factors that constitute their structure of feeling. After being subject to decades of cultural degradation and state-enforced exclusion through the processes of natal alienation and slavery, the modern African American community's identity was formed upon these foundational elements. This historical struggle has translated into much of the modern African American experience being defined by mistreatment by police, economic oppression, as well as drug and gang violence (McLeod Jr 2017, 127).

To illustrate the African American structure of feeling in "The Blacker the Berry", Kendrick Lamar explores Stuart Hall's idea of critical conception of race and racialization which describes the ways in which the modern African American identity is predicated on their historical oppression. In the bridge of the song, before the first verse, Lamar delivers the lines, "...they may call me crazy / They may say I suffer from schizophrenia or somethin' / But homie, you made me", which accurately expresses Hall's theory of critical conception of race, by understanding that the "homie" Lamar refers to is the malicious and overarching Whiteness that has subjugated African Americans. Moving into the first verse, Lamar raps, "Came from the bottom of mankind / My hair is nappy, my dick is big, my nose is round and wide / You hate me don't

you?" In these three lines, Lamar describes two concepts relevant in racial theory. When stating prominent physical features of Blacks and subsequently questioning the "you" of their hatred, Lamar describes theories of descent in which race is thought to be determined by the biological elements of a person. Furthermore, when referencing his penis, Lamar illustrates Kobena Mercer's theory of racial fetishism, which takes the penis of the Black male and effectively reduces their identity to that image, stripping them of any individuality (Mercer 199, 178). The overtly sexualized nature of racial fetishization is one of the contributing factors towards prevalent stereotypes of the Black community; with specific reference to the stereotype of the Black Buck, Lamar examines these ideas as part of his representation of the modern African American experience.

African American historian, Donald Bogle, describes the stereotype of the Black Buck as "big, bad niggers, oversexed and savage, violent and frenzied" and from "The Blacker the Berry", in the lines, "...I'm irrelevant to society / That's what you're telling me, penitentiary would only hire me / [...] I'ma be just another slave in my head", Lamar states this common narrative of the Black Buck: they are unemployable and belong only in prison, a stereotype of that Black males should adhere to (Bogle 2001, 10). Additionally, Bogle interprets these stereotypes as

originating from White anxieties of revenge from Blacks, which substantiates Stuart Hall's idea that stereotypes say more about the individual creating them, rather than the subject of the stereotype (Hall 1997, 233). Lamar is able to represent this concept succinctly by rapping, "You hate me don't you? / I know you hate me just as much as you hate yourself / Jealous of my wisdom and cards I dealt."

In the continuation of Lamar's representation of the African American experience, he quietly delivers the lines at the beginning of the song, "Everything black, I don't need black / I want everything black, I don't want black". Within these lines, Lamar shows how institutionalized racism is concealed in 21st century America by exhibiting the contrast between the surface expressions of Black acceptance against the unconscious racism that is still prevalent in America despite the absence of state-sanctioned racist practices.

Despite all of the oppression the African American community faces from Whites that Lamar raps about in "The Blacker the Berry", Lamar interestingly notes the prevalence of Black-on-Black violence as part of the African American structure of feeling in both the title and towards the end of the song. The song title, "The Blacker the Berry", is a reference to an adage and to a novel. The adage, "the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice" is a phrase meant to induce Black pride and empowerment; that they should not be ashamed of their skin colour. The novel of the same name by Wallace Thurman, depicts discrimination within a Black community, as lighter-skinned Blacks are favoured through the phenomenon of colorism. Colorism is the form of prejudice arising from the

differential treatment of those with darker skin tones and can be understood as a subsidiary form of racism (Harvey 1995, 5). In "The Blacker the Berry", at the beginning of each verse Lamar starts by saying, "I'm the biggest hypocrite of 2015", but doesn't elaborate upon this statement until the final lines of the song where he raps, "So don't matter how much I say I like to preach with the Panthers / Or tell Georgia State 'Marcus Garvey got all the answers' / [...] So why did I weep when Trayvon Martin was in the street / When gang banging make me kill a nigga blacker than me?" In these lines Lamar explores the hypocrisy that exists within the Black community resulting from colorism, by first stating pro-African American attitudes, followed by a depiction of Black-on-Black gang violence. It is here where Lamar faced some criticism for appearing to downplay the importance of the mistreatment by police the African American community experiences. However, what Lamar also highlights, is that colorism within the Black community is yet another consequence of historical, systematic oppression and proliferation of Eurocentric ideology, that both complicates and establishes the African American structure of feeling today.

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#IfTheyGunnedMeDown: The Black Experience and the Ideal Victim

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MIT 3000- Designing and Critiquing Research Methods

Introduction

In 1986, Nil Christie theorized the implications of a justice system that does not provide justice in all situations. Christie understood the justice system as a system that operates under a set of ideologies that confirm the validity of a victim's allegations if they align with the ideological projections of an "ideal victim" (Hoyle and Young 2002, 179). Doreen McBarnet, author of *Regulation and Criminal Justice: Innovations in Policy and Research* defined the ideal victim simply as, "the blameless white side of the black and white adversary dispute," (Hoyle and Young 2002, 179) and through personal observation of the justice system, the contents of this definition are literal. It is apparent that there is an ideal victim, and often times the projection that people of colour, specifically black people, are being held more accountable than a non-person of colour, specifically white people, in both circumstances as a victim and as a criminal.

In 2017, a study produced by the University of Toronto called "The Black Experience Project" outlined and statistically supported the experiences of black people in the Greater Toronto Area who endure the

effects of institutionalized racism. This study highlights harassment by law enforcement within the black community with 38% of the black sample reporting police harassment. It also reinforced the idea that black people are not treated justly under the law, stating that 80% of the non-white sample viewed black people as negative or very negative. It, finally, affirmed the influence of the media by stating 33% of the black sample reported that mainstream media portrayal of black people was inaccurate. "The Black Experience Project in the Greater Toronto Area 2017). These three factors contribute to the perpetuation of the ideal victim, but the study does not deeply analyze the effects that media and news outlets have on the treatment of black people in the justice system.

In relation to Christie's theory and these observations, there are very few studies that analyze and assign accountability to national and regional news outlets in the United States, and their abilities to perpetuate the idea of the ideal victim by publishing articles that favour white people, both as victims and criminals, and demonize black people, both as victims and criminals. Christie's ideal victim theory defines the victim as, "vulnerable and not to blame for his or

her victimisation,” (Hoyle and Young 2002, 179) and a criminal as, “big and bad,” (179) which correlates to common and stereotypical associations with black men. The study of the representations of black people in comparison to white people then becomes increasingly important when considering these biases that are further replicated on both national and regional news outlets. With the rise of President Trump in 2016, increasing racial tensions in the United States of America (US) have skyrocketed creating divides in the country, making the US the ideal country to analyze for this study. The purpose of this study is to directly prove the effects of racial biases and the biases within the justice system by comparing the treatment of black victims to the treatment of white victims and criminals in news outlets.

The four articles selected for this sample represent national news sources and regional news sources while presenting a span of four years to analyze. NBC (2012) and The Whitter Daily News (2014) are traditionally liberal news outlets in the US (Blake 2014). The Staten Island Media Group (2010) and the Alabama Local News (2014) are news outlets in traditionally conservative areas (Wroblewski 2012). This essay will examine and compare the representation of black victims, black criminals, in comparison to the representation of white victims and white criminals, by analyzing the use

of positive and negative language on national and regional news sources.

Research Hypothesis

Using the notion of an “ideal victim”, the frequency of negative language and negative photographic representations of black victims will be more present on news outlets than of white victims and criminals. These racial and ideological biases will be analyzed within four diverse and American news sources that span over four years and will prove to be an issue of concern today.

Theoretic Hypothesis

The representation of black people as dangerous within the justice system and news producing outlets is not representative of them as a people, but of the ideology of them as a threat to society. This enables unfair treatment in the justice system and perpetuates outdated stereotypes. These points are reflected in the incarceration rates where black people encompass 13.3% of the total US population but represent 62% of the US incarceration rate. (Prison Policy 2010, US Department of Commerce 2016).

Operationalization

Sampling Frame and Sample

The sampling frame includes four articles about crime in the US committed by white offenders and also include black and white victims. Articles were chosen at random, meaning, the articles in this analysis

were not specifically sought out of personal bias. The sample spans over four years, from 2012-2014, and are published in the US in states that are either Republican or Democratic.

The articles within the sample were chosen based on the race of the offender, the victim, or both. Samples of black victims were sought out but samples of white victims and criminals were both included. NBC (2012) represents a national news outlet which means they have more of a following and The Whittier Daily News (2014), The Staten Island Media Group (2010), and The Alabama Local News (2014) represent regional news sources.

Measurements

Definitions

Black People: For the purpose of this study, black people are defined as people with visibly darker skin and consequently visibly African facial features. Those who may be biracial, with both black and white ethnic backgrounds, will only be considered black if they are visibly dark, and not if they are fair skinned but may possess African facial features (ie. Wider nose, fuller lips, etc.).

White People: Those who are considered white are those who are visibly fair skinned and have European facial features (ie. Smaller nose, silky hair, etc.) White people, in this study, may also be biracial with any race that

is not black. Whiteness in these cases is also confirmed by fairness of skin and European facial features.

Defining Positivity: For the purpose of this study, positive language is the use of words that describe a criminal or a victim in a positive way. This can mean talking about a person's positive character (ie. The person did positive things for the community), or having loved ones or those who knew or know the person talk about positive experiences with the person. Positivity can also be words that insight empathy within the readers, or make readers believe that they did not deserve to endure the event at hand. Positivity will also be addressed by any photos of the victims or the offenders that are present. Positive photos of either are ones that have the victim(s) or offenders smiling in a non-penitentiary setting or non-violent setting (ie. School photos, professional family photos, etc.) The presence of one or more of these criteria makes it a positive photo.

Defining Negativity: Negative language in this study is defined as words that defame the character of the victim(s) or the criminals, or words that negatively impact the perception that viewers have of either of the two (ie. Addressing negative events about the victim's or criminal's past). Negativity can also be words that prevent readers from feeling empathetic towards the victim(s) or criminal, or make readers believe that

they deserved to endure the event at hand. Negativity will also be addressed in both the absence of photos of the victim(s) or the criminal(s) and the presence of negative photos that the victim(s) or criminal(s) are not smiling or are in a penitentiary or violent setting (ie. A mug shot, surrounded by weapons or illegal substance paraphernalia, gang affiliation, etc.). The absence of a photo of those addressed in the sample dehumanizes the subjects, making it hard for readers to feel empathy for them. The presence of one or more of these criteria makes it a negative photo.

Defining Non-Applicable

Language: There will be language that is neither positive nor negative within the samples. This language is identified as simply a sentence describing a particular occurrence within the sample without any positive or negative implications. These sentences are not relevant for the purpose of this study.

Measuring Positivity: By using the guidelines previously outlined that define positivity, the measurement of positivity of language is calculated by sentences. Each time a sentence has a positive affirmation about victim(s) or criminal(s), it will be counted towards the percentage of positivity in the sample as described above. Any mention of mental health and its relation to the criminal is positive as this pushes the negativity of the event onto the illness, not the criminal. For

example, a sentence describing a criminal as a well-liked person is a positive sentence and counts for one of all sentences of the sample that is positive. Headlines are also included as a part of this count. Positive images will also be evaluated as per the criteria above. If an image projects victim(s) or criminal(s) positively, then it is positive. Positive images do contribute to the overall positivity of a sample but are not measured alongside language positivity.

Measuring Negativity: By using the guidelines previously outlined that define negativity, the measurement of negativity of language is also calculated by sentences. Each time a sentence has a negative affirmation about victim(s) or criminal(s), it will be counted towards the percentage of negativity in the sample as described above. For example, a sentence describing a victim's past affiliation with a gang is a negative sentence and counts for one of all sentences of the sample that is negative. Headlines are also included as a part of this count. Any mention of violence and its relation to the victim(s) or criminal(s) is negative. Negative images will also be evaluated as per the criteria above. If an image projects victim(s) or criminal(s) negatively, then it is negative. Negative images do contribute to the overall negativity of a sample but are not measured alongside language positivity.

Positive Comments: At times, there was commentary from sources outside of the news outlets. Positive comments often were those that were from people that knew or know the victim(s) or the criminal(s) and spoke positively about their character. These count towards the tally of positive language in sentences.

Negative Comments: There was also commentary from sources outside of the news outlets that spoke negatively about the victim(s) or criminal(s). Often times these comments were made from law enforcement or professionals within the justice system. These count towards the tally of negative language in sentences.

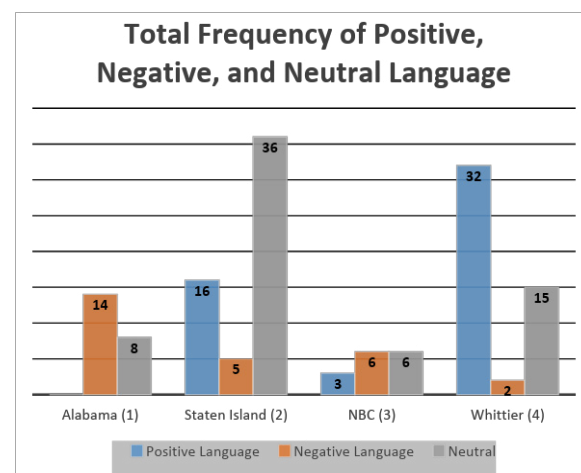
Analysis

Frequency of Negative Language

The results of this study confirm the unjust treatment of black victims by the justice system and American news outlets as they do not fit the criteria of the ideal victim as described by Nil Christie. Both samples that were reporting on black victims have a significantly larger presence of negative language than positive language; one sample resulting in fourteen (14) times more positive language than negative language and the second resulting in two times more positive language than negative language (See Figure 1). Though negative language is the dominant language used in the samples reporting on black victims,

there is no complete absence of negative language in the samples reporting on white criminals. This only reinforces the willingness to justly report on white people, criminals and victims alike, including both facts and emotional commentary, but the same practices are not applied when reporting on black people.

Figure 1



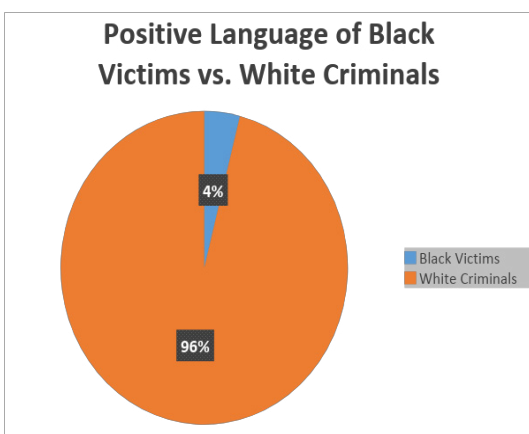
Frequency of Positive Language

The appearance of positive language in both the Alabama sample (2014) and the NBC sample (2012) was significantly lower than the appearance of negative language. The Alabama sample had zero positive language about the black victim proving that black victims are continuously being treated as if they are deserving of being victims of crime and are not deserving of empathy because they are not the ideal victim. Positive language in both the Staten Island sample (2010) and the Whittier sample (2014) were

significantly greater than negative language, affirming the research hypothesis that white criminals would be acknowledged as gentle and kind humans more than black victims, who suffer the ultimate consequence of the crime by being the victim. Figure 1 outlines the results of all positive, negative, and neutral or non-applicable language for each sample.

When calculating the total amount of positive language used in all four samples, 96% of it was directed to the white criminals and white victims in the Staten Island sample (2010) whom were subjects of the reports. Despite the black people in these samples suffering some sort of loss as they are the victims, their worthiness of being mourned in positive ways and being acknowledged as a person who deserves justice for the crime, they have endured is not relevant simply because they are black and are not the ideal victim. Figure 2 compares the results of positive language between the two samples with black victims and the two samples with white criminals.

Figure 2

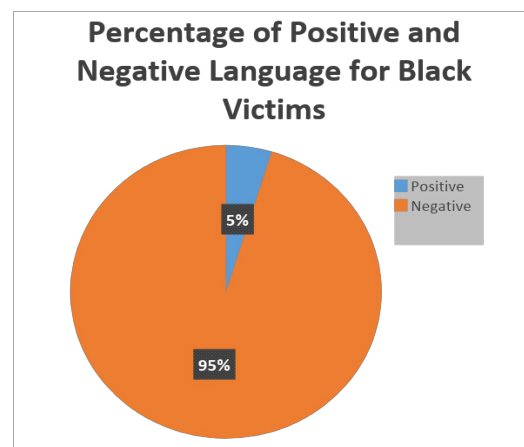


Frequency of Positive and Negative Language: A Deeper Analysis

Though negative language is not completely absent from the samples reporting on white criminals, there is still an overwhelmingly high presence of positive language which is not the case for the samples with the black victims. When totalling both positive and negative language used in the samples with the black victims, an astounding 95% of it was negative.

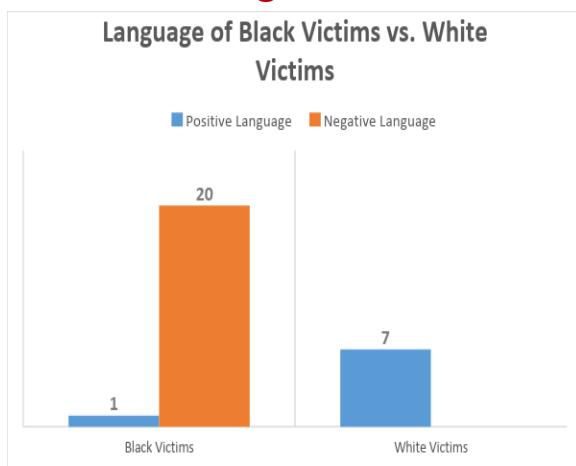
This is concurrent with both research and theoretic hypotheses by outlining the unjust treatment of black people driven by stereotypes and proving that news outlets in the US perpetuate these biases by reporting on black victims in ways that do not present empathy or regard for them. Black victims are not the ideal victim which, in these samples, drives a negative narrative and leaves very minimal opportunity for mourning or compassion. Figure 3 provides results that define the reporting of black victims in these samples to be almost entirely negative.

Figure 3



For further analyses of the racial biases embedded within American news outlets, a comparison between black victims in the NBC (2014) and the Alabama (2014) samples to the Staten Island (2010) sample was conducted. Since there were white victims in the Staten Island sample that were addressed, a comparison between the language used to address both black and white victims will provide further evidence to prove the theoretic hypotheses of the ideal victim. From the results, it is clear that black victims are not to receive proper treatment for being a victim in comparison to white victims. White victims were described by only positive language at 100% positivity and black victims were described by almost only negative language at 20 of the 21 language descriptions for them. Black victims are scrutinized while being victims but white victims are mourned peacefully, as victims should be, without being blamed for their victimization. Figure 4 presents data reaffirming that white victims, even when they are not the main subject of a story, are properly mourned and victimized and black victims are scrutinized.

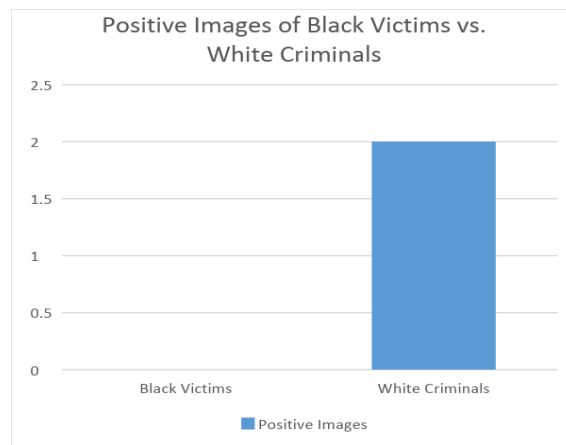
Figure 4



Positive Images

Images of victims and criminals can be positive if they are present to represent them positively and not to incriminate. In the samples, there were no pictures of the black victims present prior to their deaths or at all. Having no pictures present dehumanizes the victims and does not give readers who do not know the victims to properly mourn for the victim and empathise for their victimisation. Furthermore, both samples of white criminals had positive images of them, enticing positive feelings about the criminals despite their heinous acts and even empathizing for them. Figure 5 depicts the comparison of positive image presence between the samples with black victims and the samples with white criminals.

Figure 5



Validity and Reliability

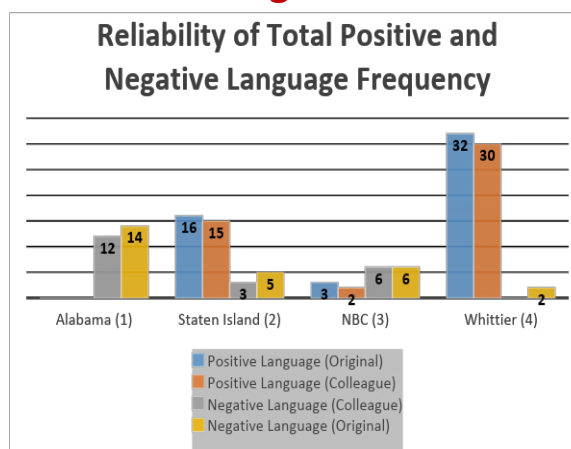
Internal Validity: All results from the study are evaluated by the guidelines and the definitions outlined prior to analyses. The use of Nil

Christie's 'ideal victim' is to confirm the employment of this theory within the sampling frame of this study, and to aid in verifying the hypotheses that black people are excessively demonized on various news outlets, especially more than white people. The conclusions in the study were self-referential, referring to the results of the study and to previous research done in similar areas. This study also provided two scales of measure to contribute to the operationalisation of the hypotheses. The measurement of both language and images in the samples represented were two ways to produce results.

External Validity: The results of this study confirm both Christie's ideal victim and the conclusions drawn from the Black Experience Project. The conclusion from these samples that black victims and the events that led up to their victimisation were described using 95% negative language (See Figure 3) and white criminals in these samples were described using little to no negative language. Through many data comparisons, the ideal victim produced by society of whom is white has been proven to be accurate in its definition. The ideal victim is also being perpetuated by news outlets or "the media" which is also confirmed by the Black Experience Project as a perpetrator of inaccuracies when representing the black community.

Intercoder Reliability: Though the framework of this analysis was clearly outlined, the interpretation of the positivity and the negativity of language and photos can be subjective depending on who is reading the text. This subjectivity was not overarching, and the text presented was not difficult to assign positivity or negativity to, but subjectivity is always possible. When asking a colleague to perform the quantitative analysis of adding up all of the positive and negative descriptions of language, subjectivity became clear as almost all of the new responses were very close to the original research, and only two were the exact same. Though it is clear that most language is understood as either positive or negative, some words can be interpreted either way making it a little less guaranteed that it can be replicated identically. Figure 6 compares the results of the original experiment to the results of a colleague.

Figure 6



Limitations

Though the sampling frame of this study was analyzed comprehensively with the information presented, there were still issues of reliability, replicability, and validity that made this research difficult to properly produce concrete quantifications and qualifications.

Defining Race: Race is typically hard to define and defining the race of the subjects within the sample without consulting these people could be problematic. Though black and white were defined for the purpose of this study, the potential biases that those who are biracial experience or do not experience were not acknowledged. An acknowledgement of those biases could have strengthened the validity of this study and produced more concrete results when arguing that those whole are black truly experience more negative language than those who are white.

Measuring Positive and Negative Language: Calculating the amount of positivity and negativity in language by sentences was the selected measurement for this research. Performing this can produce human error as those performing the study can miscalculate their predictions, and the quantification of negativity and positivity can vary depending on the person who is conducting the research. Though words do have their own known meanings, the interpretation of language is subjective to each person; different words can mean different

things to different researchers. Though the guidelines for this study were clearly outlined, the possibility of misinterpretation is high, conducting research on text that can be subjective effected the reliability and the capability of replicating this research to ensure concrete results.

Sampling Frame and Sampling Size: Though the sampling frame did span over various years and news outlets, it would have been beneficial to have a larger sample with the same variance in news outlets or a larger sample that analyzed the racially biased tendencies of single major news outlet in the US. Having more samples would have strengthened the validity of the research as there would have been more data to prove or disprove the hypotheses. Exploring the racial biases of one major American news outlet instead of multiple news outlets could have also strengthened the validity of the research because the writing style would be consistent enough in the samples to make concrete conclusions.

Measuring Positive and Negative Images: The measurement of the positivity and negativity of images would have been more reliable if each sample had photos to quantify. The absence of photos, though do imply negativity, do not provide the most concrete quantification of a negative or positive image. The use of samples with the presence of photos

would have strengthened the research.

Conclusion

The results of this research almost entirely support the research and theoretical hypotheses.

As suggested by the research and theoretic hypotheses, the notion of an ideal victim was presented in the samples, specifically the Staten Island (2010) sample, and the white victims of this sample were positively communicated and mourned to the public. When evaluating the language associated with black victims in both NBC (2012) and the Alabama Local News (2014), who do not represent an ideal victim, the language was predominantly or completely negative and did not entice empathy within the readers for the victims.

The research and theoretic hypotheses also suggested that white people in similar situations as black people, for example comparing the treatment of a white victim and a black victim in news outlets, would result in white people being favoured sufficiently more than black people. This was proven in the research results when 95% of the language used in all samples to describe black victims were negative.

Though the research and theoretic hypotheses were supported by the research results that prove the presence of a bias in the reporting of black people in news outlets, the absence of negative language when

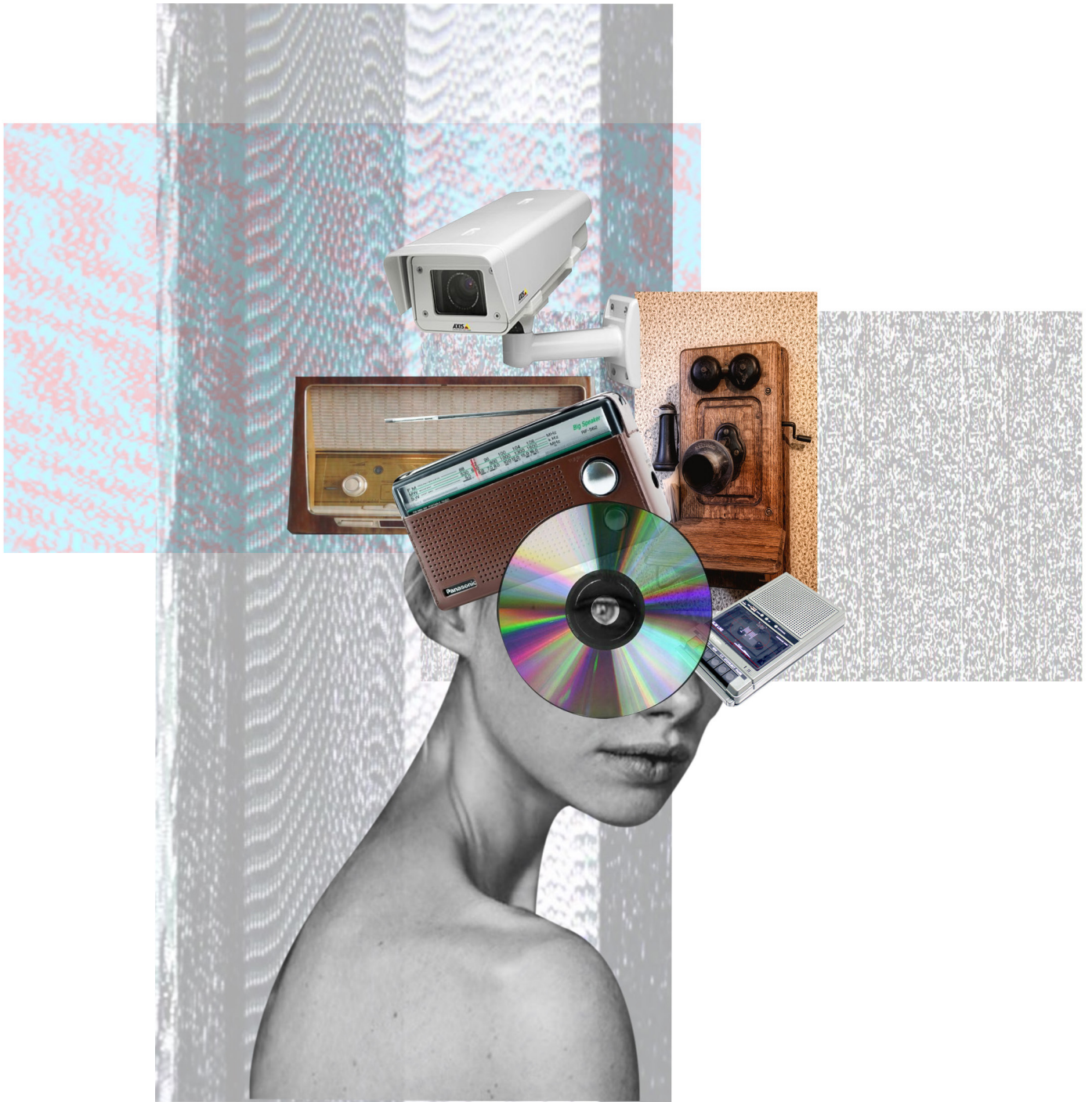
describing white criminals was not present which means complete bias when reporting white criminals could not be proven in this study.

The research conducted in this study only furthered the need to eliminate biases both in reporting on American news outlets and within the criminal justice system framework. It is important to further study these biases in all societal settings to educate those of the importance of fair and just treatment towards minorities.

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White Skin, Black Booties: How “Hook up” and Nightclub culture Glorify and Promote Stereotypically Black Ethnic Characteristics, Body-types and Objectifying sexual Gazes

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MIT 2200 - Mapping Media and Cultural Theory

Kobena Mercer theorized, based on Mapplethorpe’s photographs, that white men objectify black men to satisfy homosexual and “colonial fantas[ies]” (172). Frantz Fanon added that white people subject Blacks by “objective[ly] examin[ing]” and “fetishiz[ing]” them, as well as calling “Negroes ... animals” and “cannibals” (165). Fanon thus claims Blacks don “white masks”--“marry[ing] white women” and tak[ing] up professions that make them “almost white”--to avoid subjugation and blend into white society (167). In modern “hook up culture”, however, sex appeal is a powerful tool in the nightclub, where many seek casual sexual partners. Thus, hook up culture encourages the sexualizing, stereotypically Black characteristics Fanon and Mercer observed. In this paper, I will demonstrate that with their songs, many modern club artists, black and white, actively adopt stereotypically Black characteristics and objectification Fanon and Mercer find subjugating, and connote them as powerful.

Modern club artists willingly adopt Black “ethnic characteristics” animalism and cannibalism, stereotypes with which Fanon claims white people “imprison [passive Blacks]” (165). Maroon 5’s club song, “Animals”, Adam Levine uses animal imagery to describe the strength of his sexual pursuit, singing “baby I’m preying on you tonight / Hunt you down eat you alive / Just like animals ...” (Maroon 5). In Nikki Minaj’s, “Anaconda”, Sir Mix a Lot calls his penis a powerful “anaconda” (Minaj). Thus white and black musicians willingly represent themselves with predatorial animalistic language, connoting animalism as bold and sexually advantageous, unlike Fanon who describes animalistic labels as “imprison[ing]” and “object[ifying]” tools of subjugating a passive “object” (165).

Fanon also observes that white people “batter down” Blacks by reducing them to “cannibal[s]” (165), yet in Ke\$ha’s song, “Cannibal”, Ke\$ha emphasizes the sexual imagery of consumption and confidently calls herself a cannibal, saying “[she] eat[s] boys up, breakfast and lunch / Then when

[she is] thirsty, [she] drink[s] their blood / carnivore animal, [she is] a cannibal" ("Cannibal" Ke\$ha). Nelly Furtado also asserts her sexual dominance as a "Maneater" (Furtado). In this way, Ke\$ha and Nelly's club songs not only willingly adopt an allegedly dehumanizing and stereotypically Black label, but also connote cannibalism as a metaphor for sexual dominance—a desirable feat in a hookup culture—and assert it is a sign of sexual power rather than a tool of passive subjugation.

When analyzing Mapplethorpe's photographs of Black male bodies, Mercer theorized that white people also subjugate "passive" Black subjects by visually "cropping" Black bodies into sexualized, and "fragmented ... parts" (174-5) for "a white [homosexual] male desire" to conduct a "scopophilic dissection of ... [body] parts" (175). Mercer claims objectification is subjugating since "look[ing] ... affirm[s] [the white man's] ... mastery over the ... [objectified] thin[g]" (171-2). And yet, many club songs glorify being sexually objectified and watched. Many modern club artists, actively "crop" themselves into fetishizable parts, willingly "subject[ing] [them]sel[ves] to an objective examination" (165): Nikki Minaj, for example, zooms in on her buttocks in her song "Anaconda", sings "Yeah, he love this fat ass, ha haha! ... / I got a big fat ass" (Minaj);

white singer Meghan Trainor also objectifies herself in "All about that Bass" when she sings, "I got that boom boom that all the boys chase / All the right junk in all the right places" (Trainor); Beyoncé, too, in "Bootylicious", objectifies herself, bragging that "whip[ping]" "[her] ... thighs ... booty" and "hips" "[en]trance[s]" spectators (Beyoncé). Thus while Fanon describes being "dissected under [white] eyes" (167) as a passive act of "examination" that "subject[s]" and "negat[es]" subjects (164) and so desires to "hide" where "no one [would] notice him" (167), artist LMFAO brags about being watched in "Shots", singing "when [the artist] walk[s] in the club / all eyes [are] on [him]" ("Shots" LMFAO), and white singer Stefan Kendal Gordy, in "Sexy and I know it", brags that "when [he] walk[s] in the spot ... everybody ... star[es] at [him]", because "[he] [has] a passion in [his] pants and [he] [isn't] afraid to show it / [since] [he's] sexy and [he] know[s] it" ("Sexy ..." LMFAO). Indeed, while Fanon's dream was to remain unnoticed by the spectators that attempt "mastery" and subjugation through looking (172), Stefan Kendal Gordy encourages "girls [to] look at [his] body ... [and] check it out" so he can show off that "[he] work[s] out" ("Sexy ..." LMFAO), willingly subjecting himself to the sexual gaze.

These club songs redefine

objectification and stereotypically Black ethnic characteristics— which Fanon and Mercer consider subjugating-- as tools of sexual dominance. It is likely this Black fetishization that popularizes Kylie Jenner lip kits (which make smaller lips appear fuller) and leggings (which, as Mercer describes leather clothing, are “invariably black” tights--a buttocks-emphasizing “second skin”-- that “imitat[e] black skin” (176)). More abstractly, perhaps club culture itself is a Black “mask” with which we “imitate” our warped perceptions of blackness.

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The Sustained Myth of the Internet

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MIT 2000 - The History of Communication

In the late twentieth century, as personal computers and the Internet became more affordable and thus more accessible to the public, a discourse regarding the Internet's potential for good or bad proliferated. Though expectations ranged from optimistic to cynical, the general consensus was that the world was amidst a "new Renaissance" (Robertson 1). The Internet was seen as a free space that would democratize information and communication, foster community building and empowerment by allowing everybody an equal opportunity for their voice to be heard (Barlow; Rheingold; Sutton and Pollock 699; Reagle). These supposed revolutionary capabilities of the Internet are its myth, and the dissemination of these myths are its myth-making. The propagation of these myths continues to this day, as evidenced in articles such as "How the Internet Leveled the Playing Field and Gave Everyone a Voice" (Graham; Gutierrez; Callahan; Sarker). Though the ascendancy of the Internet has undeniably changed aspects of our lives such as how we communicate, shop or use our leisure time, evidence supporting the notion of it changing the world is uncertain. This essay will illustrate the evolution of the Internet and its myths, comparing its early promises to the present-day reality,

through exploring the question of why the myths of the Internet continue to thrive today, with the answer lying in the nature of myth itself.

The precursor to the Internet was a communications network called the ARPANET (the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), which was originally conceived as a means for the United States' military to keep intact its command and control structure in the event of a nuclear war (Junger 28). The United States Department of Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) wanted "a data network that was capable of functioning even when parts of the network were destroyed" (Butterfield and Ngondi). Thus, in 1969 the ARPANET:

was created as a system of twenty individual computer stations, or nodes, located at various distances from one another.... Each station used a common language, or control protocol that allowed it to communicate electronically and a transmission protocol that made all nodes equal, as opposed to using a central station hierarchy [like the telegraph and telephone did]. Even if several nodes were destroyed in an attack, messages could still be

transmitted as long as at least one pathway remained.... ARPANET...could reroute critical messages between nodes without any human intervention. (Junger 28)

The system's ability to function without human intervention is a key factor in why the Internet is so revolutionary in the history of communication. As Junger notes, one issue with the Internet's preceding communication networks, the telegraph and telephone, was that they required "interconnection," as "[a] telephone is useless without there being someone to call" and similarly, the telegraph required an interpreter on the receiving end (28). It was a revolutionarily efficient way to ensure a message would get from point A to point B.

In 1972, email was introduced and "forty-six university and research organization networks were added to the system... ARPANET began to grow" (Junger 29). In 1973, "global networking becomes a reality" when university networks in England and Norway connected to ARPANET, "the term Internet [was] born" (Zimmermann and Emspak). The introduction of the Domain Name System in 1983 made navigating the Internet easier by assigning websites names, such as .edu; .gov; or .com rather than the previous numbering system (Zimmermann and Emspak). This new addressing system also led

to the evolution of the Internet "from a medium for simple back-and-forth messages to one capable of providing complex mass-audience content, similar to publishing or broadcasting" (Junger 29). Although "the original ARPANET ceased to exist in June 1990," the World Wide Web went public in 1991 and the number of personal computers grew from 313,000 in 1990 to 56,218,000 in 1999 (Junger 29-30; Bryant).

In the 1990s following the advent of the personal computer and the World Wide Web, Internet usage for purposes beyond research and development proliferated (Junger 29-30; Leiner et al.). As the concept of "surfing the Internet" became popularized, countless written works on various Internet-related topics were subsequently produced from academic, news and independent sources (Zimmermann and Emspak; Morris and Ogan; Kline). A common theme in these written works is the notion of the democratizing potential of the Internet: "the potential to bring enormous leverage to ordinary citizens" (Rheingold xix). In *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Howard Rheingold describes his own involvement in various online communities with an apparent sense of admiration. This is partially due to the fact that he was experiencing a new phenomenon: connecting with strangers he would have never met otherwise on the basis of shared interests (Rheingold 11). However, Rheingold's reverence for

the Internet was more significantly influenced by the fact that he believed its ability to facilitate the formation of virtual communities could lead them to significant political empowerment (xxix). He urges Internet users to understand the potential power he believed they held; “we temporarily have access to a tool that could...help revitalize the public sphere” (xxx). To “revitalize the public sphere” means to re-establish a place for critical and rational debate, where anybody can participate in the formation of public opinion regardless of race, class or gender (Rheingold xxx; Habermas, 49). The notion of the Internet fostering a new public sphere is a noteworthy point which will be referred to later in the discussion of myth, as it is a fundamental aspect of the myth of the Internet to this day. Though Rheingold understood that the Internet’s potential could also be harnessed as a mechanism of control¹, his work nevertheless illustrates a familiar perspective of the Internet in the 1990s: that it had “potential to change us as humans, as communities [and] as democracies” (xxxi).

¹ Rheingold’s enthusiastic urging of users to grasp the power he saw them having access to appears to come from a place of him knowing that the apparent power of the Internet could be harnessed for corporate interests or surveillance; “[t]he cables that bring information into our homes today are technically capable of bringing information out...instantly transmitted to interested others” (xxx).

A more enthusiastic example of this revolutionary perspective is exemplified in an article published by John P. Barlow of the Electronic Frontier Foundation; *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*:

Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.... We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth. We are creating a world where anyone, anywhere may express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity. (Barlow)

This excerpt illustrates the degree to which some felt the Internet challenged traditional power structures and socio-economic class distinctions. Many saw the Internet as a relatively anarchistic, anonymous and open network where “every citizen [could] broadcast to every citizen” (Reagle; Rheingold xxix). Activism was also moving to the digital realm, initiated by the use of the Internet in Zapatista movement in the 1990s (Lee 1). Sutton and Pollock’s

article *Online Activism for Women's Rights* states that "activists working online have recognized the potential of the Internet as a force for social change. Women are using the technology as a form of empowerment, by creating women's venues, resources, and networks for organizing" (Sutton and Pollock 699). Terms such as "electronic civil disobedience" and "cyber-activism" came to be recognized in the context of how computers would revolutionize activism in the digital age (Wray). The early days of mainstream Internet instilled hopefulness in many, and rightfully so. The Internet in its early stages was anonymous, open and relatively anarchistic; however, the present-day reality of the Internet is far from what these 1990s myth-makers envisioned. This suggests that its perceived promise was mythical to begin with.

This examination of the Internet's evolution in the twentieth century demonstrates that the 1990s were the peak of its myth-making. These sentiments of the vast possibilities associated with the ascent of the Internet are what Vincent Mosco refers to in *The Digital Sublime* as "myths" (2). Myths in this discussion are not simply "falsehoods or cons...they are a form of reality" (Mosco 3-13). Mosco explains that myths make sense of the incomprehensible and hence fearful aspects of human life; "the sublime" (23-28). Citing Roland Barthes, he poses that "myths transform the

messy complexities of history into the pristine gloss of nature" by giving "them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact.... In essence...myth is depoliticized speech" (Mosco 30). This effectively means that myths are oversimplified explanations of the world, ideologically swayed yet appearing as common sense (Mosco 29-30). Barlow's aforementioned vision of a democratic future in cyberspace exemplifies Barthes' notion of myth being "depoliticized speech," as his libertarian political values subtly shape his vision of what the Internet should be (Mosco 30; Golumbia). By incorporating the human value of agency, his ideological influence is hidden, and the reader feels these dreams are their own.

It is safe to assume that the reality of the Internet today is not quite what Rheingold, Barlow and the other twentieth-century myth-makers had in mind for a number of reasons. The notion of anonymity for example, is no longer a feature of the Internet today due to the development of tracking and surveillance procedures for both corporate and governmental interests. The use of algorithms to collect Internet user data to increase the accuracy of online advertising has proliferated in the twenty-first century (Carrascosa et al. 1). These algorithms pick up on various features of one's online behaviour, generating distinct profiles for Internet users by associating them with different tags or labels based off of their online activity

for the purpose of online behavioural targeted advertising (OBA) (Carrascosa et al. 1). OBA increases the effectiveness of online advertising by using these profiles to target users with advertisements that correspond to their interests (Carrascosa et al. 1). Despite the fact that the data collected is “anonymous,” these data-collecting bots have the ability to construct an eerily accurate profile of Internet users based off of this information (Norton). These tracking processes assign users “a unique identifier” based off of behavioural characteristics beyond one’s name or identity, essentially meaning that one’s online behaviour profile is inescapable unless they stop using the Internet entirely (Norton).

This lack of anonymity is indisputable upon observance of the case of whistleblower Edward Snowden, a former agent at the United States’ National Security Agency (NSA) who left after witnessing the extent of surveillance being conducted by the NSA, subsequently leaking classified documents that exposed numerous surveillance programs (MacAskill). In an interview with *The Guardian*, Snowden explains that “the NSA has built an infrastructure that allows it to intercept almost anything. With this capability, the vast majority of human communications are automatically ingested without targeting” (MacAskill). The leaked documents describe a surveillance program, “Prism,” which is “the biggest single

contributor to [the NSA’s] intelligence reports,” allowing “the agency [to collect] data from Google, Facebook, Apple, Yahoo and other US Internet giants” (MacAskill and Dance). Through this program, the NSA has access to information obtained from these platforms such as voice and video chat, emails and notifications of activity, such as logins (MacAskill and Dance). Although Prism and other surveillance programs are designed to track “targets” such as terror suspects, other users are tracked “incidentally” for a number of reasons, broadly explained as “the way the technology works” (McLaughlin and Cooper). Furthermore, the Snowden documents reveal that despite being an American organisation, the scope of the NSA’s surveillance extends to numerous other countries (McLaughlin and Cooper; MacAskill). Thus, it is essentially impossible to actually be anonymous on the Internet today.

As stated earlier, an important aspect of the myth of the Internet is the supposed possibility of it fostering a public sphere; a space where anybody can participate in critical and rational debate; the formation of public opinion. The importance of open participation in this is that it allows for different opinions and perspectives to be expressed and thereby considered. This possibility is constrained, if not eradicated by algorithmically imposed phenomena such as filter bubbles and echo chambers (Chandler and Munday).

The aforementioned profiling algorithms used for OBA are also used by search engines to tailor search results for Internet users based on their “ideological perspectives,” thereby reinforcing said perspectives in individualized filter bubbles (Chandler and Munday). Similarly, the echo chamber effect occurs within these filter bubbles and on social media, essentially reinforcing a “group worldview” by continuously circulating it “amongst like-minded people” (Chandler and Munday). This inhibits the possibility of the Internet as a platform for critical and rational debate, a public sphere, as users are ultimately preaching to the choir. An analysis of political discussion activities on Twitter conducted by Johnathan Bright exemplifies this notion, as it found that the further apart groups are on “the ideological scale,” the less likely they are to interact (17).

Despite the reality of the Internet today being far from what the 1990s myth-makers envisioned, it is still portrayed as having the mythical power to foster empowerment and social change (Graham; Gutierrez; Callahan; Sarker). Intriguingly, Mosco notes that strikingly similar mythical prophecies have been made with the advent of new technologies throughout history (1-2, 18-19, 22-25). He recalls that the telegraph was predicted to end socio-economic class distinctions in the nineteenth century; shortly after, the telephone “would lead to an acceleration of

democracy in politics and social life;” and in the 1920s, the radio would allow for “direct democracy” as it “would allow...direct contact with those in power” (Mosco 120, 127, 129). Alisdair MacIntyre’s states; “myths are neither true or false, but living or dead. A myth is alive if it continues to give meaning to human life...and if it continues to render socially and intellectually tolerable what would otherwise be experienced as incoherence” (Mosco 29). Thus, as Mosco asserts, understanding a myth means more than debunking it, it “means figuring out why the myth exists, why it is so important to people, what it means, and what it tells us about people’s hopes and dreams” (29).

The notion of myths surviving for a reason, illustrating the human values of a given time, yet simultaneously being shaped by a common ideology prompts the question of why the myth of the Internet is still alive today. Unlike the radio, “the arrival of advertising and big business” did not kill the myth of the Internet (Mosco 129-130). The answer to why this is the case, as well as why the myths of new technologies throughout history were so similar, lies in the ideological aspect of myth. Mosco’s historical analysis of technological myths demonstrates that myth-makers often have something to gain from the myths they create (123, 127, 128). The president of General Electric, which owned the Radio Corporation of America, saw “radio “as a means for

general and perpetual peace on earth”” (Mosco 128). The Electronics Industry Association “saw cable TV as leading a revolution that would transform society” (Mosco 138). It is no coincidence that these mythical technologies have all been commodified in some sense. Myths reflect human values as well as certain ideologies. The sustained myth of the Internet is that it gives users agency and potential to improve the world. Who would that not appeal to? In reality, the Internet gives users an illusion of agency, whether it is through having their opinions reinforced through echo chambers and filter bubbles or through the feeling of validation. The same revolutionary claims have been made for centuries, yet to be fulfilled. The myth of the Internet is sustained because if more people use the Internet, there is more information to be collected by algorithms and sold to advertising companies, more of a chance that users will spend money online, more customers for Internet providers, computer and smartphone manufacturers. In other words, the myth of the Internet is sustained because it serves the interests of capitalists, as capitalism values profit above all else. Myth of the Internet gives us an illusion of agency, but we do not see how limited our agency truly is.

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A Mental Health Analysis of Pixar's *Inside Out*

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In 2015, Pixar released *Inside Out*. The film was immensely popular amongst audiences—both young and old. The animated film takes the audience into the mind of a young child named Riley as they struggle with mental health for the first time their life and comes to find out more about their identity. Throughout the film, Riley learns more about their mind and that balance is key in maintaining emotional stability. This film takes a brilliant and light-hearted approach at discussing mental health that makes it approachable to audiences of all ages.

In *Inside Out*, topics of gender representation and the culture of mental health are well represented through supportive communities that do not shun Riley for their differences. Although there are possible areas for improvement, the film effectively depicts how one can care for their own mental health and how people can care for the mental health of someone in their own community.

Before discussing the two topics at hand, it is important to analyze the film as a whole; *Inside Out* does an amazing job at

presenting mental health through the lens of the mind rather than the brain. The key point here, is that in suggesting that mental health has to do with the mind, the filmmakers do not play to the fallacy of mental health being shaped by any sort of brain chemistry or genetic predisposition. Mental health is entirely shaped by nurture and is not shaped by nature as some people used to, and still do, assume to be the case (Collier 1994). There is not a single moment in the film where the filmmakers even begin to allude to the possibility of mental health being caused by nature. This is commendable because the media, and Hollywood in particular, all too often play-up the idea that mental health is somehow biological.

The most under-appreciated aspect of this film, however, is the way the filmmakers make mental health an approachable topic for people of all ages and backgrounds. The animation allows for young children to enjoy the film without having to try and understand the deeper meanings. All the while, adults are also able to enjoy the film and grasp at its more complex topics that deal with gender

identity, gender representation, and the culture of mental health in North American societies.

In addition to the many layers of *Inside Out*'s plot that people can choose to analyze at their leisure, this film is not presented way that would trigger people with existing mental health diagnoses like depression. This means that *Inside Out* can potentially act as a way for people with depression to illustrate to how they feel to their loved ones. Similarly, to the average viewer, Riley seems like a typical young girl. Upon further reflection, it can be seen that their experience and identity might not simply be that of a young girl, but rather someone who might not fully identify as female. That is truly the brilliance of *Inside Out*; it has so many layers and how one chooses to view it can provide them with a completely different experience while watching the same film.

Throughout the film, Riley is never shunned by their community or by their parents. This is not always the case for people living in Western countries. Riley's parents' depict a constructive way people struggling with mental health can be treated without being shunned by their communities. Often, people who struggle with mental health in non-Western societies are better supported by their communities than people in

Western societies (Borges 2017). For example, in the documentary *Crazywise*, people in the African communities are nurtured by their peers rather than stigmatized (Borges 2017).

Mental health care often starts with the people closest to the individual struggling with mental health. Riley's parents thus can be catalysts for Riley to seek help from a mental health care professional; most health care professionals agree that this would be the ideal scenario (Corrigan, Druss, and Perlick 2014). Parents typically find it difficult to talk their children about their struggles with mental health because they worry that their child may actually be struggling with their mental health and could see this as a fault of their parenting (Liegghio 2017). Riley's parents care for her in a way that they feel comfortable, but do not actually try and have an open conversation with Riley about her mental health. This is a conversation that would have been beneficial to see in the film, as it would de-stigmatized the practice of having open conversations about mental health with loved ones.

Furthermore, the culture of mental health is well represented since the audience sees that people suffering with mental health are not necessarily outsiders. They can be average children like Riley or

even highly successful professionals. In a way, this does de-stigmatize people struggling with their mental health (Pinfold et al. 2005). However, this is also a double-edged sword. It can be problematic because it may illustrate to viewers that Riley's struggle is rather common for normal people to face, but the struggles of people who often end up living on the streets are uncommon (Harper 2005). This is due to societal misconceptions of the homeless. For example, growing up many children are told not to interact with people on the street that look like something may be wrong with them; in some instances children are even told to walk to the opposite side of the street to avoid possible altercations. As a whole however, it was beneficial to illustrate to the audience that people struggling with mental health can be otherwise very normal and productive members of society.

The gender representation in *Inside Out* is one of my favourite parts because it was not something I took note of upon first watch since it was done so naturally. The essence of the gender representation lays in the gendered representation of emotions. For Riley's parents, the mother has only female characters to represent her emotions and the father has only male characters to represent his emotions. Riley's

parents are thus cisgender. But Riley's gender is more open for interpretation – and as such, I purposefully used gender-neutral pronouns to describe Riley throughout this paper.

Riley has emotions that are represented by both female and male characters – Disgust, Joy and Sadness being portrayed as female whereas Anger and Fear are portrayed as male in Riley's mind. From this, there can be a few assumptions made. Firstly, Riley does not conform to a gender binary; they are either transgender, gender queer, or simply gender non-binary. Secondly, this was a sort of unconscious portrayal. Maybe Pixar simply wanted to make the emotions have more discourse that required characters of different genders. The conclusion that I think makes the most sense, it is a mixture of both theories. Pixar is one of the world's best animation studios with a notoriously keen eye for detail; they could not have unconsciously chosen the genders of Riley's emotions. My belief is that Pixar wanted to show children that it is okay to not conform to societal norms of gender. Pixar did this in such a way that it went unnoticed to people who did not pay enough attention to the clues that Riley was not cisgender.

Another clue that Riley may not be cisgender lies in their

memories; the things that the plot of the movie is based upon. Their memories are very gender neutral. In fact, one of the earliest memories the audience sees is of Riley playing hockey.

It is amazing that children can be exposed to characters that do not necessarily conform to gender binaries because it may serve as a way for them to see themselves in the movies they choose to watch. Just as society advocates for more films to have racially diverse casts, society should also advocate more for films that incorporate gender identity, mental health, and the struggles of both. Ultimately, *Inside Out* was a pleasure to watch and the aforementioned ideas that Pixar incorporated into the film enhanced my viewing experience.

In *Inside Out*, gender representation and mental health are brilliantly illustrated. *Inside Out* can serve as a medium for people to show their loved ones how they may feel if they are struggling with their gender identity or mental health.

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Prison Life from the Mouths of Prisoners: The Humanization of Incarcerated Folks in *Ear Hustle*

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The medium of radio is returning its former golden days with the unlikely help of iPods and cell phones. Podcasts, downloadable audio shows, are surging in popularity: a recent report from *The Canadian Podcast Listener* estimates that 10 million Canadians over the age of 18 have listened to a podcast in the last year (5). And the recent podcast *Ear Hustle* is making good use of the medium's intimate nature and reliance on the spoken voice to shed light on the lives of prisoners inside prison. *Ear Hustle* empowers San Quentin State Prison's incarcerated men by transforming them into storytellers with important opinions and stories with their own distinct voices. The popular podcast deftly navigates the prison's tight information regulations and uses the conventions of audio podcasting to demystify prisons and push the private issues of prison life directly to its listeners ears. This analysis focuses on the first season of the podcast to best showcase its ability to move prison life into mainstream attention even when faced with the prevalent myths surrounding prison life.

Few people know the realities of prison life as well as the

incarcerated folks themselves. The inner workings of the prison system are so opaque to those on the outside due to strict visiting policies, tight-lipped information officers, and the prison walls themselves. The prison, as Charlotte Bedford writes in *Making Waves Behind Bars*, "remains a mysterious and mythologised space" (129). This myth of the prison is built up, in part, due to a lack of critical engagement or examination of prison life from an insider's perspective. Michelle Alexander calls out the typical crime drama in *The New Jim Crow* as media that focuses on "individual stories of crime, victimization, and punishment, and... are typically told from the point of view of law enforcement" (Alexander 59). Looking at the prison from a perspective of power like that of a guard or a warden helps the prison shroud itself in an institution fog and avoid close examination. Prisons are home for so many Americans, but media rarely investigates what life is like inside that home from a resident's perspective.

Enter *Ear Hustle*, a podcast that promises to take listeners inside California's San Quentin State Prison. *Ear Hustle* is a collaborative podcast

that is co-hosted by Earlonne Woods and visual artist and prison outsider Nigel Poor. Antwan Williams and other incarcerated folk work in San Quentin's media lab to record interviews, mix sounds, and produce the podcast. Poor has stated that *Ear Hustle*'s goal is "to make people feel heard and visible, and to garner interest for what happens to people once they're inside prison" (Wade). The podcast's first season delves into topics like living with a cellmate in their four-foot by nine-foot cell, experiences in solitary confinement, and grappling with dying from old age in prison.

But Woods and Poor also provide a space to scrutinize the prison system by telling stories about a hunger strike, exploring the personal effects of the three-strikes law, and sharing stories of personal growth and evolution over life sentences. Much like Angela Davis' *Are Prisons Obsolete*, the podcast aims to "encourage readers to question their own assumptions about the prison" (11). The podcast launched in June of 2017 and quickly rose to the top of iTunes' podcast rankings and exceeded 1.5 million downloads one month after it launched (Entertainment Close-Up). The podcast is currently half-way through its third season.

Ear Hustle makes its focus clear once inside listeners are inside the prison walls: they're there to be the average listener's "ears into what life is like for millions of Americans

serving time" (Misguided Loyalty 03:28). This truthful and intimate portrayal of prison life opposes traditional crime narratives that involve prisons and their occupants. *Ear Hustle*'s storytellers are introduced by their names, not their crimes or sentences, when commenting on the day-to-day realities of prison life. This small detail helps listeners rehumanize the voices of incarcerated folk so that they can hear them as people who happen to be in prison rather than just stereotyping them as prisoners. And as Van Jones says in the last few minutes of the 13th, humanizing these voices contributes to their social decriminalization (1:34:54). The incarcerated voices of *Ear Hustle* are brought out into the daylight and made human through first person storytelling.

Storytelling from inside the prison is an essential element of *Ear Hustle* and makes up most of an episode's content. After their introduction, San Quentin's incarcerated men relay their prison experiences in their own words and their own voices. The incarcerated men are transformed in our minds from prisoners into Walter Benjamin's storytellers. Benjamin's storyteller relays his personal experience to others and thus makes the story "the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (87). There's a kind of merging that takes place between the storyteller and the listener that links the two through shared stories.

Strangers who tell stories to each other won't stay strangers for too long. Benjamin recognizes that a secondary effect of nineteenth century bourgeois society is "to make it possible for people to avoid the sight of the dying" (Benjamin 93). San Quentin's stories thus challenge this societal alienation by sharing stories about incarcerated folk's experiences and putting listeners in direct contact with their voices.

But the stories told in *Ear Hustle* wouldn't fit perfectly with Benjamin's preferred stories. Benjamin strongly believes in a link between hearing a story being told and seeing the gestures and motions that come naturally when a story is told enthusiastically and truthfully. Storytelling is a craft, and that craft must take place in person for the full emotional transfer to take place (Benjamin 108). San Quentin's stories, unfortunately, can't easily be told in person unless you're already in the prison itself. But *Ear Hustle's* producers have made full use of podcasting and audio reporting conventions to circumvent the need for a physical storytelling experience.

Podcasting, much like radio, relies solely on audio to evoke emotion and tell stories. An NPR guidebook on producing stellar audio content explains that audio storytelling is so powerful because word choices and vocal intonation are so integral to conveying feelings (Kern 2). *Ear Hustle* makes full use of studio microphones in San Quentin's media

lab to capture every detail of each interviewee's voice. Incarcerated men's voices are the only thing that leave the prison, so they need to be dripping with vocal energy and emotion. Most of the podcast's background music is created in prison, including some original songs that were recorded out in the yard and played in question and answer episode "Catch a Kite." Woods and Poor consistently find poignant storytellers and audio-makers who are eager to share their stories and talents with listeners outside of the prison walls. As the guidebook recommends, the hosts "put a lot of time and effort not only into finding the right people to interview, but also into... encouraging them to speak fluently and colorfully" (Kern 48). *Ear Hustle's* ability to capture the full quality of interviewees voices helps reel in listeners who might be put off by poor recording quality or inarticulate stories.

The prison system is brimming with unique sounds and anecdotes that help listeners visualize the realities of everyday prison life. But whether those sound bites and stories can make it past the prison's censor are another matter. *Ear Hustle* faces the constant approval of San Quentin's public information officer Lieutenant Sam Robinson. An NPR reporter writes that an information officer's job is to "provide accurate information to reporters in a prompt and comprehensive manner," though carrying out this job often gets in a

reporter's way of asking tough questions (Kern 53). Robinson takes a bit of a different role as he screens and verbally approves every episode in the last few minutes; his voice becomes quite familiar as the season progresses.

Later in the season, Robinson appears in a short segment in the episode "Catch a Kite," where he talks about the issue of censorship in relation to the podcast:

"It's a collaboration. It's making sure from the public safety side that there are things that don't exit this prison that would harm people here within our facility, other facilities in the state of California, or even people outside the walls" (22:57).

Ear Hustle's co-host Earlonne Woods then mentions that Robinson hasn't rebuffed him on any of his podcast topics or stories. Robinson's transformation from the censoring public information officer into approving collaborator builds trust between listeners and prison officials. Their relationship also fosters an environment where *Ear Hustle's* hosts feel comfortable tackling challenging topics, so long as they keep storyteller's safety at the forefront of their work.

Ear Hustle is focused on preserving the individual storyteller's safety while providing them with a space to question the prison and talk freely about prison life. The podcast fosters a sense of storytelling from the

ground-up in a strikingly recent example of Augusto Boal's practice of creating theatre of the oppressed. Boal's goal is to "change the people – 'spectators,' passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action" (Boal 122). The typically powerless incarcerated person is given the power to take control of the theatrical narrative – the podcast script, in this case – and thus practice a revolutionary power shift. It can be incredibly powerful to have so many listeners resonate with your personal story when it hasn't been acknowledged before. Boal adds that "the theatrical experience should not begin with something alien to the people... but with the *bodies* of those who agree to participate in the experiment" (Boal 127). *Ear Hustle's* revolutionary truthfulness stems from its storytellers drawing and speaking from their lived experiences in the prison.

For example, frequent yard talk segments take Woods and Poor out to the prison's yard to conduct short, informal interviews with nearby incarcerated folk. In "Catch a Kite," yard-goers are asked what they would change about prison system. One man says that he would change sentencing structures, suggesting a world where "men could get out once they have shown that they've made the necessary transformations to no longer be a threat and danger to society" (12:25). This sort of imagining falls in line with Boal's belief that the

oppressed are in the process of making their worlds and will constantly question what they see as wrong and unjust: “The oppressed classes do not know yet what their world will be like; consequently their theatre will be the rehearsal, not the finished spectacle” (142). *Ear Hustle*’s inclusion of this unnamed man’s desire for sentencing changes extends his reimagining of the world to outside listeners through the power of storytelling.

Ear Hustle could be taken as a rehearsal for prison reform from the inside. But the podcast works on multiple levels of activism and is already affecting the American prison system and aiding in its demystification. Charlotte Bedford’s *Making Waves Behind Bars* highlights that prison radio producers develop critical computer, literacy, numeracy, teamwork, and communication skills (129) when producing shows. And *Ear Hustle*’s power as a popular podcast extends its effects outside of individual skill building. The podcast will be broadcast for the first time in all California state prisons starting with the third season (Wade), bringing

the podcast’s humanizing message to fellow incarcerated folk who might need to hear it the most. Most recently, Earlonne Woods’ 31 years to life sentence was recently commuted based on his work on *Ear Hustle*. The judge highlighted his ability to “educate, enlighten and enrich the lives of his peers at San Quentin and

the many, many people who listen faithfully to *Ear Hustle*” (Meyers and Ulloa). Woods’ work on *Ear Hustle* is creating ripples of change in his own life, in his own prison, and in prisons across California.

Ear Hustle’s ripples will continue to spread out in prison systems and in the minds of everyday listeners on the outside. The prison is demystified when the prison’s public information officer releases episodes and when listeners then tune in to hear San Quentin’s personable storytellers talk about prison life. The mythical walls of the prison are being removed, brick by brick, through *Ear Hustle*’s powerful audio storytelling.

2032 words without works cited, 2280 with works cited.

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THE RENAISSANCE



SAYERS, THOMAS



SAYERS, THOMAS



Fergus



On the Nature of Nature's Freedom of Speech: Reflecting on *The Marvellous Clouds*.

Thomas Sayers

MIT 3955: Communicating Climate Change

Nature's messages are hard to ignore when you live in the forest city. But I'm beginning to see that nature is not always as natural as we think it is. I want to explore what it means for humans to communicate with nature when it's unclear if what we're interacting with is truly natural. If we ever want to wholly communicate with nature and the environment, we need to understand how restricting nature affects the stories and screams that they can omit. I'll work through John Durham Peters' introduction to *The Marvellous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* while weaving through my experiences with the Arthur Ford Nature Park from the past and present to show why a philosophy of nature needs to address how humans stifle nature's messages for our own needs.

I strolled a few blocks over to the Nature Park before writing this reflection; I wanted to see the trees and hear what they had to say with my own eyes and ears. I'm familiar with the schoolyard park; I was a student at Arthur Ford from kindergarten through grade eight. But in all those lunch recess visits, I had never wondered what the park, the willow

tree, or the wheat patch might be trying to tell me.

I have had so many good memories of picnicking and playing hide-and-seek between the tree trunks. But tonight, the nature park seemed more like a nature morgue than the oasis of wilderness that I remember so well. I felt alienated while reading the little silver biological identification plaques hanging from the trees; the signs identified which kindergarten class or dead teacher that tree was thanking or memorializing. The essence of nature that I fantasized about though out my childhood seemed so restricted, this restriction said more than any of the trees could have. As Peters writes, "Media are not only devices of information; they are also agencies of order" (1). I could almost feel the power imbalance between what the trees would really like to say and what people would like them to say.

The signs forced me to view the tree as an object with a scientific name or a memorial purpose rather than a living being with its own voice and message. The signs and their meaning are external to the tree, but it's the prevailing message that I took

away. And I don't know if I'm comfortable receiving this message because something about it seems so phony and disingenuous to the subject; the trees did not speak for themselves for there was no need, they had already been spoken for.

The conversation around freedom of speech brims with questions about this power imbalance. Who has the right to speak their truth? Whose messages should be controlled or repressed because they could be dangerous or hateful to other people? Freedom of speech allows us to see media as both communicating messages and as a system for controlling the content of messages.

Humans speaking for the trees is integral to the construction of the park as a space for interacting with mediated and restricted nature. The nature park is an infrastructure for the safe consumption of the intricate, tangled mess of life that comes to my mind when I think of nature. Peters acknowledges the inherent falseness of so-called nature: "Nature, understood as something untouched by humans, only exists on earth where humans have chosen to set it apart as 'natural'" (1). Arthur Ford might have a "nature" park, but where else in the world would you see nature arranged, splayed, and pinned-down occurring naturally? Arthur Ford has constructed the basis for a very one-sided conversation between nature and visitors.

But nature's messages are dangerous, and perhaps that's why we need to order their existence and control their messages. Peters writes about the dangers of encountering another being and hearing them earnestly speak their truth: "there is no site riper with danger and embarrassment than the presence of another person, and civilization is the long story of efforts to negotiate such dangers" (6). I think Peters should have extended this feeling of danger to interactions between humans and nature too. Nature has some scathing remarks for humanity, or at least they must, otherwise why would we go to such lengths to deny them a voice? I bet the willow tree would hurl insults and questions to me if I paid any attention to what was being said behind its silver plaque.

I don't think that there's very much communication taking place in the Nature Park. There's lots being said, for sure, but I think communication implies multiple parties respectfully listening to one another, even when their messages might make us uncomfortable. Nature is stripped of its freedom of speech in the Arthur Ford Nature Park. Parks, in this sense, are an affront to nature. They control and constrain the trees and their messages while claiming to have a deep connection to the earth, at least more so than other urban spaces. They offer up a space to commune with nature while stopping any good and productive conversation from taking place.

And I want to see the trees fight back. I want to see them try their absolute hardest to say something of their own creation despite our attempts to speak for them. I want to see them grow outside of the strict lines that we've imposed on them. But nature's need to communicate freely comes secondary to our human need to paint ourselves as glorious preservers and advocates for nature. We need the signs in the nature park because we've lost the ability to truly engage with nature

I do see trees in the nature park. I see butterfly flower fields, a patchy community garden, and a crab apple orchard. I see and experience nature in the sense that I see living beings that are green, but I experience these green living beings in their most palatable form. I wouldn't feel comfortable saying that I received any personal messages from the trees or the shrubs or the flowers themselves. Instead, I received an imposed message more from the people who created and maintain the park. And I felt that receiving this false message violated nature's right to speak for itself and to simply exist.

Maybe the Arthur Ford Nature Park will grow over one day. Maybe its plants will grow strong roots that become too strong to control. Maybe rust will overpower the shiny, metal, oppressive signs and we'll truly be able to hear nature in its own words. Or we'll be able to try to listen, at the very least. Until then, I think there's so

much humanity in my nature that it any chance of truthfully communicating with natural nature is dead where it stands. Perhaps I'm too afraid of what nature would say, given the chance, to really want anything different.

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A Drug Called Tradition: Settler-Colonial Legacies, Land, and Canadian Multiculturalism

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MIT 3935 – Race, Ethnicity, and Technology

“We dance in circles growing larger and larger until we are standing on the shore, watching all the ships returning to Europe. All the white hands are waving good-bye and we continue to dance, dance until the ships fall off the horizon, dance until we are so tall and strong that the sun is nearly jealous. We dance that way.”

Sherman Alexie, “A Drug Called Tradition”, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fight in Heaven* (pp. 50, 1993)

An excellent precedent to contemporary Aboriginal issues, the writings of Sherman Alexie illustrate the countless afflictions that North American Indigenous peoples have lived under for centuries: poverty, racism, and isolation – to name a few. To the Aboriginal people of Canada, “Land is life” – an ancestral spiritual belief that points to what has entrenched their struggle so deeply in a yearning for liberation: they have lost their greatest asset, their provider, and their home (Wolfe 2006, 387). Canada, Kanata, or Turtle Island is a land mass that is now home to 37 million people, only 4.1% of which are Aboriginal (Statistics Canada 2011). Alexie digs up the weeds of cultural genocide so long neglected by time and places them in the present, removing the ignorance of history and setting discourses of settler-colonialism and genocide alongside “informed past, present, and future formations of race” (Bonds, Inwood 2016, 715-716). However, now we must

attempt to do the same as Alexie, forcibly excise settler-colonial legacies from deep within the pages of Canadian history and place them in the present. Racism has been and continues to be conjured in the project of on-going settler colonialism, both culturally and economically, through the systemic exploitation of Canada’s Indigenous peoples to create material conditions that reproduce the means of white supremacy. The following will situate these issues in discourses of race, multiculturalism, genocide, and supremacy while detailing the systemic impoverishment of Indigenous peoples through settler-colonial policies that continue to shape the past, present, and near future. These will be specifically exemplified in terms of land: from the initial cultural genocide of Aboriginal peoples, to the environmental degradation of the tar sands; and a detailed example of racialized rhetoric at play in the representation of the

Inuit seal hunt. These all exemplify how settler-colonial ideology still dominates the sphere of Canadian identity through an insidious tradition of racial oppression.

Unlike other genocidal epochs, such as the American slave trade, the ensuing settler-colonial invasion, conversion, and mass murder of the Indigenous inhabitants of Turtle Island was legitimized entirely on the basis of land. The only access to wealth the settlers had was access to land, to which the presence of the Aboriginal peoples was counterproductive. Patrick Wolfe writes in *Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native* that the relationship between genocidal acts and settler-colonialism is legitimized through a logic of elimination, “In this way, the restrictive racial classification of Indians straightforwardly furthered the logic of elimination” (Wolfe 2006, 388). The colonists under threat of economic instability were required to use this logic of elimination that created the racialized “Indian” savage through which a systemic racism and oppression that supports the Canadian economy is conjured today.

Furthermore, as settled land became the only means by which the project could continue, the dehumanization of Aboriginal people was necessary for erasing them from the narrative of the colony while upholding white supremacy for centuries to come. Wolfe states,

“Indigenous North Americans were not killed, driven away, romanticized, assimilated, fenced in, bred White, and otherwise eliminated as the original owners of the land but as Indians” (2006, 388). This is the success of the settler-colonial project: to overtake and dominate a New World while eradicating any trace of indigeneity, establishing white supremacy while defining their “ethnically distinct national community” (Bonds and Inwood 2016, 716).

Within the sphere of white supremacy, one pillar of dominance is legitimized through the logic of genocide. This logic works towards the structuring of cultural genocide as a continuing legacy that remakes itself through whatever means necessary in order to establish supremacy. In *Indigeneity, settler colonialism, white supremacy*, scholar Andrea Smith states that, “In fact, they must always be disappearing, in order to enable nonindigenous peoples’ rightful claim to land” (2010, 2), therefore the disappearing of Aboriginal people and their culture is not a chapter in history textbooks but an ongoing project of settler-colonialism. The evaporation of culture through the logic of genocide flattens any Indigenous ownership of land, resources, spirituality and culture which, “Serves as the anchor of colonialism: it is what allows non-Native peoples to feel they can rightfully own Indigenous peoples’ land” (Smith 2010, 2). The permanent suspension of Aboriginal peoples as

ancient, endangered, or extinct has enabled the degradation and desecration of Indigenous culture as a commodity of the past, therefore allowing for settler occupation to continue because *native people have disappeared*.

This picture of ethnic diversity and community, despite being established over 400 years ago, also encompasses what Canada identifies as today: a multicultural mosaic made by progressive immigration policies and a negated Aboriginal heritage that stands behind such accomplishments as the Vancouver Olympics, pow-wows on Parliament Hill, and maple syrup. The uncanny rhetoric of contemporary Canadian identity politics fits hand-in-hand with settler-colonial ideology, highlighting the ongoing legacy of the settler project: “An enduring structure requiring constant maintenance in an effort to disappear indigenous populations” (Bonds and Inwood 2016, 716). The primary motive for the disappearing of Native populations and cultural identity is not acted upon the grounds of race, ethnicity, or religion but on access to territory. To Wolfe, “Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (Wolfe 2006, 388) and this reassignment of land has worked for centuries to cripple isolated Indigenous communities while persisting in their poverty through restricted access to healthcare, education, affordable housing, clean water, and nourishment – all things

the vast majority of white Torontonians would never be denied.

Presently, *the Truth and Reconciliation Act*, among other accounts of residential schools, has become the authoritative voice for Indigenous issues in Canada. However, the TRA has allowed the Canadian government to shape the politics of Aboriginal Affairs into the historical allegory of Wolfe’s “logic of elimination” which operates on both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it has only one objective goal: to eradicate any trace of indigeneity. Positively,

“The... outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations” (Wolfe 2006, 388).

Wolfe’s axioms of positive settler-colonialism exist directly alongside the definition of cultural genocide: both operate on the basis of invasion as a “structure not an event” (388). However, the TRA and other literature composed around Indigenous issues are based on the premise of this fallacy – that the cultural genocide of Aboriginal people is indeed a thing of the past – and once resolved it will no

longer have consequences for contemporary Native relations. An example of this reductive rhetoric is evident in Section 35 of the *Canadian Constitution Act of 1982*, which boasts equal opportunities' and access to essential public services for all "Canadians". Despite this discourse being used to include Aboriginal people as "Canadians", the term works towards a rhetoric of settler culture that encourages a collective, cohesive ignorance while denying any recognition of distinct Indigenous presence and culture.

In 1867, Canada claimed victory over the war for settler-supremacy when the young country officially became independent from the British crown – however the conquest has not stopped there. Once all Native land was successfully seized, the settler-colonial "logic of elimination" had to re-invent itself to ensure that white supremacy continued through the permanent impoverishment and suppression of Aboriginal peoples. Centuries of geographic conquest and seizure of Native land to be exploited for natural resources is one such project responsible for the lack of accessible resources available to Aboriginal communities. In *Neoliberal Settler Colonialism, Canada and the Tar Sands*, Jennifer Preston uses the Canadian crude oil industry to exemplify contemporary settler-colonialism amidst the rise of Neoliberalism where, "Resource extraction projects billed as 'ethical' economic opportunities for all

Canadians obscure and normalise ongoing processes of environmental racism, Indigenous oppression and violence" (Preston 2013, 43). Preston offers a geographic example of the manifestation of such policies on Aboriginal peoples via. The Canadian crude oil giant: Enbridge's Northern Gateway project in Alberta. Their methods of extracting an oil deposit known as Bitumen, from which synthetic oils are produced, requires the devastation of large forests rendering vast expanses of land uninhabitable, virtually poisoning all living lifeforms and endangering those close by. The majority of this land is either inhabited by Aboriginal people or was once their property, however environmental racism persists in erasing any economic value in Indigenous property. To Preston, the project reveals how, "Racism and settler colonialism fundamentally structure contemporary social and economic life, requiring the wider Canadian public, as well as Indigenous Nations, to identify such projects as sites of ongoing settler colonialism" (43).

Projects like the tar sands are just one example of the many permanent fixtures of oppression meant to further enclose Aboriginal people within impoverished conditions that conspire to racialize them. The realm of modern settler-colonialism is occupied by both the Federal government and private industries to regulate the "Indian problem". Similar to gentrification in urban areas of America, the Canadian

government conspires together with large industries to transform Aboriginal reserves into privately owned properties. Preston points to a 2010 resolution by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) that states, “land privatisation would ‘erode our collective rights in our reserved lands’, and ‘impose the colonizer’s model on our Peoples’”. AFN continues by explaining this act is, “a concept that is in direct contradiction to First Nation sacred responsibilities and distinct relationship to our territories’ (Preston 2013, 49). This example points to the never-ending cycle of systemic oppression imposed upon Canada’s Aboriginal people. The direct effects of colonialization enclose them in remote locations that promote poverty while lacking essential services through which they are racialized as *lazy, addicts, uneducated, corrupt*. Private companies and government initiatives alike refuse to acknowledge that these are the direct consequences of colonialism. Their representation of the “Indian problem” has racialized not only the people on these reserves but the land itself, mineral deposits deep in the soil beneath Aboriginal reservations are interpreted as more valuable than the wellbeing of the countless Indigenous communities that rely on the land’s resources.

Not only does the geographical domination over Indigenous reserves signal to settler colonial legacies, it also signifies a white supremacist identity that underlies Canadian

policies. Discourses on race relations specifically related to *white supremacy* are often differed towards American politics, however this tendency points to a larger issue within the Canadian sphere of racial tension: the guise of Multiculturalism. Canada’s growing immigrant population has created the perfect platform for nationalist rhetoric to become centred around Canada’s diverse cultural identity. Rather than sourcing this diversity from the innermost cultural fountainhead of Aboriginal practices so long repressed and institutionalized, multiculturalism was chosen to represent the millions of individuals from countless other countries who are encouraged to uphold their original cultural practices as Canadian citizens. I believe the overwhelming attention towards multiculturalism has even further distanced Aboriginal issues from contemporary interpretation, as “The concept of white supremacy forcefully calls attention to the brutality and dehumanization of racial exploitation and domination that emerges from settler colonial societies” (Bonds and Inwood 2016, 716), the story of Canada’s cultural hospitality furthers the rhetoric of domination and degradation towards its own first peoples.

The ways in which the Indigenous people of Canada are racialized and oppressed are varied, each working through conjured racism to perpetuate conditions that keep Aboriginal people on reserves,

create impoverished and unsafe housing, foster addictions and mental illness at epidemic proportions, and eliminate any opportunity to further their economic situation. A compelling example of how race accomplishes this is seen in the northern communities of Nunavut, where the ancient tradition of the seal hunt strives to keep people well fed while providing Aboriginal people with financial stability and the ability to participate in the global economy through the seal trade. However, over the past 40 years environmental organizations like PETA and Greenpeace have played a large role in the eventual creation of the seal hunting ban in Europe and, “More significantly, the associated drop in public approval of seal products”. This created a massive economic deficit in northern Indigenous communities, a period of suffering dubbed “the Great Depression” by the Inuit people (Randhawa 2017). The exploitation of modern media exposure for the purpose of economically crippling these already unstable communities has sparked a controversy that, “Highlighted the often uncomfortable relationship between animal rights and environmental groups and Indigenous communities who are struggling with profound issues of poverty and deprivation” (Randhawa 2017). Despite a written exemption for Inuit seal hunters, their fragile economy crashed, “In 1983-85, when the ban went into effect, the average income of an Inuit seal hunter in Resolute Bay fell from \$54,000 to

\$1,000 CAD” and “Nearly 18 out of 20 Inuit villages lost almost 60% of their communities’ income” (Randhawa 2017).

All of this went undetected by the masses of media consumers due to the racialization of these communities that denied their right to participate in the global economy – because *they were still allowed to eat seal meat to survive* – a long standing cultural tradition. However, even being able to eat seal meat becomes next to impossible if hunters are unable to make money to pay for the gas, tools, and transportation that makes the seal hunt possible. Inuit activists like filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril have attempted to awaken the white public to the cultural prejudice at play in Northern communities (often portrayed as a Canadian Siberia), especially the settler ideology that racializes Inuit people as savages still living 2,000 years in the past with no need for money or modern commodities. Pictures of Igloos have imposed an immortalized Native presence in northern Canada that perpetuates ignorance and denies them of basic human rights. This narrative is a dynamic example of how Aboriginal people in Canada are constantly subjected to the constraints of the settler-colonial project that interpolates their race (and therefore their humanity) through geographic conquest.

To conclude we must return to Sherman Alexie. The excerpt at the

very beginning of this dissertation describes a vision shared between two boys. Junior tells Thomas he sees him performing a Ghost Dance that resurrects an Aboriginal tribe murdered by small-pox infected blankets – a symbol of settler genocide. The dancing creates a force of overwhelming energy that shakes the Earth and drives the White people from their land. Alexie illustrates the power of cultural identity and the value of tradition in this allegory. However, we are also left to wonder what constitutes as tradition under settler-colonial influence? Before Canadian identity can progress further into its guise of multiculturalism, the traditions of Indigenous people need to be empowered enough to serve as the front runner of the Canadian cultural movement. While reparations like the *Truth and Reconciliation Act* have sparked the first inklings of change, I believe reparations need to exist outside of policy. Indigenous communities should, without question, be economically uplifted and given the resources they need to thrive in order to contribute to this *mosaic* of a country we call Kanata, our village. When Aboriginal communities are thriving diversity is intensified, environmental degradation is challenged, culture is celebrated, and this “drug called Tradition” works to undo the trauma of settler-colonialism and all of its injustices.

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WHAT'S AT STEAK?



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