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The Geopolitics of White Supremacy: A Case Study on Monuments and Monumental Rhetoric

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Abstract

Recent national racist and anti-racist movements tied to the protection or removal of Confederate monuments across the United States speaks to the significance of these multimodal objects in our public memory. This article traces the historically dominant social energy, the cultural commonplaces or topoi responsible for producing, organizing, and animating communities, in Gainesville, Florida—a small college town with a long Confederate history—as it materializes through the creation and recent removal of a local Confederate monument nicknamed “Old Joe.” Exploring how “Old Joe” and similar monuments frame and contribute to cultural topographies as active agents of white supremacy has the potential to enrich national discourse(s) on the Confederacy by better representing our local communities and their situated topoi. At the same time, understanding how monuments create different publics by inducing affirmative or dissonant activity offers an avenue for breaking away from violent historical patterns echoing into the present.

Keywords: Public Memory; Multimodal Rhetoric; Topoi; Community.

Introduction

Rhetoric is not rhetoric until it is uttered, written, or otherwise manifested or given presence. Thus, we might hypothesize as a starting point for theorizing rhetoric that at least one of its basic characteristics (if not the *most* basic) is its materiality. (Blair, 1999, p. 19)

Recent national racist and anti-racist movements tied to the presence, defacement, and/or removal of Confederate monuments have demonstrated the significance behind communities making and remaking the material places and memorial spaces dotting their landscapes. The 2015 Charleston church shooting in South Carolina, for example, prompted cities like New Orleans and Baltimore to remove Confederate monuments from public property (Aguilera, 2020). Reversing course, neo-Confederates and other white supremacists would, two years later, organize the deadly “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the city’s planned removal of a statue depicting Robert E. Lee. And in Gainesville, Florida, the twelve-foot-tall Confederate statue nicknamed “Old Joe” was removed two days after the rally in Charlottesville, joining, according to *USA Today*, a group of around seventy-five Confederate monuments nationwide (Hampson, 2018).

Although more Confederate monuments are coming down—with the most recent wave of removals following the killing of George Floyd in 2020 (Aguilera, 2020)—I am interested as a lifelong Floridian in “Old Joe’s” relocation. After all, every national conflict over Confederate monuments emerges from, takes place within, and contributes toward local geopolitical histories. How can we ever hope to understand macro level trends without first discussing their beginnings in our local communities?

Consider that Gainesville is a settler-colony built on Seminole and Timucua land, and that early settler-colonists used mostly Black enslaved labor to develop the local plantation economy (Kirkman & Branton, n.d.; Ortiz, 2005). Today, the most noteworthy plantation, the Haile Plantation, has been reimagined as a predominantly white wealthy suburb located near the original Haile Plantation Homestead. Transforming a literal plantation into a white suburb would suggest, as Katherine McKittrick (2013) observes in “Plantation Futures,” that “the *idea* of the plantation is migratory” such that a “plantation logic characteristic of (but not identical to) slavery emerges both ideologically and materially” in our political geographies (p. 3). In other words, an anti-Black way of thinking and being is rooted in (for our purposes) Gainesville’s political, cultural, and geographical design, replicating plantation-like spaces. Understanding how this settler-colony is organized around an anti-Black ideology contextualizes our interactions with “Old Joe,” transforming a simple statue or neo-Confederate relic into an active agent of white supremacy.

The goal of this article is to trace the historically dominant *social energy*—the cultural values, beliefs, and experiences responsible for producing, organizing, and animating the life-worlds of different groups of people—circulating in Gainesville, Florida, through the construction and removal of one of the city’s most famous Confederate monuments: “Old Joe.” My aim as a white Jewish newcomer in writing this piece is to better understand how historical ideologies (in this case, white supremacy) rooted in local cultural and geopolitical contexts continue to reverberate materially and symbolically into the present.

Motivating Desires: Rhetorical Energy in Stone

Discourse surrounding public memory and its memorialization typically treats monuments as tools for forwarding narratives or beliefs about people, places, and events for specific audiences or publics (O’Brien & Sanchez, 2021; Sanchez & Moore, 2015; Bednar, 2011; Casey, 2004). To that end, public monuments frame narratives about the past in the present while also ensuring that these narratives are brought into the future. As James Chase Sanchez and Kristen R. Moore (2015) explain in their article “Reappropriating Public Memory: Racism, Resistance, and Erasure of the Confederate Defenders of Charleston Monument,” “Public monuments serve as rhetorical and material renderings of public memory, wherein, as James Young suggests, not only is public memory constructed but events are co-constructed with memories and monuments” (p. 3). In creating monuments, communities both forward and actualize specific narratives by embedding them within the monument’s materiality. Monuments, in other words, are important multimodal actors in preserving and extending public memories.

The idea that monuments have a rhetorical life of their own by materializing our memories and values is not new. In his work on roadside crash memorials, Robert M. Bednar (2011) contends that shrines take on the lives of those they represent through the production of memorial space (pp. 24-5; see also O'Brien, 2020). Edward S. Casey (2004) similarly attributes agency to objects when arguing that monuments do not “merely embody or represent an event (or person, or group of persons)...[but instead] strives to preserve its memory in times to come” (pp. 17-8). For Bednar (2011) and Casey (2004), a monument’s agency or ability to act is often constructed multimodally through the assemblage of different objects such as photographs, written messages, carvings, or even flowering plants in culturally significant locations. We can add to these rhetorical and materialist understandings of monuments by observing that monuments also organize and mobilize social activity, that is, activity that may involve the support or appropriation of public memory by different publics.

Public monuments organize and mobilize social activity by embodying *topoi*—what Ralph Cintrón (2010) characterizes as “storehouses of social energy” (p. 101)—through their claims to both land and power. These *topoi*, the literal and figurative places where people make meaning, such as in a public square or through shared expressions, are sources of *energeia* or physical force in their ability to actualize ““things or [make] them appear to be engaged in an activity”” (qtd. in Olson, 2010, p. 303). Hence, in their claims to a community’s history through their visual and bodily assertion over physical space, public monuments capture and actualize a public’s social or cultural *energeia* by reproducing the “contradictory, collective passions and convictions that constitute a people” (Cintrón, 2010, p. 101). The materialization of a dominant community’s passions and beliefs sparks embodied reactions in viewers through their identification or disidentification with the values being exhorted, such as adorning a statue with flowers or defacing it with paint. Different publics therefore cohere through their shared support of or opposition to public monuments and the value-systems energizing these sites of public memory by adopting specific modalities (e.g., graffitiing)—reflective of their own attitudes and beliefs—for interacting with these monuments.

By embodying a community’s social *energeia*, monuments themselves have agency. After all, as many diverse Indigenous systems of knowledge maintain, individuals do not preexist the material world around them but instead come into being with it (see Gómez-Barris, 2017; Rìos, 2015; Wilson, 2008). Statues create communities by appealing to or challenging our values while, at the same time, our engagement with these statues solidifies their cultural capital as monuments. Because public monuments are co-constructed alongside the ideological narratives they portray (O’Brien & Sanchez, 2021; Sanchez & Moore, 2015), and because these monuments take on the social lives of what or who they are made to represent (Bednar, 2011; Casey, 2004), they become identical to these narratives in ways that induce supportive or dissident activity as determined by an individual’s relationship to the values represented in that narrative, person, or event. We might therefore identify “Old Joe” with the social energy inherited from Gainesville’s early white dominant cultural community.

Because a public’s beliefs, values, and experiences (i.e., *topoi*) are localized in ways that “organize and constitute our [their] imagining of social life” (Cintrón, 2010, p. 101), claims that

a town's culture is identifiable with just one bodily public or institution overlooks the production and reproduction of cultural knowledge at the level of community activity. We might reflect for example that while the Southern Poverty Law Center reported in 2019 that "Old Joe" was the only Confederate monument in Gainesville (see "Whose Heritage?"), residents know that the Confederacy is still memorialized through monuments like university buildings named after members of the Confederacy (Aspuru, 2020) or even the Southern Crosses of Honor marking local gravesites. Nonetheless, "Old Joe" stands out in local public memory, in part thanks to its location and initial reception.

Standing at just twelve feet tall, the copper statue was erected in 1904 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), a neo-Confederate women's group dedicated to honoring individuals who served the Confederacy (see Figure 1 on next page). According to the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the sculpture proclaims the following:

(Front of base:) IN MEMORY OF/THE/CONFEDERATE/DEAD/1861 1865. (Left side:) 'THEY FELL FOR US, AND FOR THEM/SHOULD FALL/THE TEARS OF A NATION'S GRIEF.'...(Right side of base:) 'THEY COUNTED THE COST/AND IN DEFENCE OF RIGHT/THEY PAID THE MARTYR'S PRICE.' (Smithsonian, n.d., n.p.)

The narrative this monument is forwarding alphabetically, visually, and materially revolves around seeing Confederate soldiers—represented by an unnamed soldier in uniform—as fighting to protect the (white) public's freedom, arguing that we, as beneficiaries of their sacrifice, should mourn them as martyrs. This message seemingly resonated with the feelings and convictions of Gainesville's early white public, the group with perhaps the most political power at the time (see Smith, 1973; Ortiz, 2005). According to the *Ocala Evening Star*, the monument was unveiled after speeches by both a well-known judge and a Confederate general to a large crowd that was "highly pleased with it" ("Confederate Monument," 1904, p. 1).

Mapping Gainesville's Social Energy

"Old Joe's" reception, introduction, and placement would suggest that the values we identify with Confederate ideologies are symbolically and materially embedded in Gainesville's cultural geography—its cultural relationship to space and place. This is perhaps not surprising given that Gainesville was established by settler-colonists hoping to expand Florida's plantation economy through Black enslaved labor (Smith, 1973, p. 11) and, later, a Confederate stronghold during two Civil War battles (Ortiz, 2005, p. 5). In fact, just twenty years before "Old Joe's" construction, Gainesville's agricultural economy was predicated on the legal enforcement of Black labor through vagrancy statutes that locked "African Americans into subordinate positions" (p. 53), with the *Gainesville Sun* swearing that "we will be forced to force the negro to work" (qtd. in Ortiz, 2005, p. 53). The call to reproduce the use of earlier forms of Black enforced labor through the letter of the law continues into the present, with the University of Florida benefitting from 156,684 hours of unpaid prison labor between 2015 and 2019 (Rodriguez, 2020, n.p.), although of course not all workers were Black.

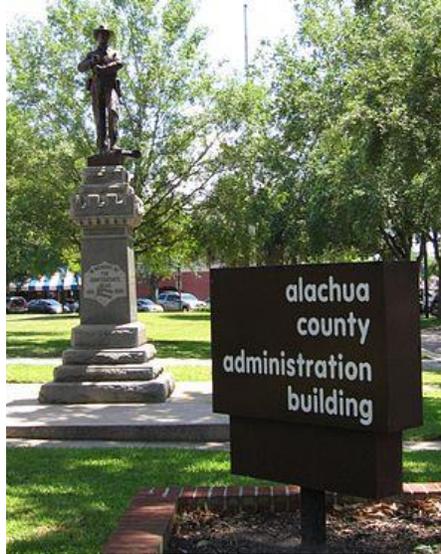


Figure 1: “Old Joe” Standing Next to the Alachua County Administration Building in Gainesville, Florida. Image from [Douglas Green, Wikipedia](#).

Understanding these ideological and material patterns of oppression are important for contextualizing how “Old Joe” and the narratives it materializes are part of what Katherine McKittrick (2011) characterizes as “a plantation logic that spatialized the complementary workings of modernity, land exploitation, and anti-black violence” (p. 951). The statue connects the present with a Confederate past through the colonization of Indigenous land and recurring Black exploitation. “Old Joe’s” domineering presence in front of the county’s administration building dichotomizes the town and its “geographies into us/them,” hiding “secret histories that undo the teleological and biocentric underpinnings of spatiality” (McKittrick, 2013, p. 12). The *topoi* or social energy stored in “Old Joe” in other words is enacted and reenacted in ways that serve to reify its identity as a Confederate monument, tying Gainesville’s cultural and geopolitical landscape to anti-Black geographies in ways that try to limit Black imagination to trauma-centered narratives. These moments of reification occur in both instances of identification, such as when members of the community annually leave wreaths near the statue’s base (Caplan, 2017), or disidentification through protest (see Figure 2 on next page).

Anti-racist groups protested the statue’s presence in Gainesville five months prior to the beginning of the Unite the Right rally (see Figure 2), the event that would ultimately move Alachua County commissioners to vote four to one to return the statue to the UDC (Sarbak, 2017). But because “Old Joe” and the values it represents so strongly resonated with some community members, it was inevitable that protestors would be met by Confederate sympathizers and members of white supremacy groups like the Proud Boys. We might read the moment pictured in Figure 2 as an ideological contest over public memory mediated by the statue’s materiality. But rather than acting only as an object of debate, we should think of the statue



Figure 2: The “Rally Against Racism,” organized by community members protesting “Old Joe’s” presence and met by neo-Confederate counter-protestors. Image from *The Gainesville Sun*.

itself as a rhetorical agent responsible for rematerializing historical trauma through different modes of communication, namely its inscriptions, shape, and bodily presence. Chelsey Carter (2018) writes in her article “Racist Monuments Are Killing Us” that, as a Black woman,

I am reminded [by Confederate monuments] of my ancestors who gave their lives fighting for my freedom, but I am also insulted by the fact that the city and country that I love continues to honor a violent faction of the country that devalued my life. (p. 140)

For Carter, Confederate monuments as rhetorical agents force her and perhaps others to psychologically relive past traumas. And when we couple her observation with the fact that displays of racism directly impact people of color—especially Black people—in ways that are deleterious to their physical and psychological wellbeing (Carter, 2018; Krieger, 2012), it becomes difficult *not* to see “Old Joe” as an active agent in extending plantation violence. “Old Joe” and Confederate monuments more generally not only represent falsely idyllic views of history but also re-present or re-enact these narratives through their physical presence.

As an outgrowth of Gainesville’s plantation history, “Old Joe” framed the community’s understanding of who they are and are not by organizing their values, beliefs, and experiences. And like many of his contemporary counterparts, “Old Joe” would be returned to the UDC without much fanfare two days after the Unite the Right rally (see Figure 3) (CBS 4, 2017). But whereas the defacement of public monuments to the Confederacy may be seen as refutations of how certain histories are publicly memorialized and/or attempts to create new public narratives (Sanchez & Moore, 2015, pp. 3-5), the gentle relocation of Confederate monuments imbued with a community’s memory to spaces like museums or estates owned by the UDC neither uproot nor dramatically shift the social and cultural energy they embody. On the contrary, monuments that materialize white supremacist ideologies need to be torn down,



Figure 3: Pictured on the left are workers readying to remove the monument. The image on the right depicts “Old Joe” safely off his plinth. Images from *CBS 4 News*.

smashed, and destroyed for racist public memories and localized *topoi* to be utterly broken, changed, or fissured.

Although destroying monuments is likely not the violence psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon (1952/2008) imagined could be the source of a “*collective catharsis...through which the forces accumulated in the form of aggression can be released*” (p. 112), we might parallel toppling material agents of white supremacy—whether they be made of stone or copper—with a more subtle version of how colonized subjects affect change according to Fanon (1961/2004): “The colonized subject discovers reality and transforms it through his praxis, his deployment of violence and his agenda for liberation” (p. 21). After all, similarly to how “colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking...[but rather] naked violence” that only yields “when confronted with greater violence” (p. 23), white supremacy operates *writ large* according to the violent erasure and/or subjugation of o/Other bodies. Enacting violence against a Confederate monument creates, to use Sanchez and Moore’s (2015) language, “a palimpsestic memory” that emphasizes counter narratives such that the original, “even if restored to its original state, will never be the same, just as public memory of the monument will never be the same” (p. 5). A Confederate monument like “Old Joe” that is carefully relocated, however, prevents communities from actually and therapeutically challenging the reoccurring murmurs of plantation violence. The act and memory of smashing Confederate

monuments supplants the memorialization of anti-Black violence through its erasure—a refutation of unquestionably racist discourse as well as an invitation for communities to create counter narratives or memories, “form[s] of remembering...that [ultimately] resituates the narrative of the oppressed” (O’Brien & Sanchez, 2021, p. 5).

Conclusion

The cultural and geopolitical relationships that connected Gainesville’s plantation economy to “Old Joe” fit into a larger, national conversation regarding Confederate monuments. But the seeds of this debate were planted in local plantations, where white power structures would eventually come to shape the dominant geographical culture of towns like Gainesville. Mapping the rhetorical and social energy of any cultural community requires a narrowly defined lens informed by local histories and epistemologies. My short analysis of the crossroads between the historical and contemporary narratives and events in Gainesville was only made possible by closely studying these ideological moments as they materialized in a definite, multimodal body.

Just as Sanchez and Moore (2015) call “on rhetoricians to address and engage with the Black Lives Matter movement in new ways, embracing and engaging with public memory and affect as central to the rhetorical moment” (p. 6), I ask that we direct our attention to local rhetorical acts of meaning-making to unmask and challenge white supremacy where it begins: in our earliest public memories. Rather than simple visual and/or textual adornments, local monuments create claims to both land and power that are ideologically and materially memorialized and carried into the future; they not only represent a public’s memory narrative but also (re)materialize its *energeia*. In the case of Confederate monuments, this entails reinvigorating historical violence while simultaneously reaching outward to “organize our sentiments, beliefs, and actions in the lifeworld” (Cintrón, 2010, p. 100).

Although this article only focused on “Old Joe,” he is tied or hyperlinked to other existing Confederate monuments in Gainesville, of which there are many. Therefore, an anti-Black and anti-Indigenous history likely frames community activity and organizing in Gainesville as well as similar college towns. We need to be cognizant of how these ideologies are materialized in our cities and their networked cultural and political geographies, as well as when to raise a hammer to them.

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Images for Inventing and Images to Deliver: Using Visual Rhetoric in Composing Practices

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Abstract

Images hold tremendous, yet underexplored potential for composition pedagogy as tools of invention and delivery. Analysis of post-assignment reflective essays of two assignments in two first-year composition classes reveals that using visual rhetorics as a pedagogic tool can be highly effective in helping students hone their critical composing skills. In one assignment, students formulated questions through images to explore a path of self-driven inquiry. In another assignment, students created visual content to illustrate their prior knowledge and expertise in a topic. In both cases, discussions of critical application of visual rhetoric are pivotal in strategizing research and delivery, and to locating gaps in pre-existing knowledges. Both assignments challenge students to explore and employ visual rhetorics which in turn help students discover, develop, and respond when meaningful curiosity arises (Peterson, 2001; Hocks, 2003). To understand how meanings are constructed, we examine how internalization and externalization, as theorized by Vygotsky, shapes authors' decisions in making meanings through visuals. We argue that alternating between internalization and externalization of meaningful visualization during the research process helps students learn and exercise control/mastery/agency and practice negotiation (Vygotsky, 1997; Bazerman, 2012).

Keywords: Visual Rhetorics; Invention; Delivery; Canons of Rhetoric; Images; Professional writing; Multimodality.

Background of the Study

The persuasive meaning-making potential of text is significantly enhanced when images supplement textual content and when students are challenged to be critical interpreters and creators of visual content. Over the past decade, writing and composition studies have started creating space for students to explore the possibilities of images in the composition process. In a technology-infused writing environment, students can be both content creators and receptors of the textual and non-textual content. For instance, social media composing space gives opportunity for students to compose as well as form ideas/reactions/opinions about text-based and visual content. Available visual information can contribute richly to composition classes when students are challenged to uncover new information by critically analyzing these images. In this article, we use explore the application of visual literacy. We analyze the findings from two Freshman Composition class assignments to examine the affordances and limitations of using visual rhetorics. In the first example, students engage in critically exploring visual content, Images help students delve into questions that they do not know the answer to, leaving space

for self-driven inquiry. In the second, they create visual content to illustrate their prior knowledge and expertise in a topic. In both assignments, visual rhetoric is pivotal in helping them make decisions regarding the course of their research process. Students reflected upon their process in the portfolio assignment. Analysis of the portfolios reveals that visual rhetoric-infused pedagogy can be vital in critically engaging first year writing students.

Instructors can infuse visual rhetorics at various stages of the composition process. Images can trigger and mobilize inventive thinking; visuals can be used to demonstrate arrangement patterns (word clouds); visuals mnemonics can be used for memorization; and lastly, using images in presentations greatly enhances the impact of delivery. Instructors often include visual rhetorics in their pedagogy in ways listed above or in other ways. We think it is important to make the use of visual rhetorics in our pedagogy evident and visible to students. The composing and teaching practices that include visual rhetorics need infrastructures that sustain their creation (Ball, 2004). Ball and Eyman (2015) survey several web-based platforms that may provide some sample infrastructure for using visual rhetorics in composition. It is important to carry forward these conversations and find more ways of including images and visuals in composition.

In this article, we first posit visual rhetoric as central in helping students understand and explore the canons of invention and delivery in their composing process. We outline two assignments and explain the pedagogical approach and then provide the results garnered from our classroom research in which we explore these questions: What do student composers fairly new to a topic gain by interacting with images; How do student composers with fair amount of expertise in a topic gain by expressing with images; what are some limitations and challenges of using the visual rhetorics as a tool for invention and delivery; and what pedagogical modifications might be needed as a result? To investigate these questions, we conducted an IRB approved study in two first-year writing courses where we analyzed reflection essays of student portfolios written after submission of two specific assignments. We identified examples where students incorporated references of the images. These allusions indicated that students understood the effectiveness of using images in lieu of text-based methods of invention (in example one) and delivery (in example two). We looked for indicators of difficulties that students might have faced while using images in invention and delivery. Our findings from these essays helped us contextualize the scholarship in the field that focus on the theory as well as application of visual rhetorics, especially in first year composition.

Scholarship in Infusing Visual Rhetorics in Composition Pedagogy

While discussing the conceptual fundamentals of the application of visual rhetorics, Welhausen (2018) claims that this area of study is undertheorized and subjective. He calls for teachers and students of technical communication to develop commonplace heuristics of visualization that departs from mere concepts of subjective aesthetics and resorts to deeper research-based findings to corroborate the “perceptual principles and rhetorical theory” (p. 133). To Lanham, the rise of the electronic text challenges conventional writing and therefore could be met with

institutional resistance (Lanham, 2010). The discipline of Rhetoric and Composition has begun to acknowledge that images function not only as enhancer of the alphabetic writing but can function as alternative to the written word as both the bearer of knowledge and the persuasive expression of knowledge. In classrooms, we can break down the visual nature of rhetorical acts by asking students to use images at various stages of the composition as the central mode (Hocks, 2003). In a discussion on the role of non-verbal aspects in memory, Reynolds (1989) argues that "(w)riters set up sequences defined not by sound but by space: beginnings, middles, and ends of words, lines, paragraphs, and texts; pages of lines moving top to bottom and left to right; headings, chapters, notes, references, aboves, belows..." (p. 247). This is depicted, for instance, using bullets in the invention process, mind maps in the arrangement process, multimedia in delivery, and so on. These practices are not pathbreaking or novel. Students generally use these tools in class already. These elements are not add-ons or extra in the writing process. Using visual rhetoric in the composition process is an extension of students how students already *envision* in the process of writing.

Beyond discussions related to composition, rhetoricians have theorized and explored how the rhetorical situation, understanding of audience, context, opportunity, and so on determine audience response in rhetorical situations. Bitzer argues that speech is a response to a rhetorical situation and to this, but in a more radical response, Vatz argues that the rhetorical situation itself is determined by the imagination and the art of the speaker (Bitzer, 1968; Vatz, 1973). Flower and Hayes use the concept of rhetorical situation from these two theorists to explore the cognitive process of a writer during the composition process, which, she argues, occurs as a linear series beginning with pre-writing (Flower and Hayes, 1981). Although they have been criticized to have over-simplified the writing process, Flower and Hayes give us a visualization of the composition process. Writing is in a constantly parallel to rhetorical situations. Booth and Davisson (2008), in their article on the visualization of the rhetorical situation of Hurricane Katrina, propose a tangent to the traditional definition and response to rhetorical situation that is applicable to a cultural ambiance that is steeped with multimediated visuals. Keeping pace with how students learn, think, and express in such an ambiance, understanding the impact of visuals and exploration and application of visual is critical to the composition. Consequently, instructors need to use visual rhetoric not simply as supportive teaching tool but as integral and central to the activities and projects. As digital presentation of texts facilitates an easier inclusion and manipulation of visual in the process of composing and interpreting (by the producer and the reader respectively), the difference between the text and the visual is blurring.

We will draw upon our two examples to expand the understandings of visual compositions as knowledge products where visuals can be centered at the beginning and the end. We then analyze how students see visual rhetorics as tools of invention and delivery in a composition class and develop a theoretical framework with further implications and applications in composition pedagogy.

Inventing with Images

In our first-year composition classes, students work on several writing genres: one of them is a letter to an editor and the other is an instructional manual. In the assignment where students write a letter to an editor of a major newspaper, students are asked to choose a current and contested topic or event of international significance. They begin by proposing a topic of interest about which they did not have much information. Students explore and analyze the political maps and images related to this topic or event in news and social media images surrounding that topic. For example, if the student chooses to write about the political or social situation of Iraq, the visual experience of interacting with a map is critical to their knowledge of the geographical situation of Iraq and the surrounding countries that influence the politics. Images also reveal human stories beyond what is covered in news. To get a deeper understanding of the situation, students are shown videos. Students are excited to find viewpoints that they did not know about when they began their research. The information that they procure from the visual content research is largely unknown to them until they have thoroughly researched the topic (Foss, 1994). The learning moment for students, then, is the critical analysis and application of this information: what will they do with the information and how will they talk about it.

In the discussion and the activities, students are encouraged to realize that writing, at any stage, does not need to be in the written words. The deepest impacts are caused by the images that they see and how these images broaden their knowledge and understanding. They cannot have an opinion about Iraq without knowing where Iraq is located geographically and how the geographical location influences what is happening there. Visuals that meaningfully depict multiple narratives of a world situation are accessible quite easily in most student projects. Students respond to their visuals in the form of freewriting without the requirement of sharing with instructor or the class. In these reflections, students document crucial detail that help them get diverse perspectives. Students include a compilation of these free-written journals in their portfolio reflection at the end of the semester. When we analyzed these portfolios, we found that images trigger thoughts, memories, and connections that help students form a deep idea of the issue that they would like to talk about in the letter to the editor. The empathy that visuals can create can sometimes be deeper than words.

Empathy can be a powerful tool in triggering strong responses in students who are encouraged to go deeper into their research. The place of empathy in rhetoric and composition has been explored (Leake, 2011, 2016; Blankenship, 2013, 2019; Lindquist, 2004; Lucas, 2011; Lynch, 1998; Zhao, 2012; Prebel, 2016) and their pedagogical value has also been discussed. We studied the application of these important analyses in a composition classroom to examine how reason, emotions, and judgments shaped students' interest in delving further into images to conduct deep research in their topic of choice. Leake (2016) writes, "Empathy can be a means of invention, a heuristic, a way of considering audience and situation, an instrument of revision, and a tool for critical analysis. Teaching empathy as rhetoric attunes us to its all of its possible uses and liabilities as a means of persuasion" (p. 3). He goes on to argue that images are important in the inventive process because images function as strong tools of rhetorical empathy that push writers to raise questions triggered by their emotion and reason.

The deliverable for this assignment is compact but rich. Based on research made through the exploration of visual content, students write a 250-word letter to the editor of a real newspaper (paper or web-based, national or local). These letters by young writers of an impressionable age are socially conscious and extremely powerful. Students began the project from a state of not knowing anything about the topic to a state of being advocates and passionate responders of a global issue. Topics of letter included the push to strike Iran and the military situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The variety of visuals to which they are exposed are responsible for their interest in exploring deeper. Several students belong to a visual-content-driven generation of Instagram natives. For them, learning is enhanced by the use of visuals. The quality of projects demonstrates that images function effectively as core in the invention process.

In the portfolio reflections, students wrote that images intrigued them and lead them to further critical explorations in order to get the bigger picture. Images can lead to a social response deeper than text. This quote from a portfolio from one student summarizes the general pattern of responses from students: "If children from a young age see pictures and read about other parts of the world it would not only give children the knowledge of knowing where countries and where different kinds of people live, but also give a different view. This extra knowledge would also subliminally (sic) end the ignorance of not knowing." Student responses showed that visuals draw out empathy. The reflections reveal that images related to the history, geography, and current situation lead to students questioning their pre-existing knowledge and impression of the topic and lead them to exploring deeper to revise those knowledges and understandings.

Post-assignment reflections reveal that images triggered empathy as a motivator for going deeper in research. Images can have multiple interpretations; peaked curiosities can be quenched with more image or texts-based research. Words provide ready-made perspective on a topic whereas images provide potential for a multitude of perspectives. Although text-based sources ultimately were major sources of information in almost all projects, images as a starting point of invention lead to the urge to explore further. In the next section, we will describe how another assignment used visual rhetorics for delivery.

Delivering with Images

Scholars found it hard to dissociate delivery, one of the more neglected canons of rhetoric, from its original functions in physical performance in Grecian tradition (Lanham, 1991; Nadeau, 1964; Connors, 1983; Reynolds, 1996). The definition of the canon of delivery was revised later to make it more applicable to digitally mediated composition practices and pedagogies. Several scholars in the field have applied the revised rhetorical concepts in pedagogy, thereby paving the way for future scholars and instructors (Porter, 2009; Ridolfo, DeVoss, 2009; DeVoss & Porter, 2006; Banks, 2005; Rhodes, 2004; Yancey, 2004). In this article, we would like to broaden the definition of delivery to include visual rhetoric. In this example, visuals do not function as aides of delivery in a multimodal presentation. Images are the tools of delivery. Adsanatham (2013) re-defines digital delivery keeping in mind that student projects are multiliteracies that are digitally produced (Kress, 2009; Takayoshi, Selfe, 2007; Selber, 2004). In

his research, he argues that multimodal video-making is layered in its form, content, and process because of the considerations of both format and distribution (p. 318). In our example, we further extend this definition to include the expository nature of delivery where images are designed and presented as the final product. These images can be digitally mediated or tangible. While stalwarts like Hocks, Porter, Devoss, and others have succeeded in convincing practitioner and instructors of composition that visual rhetorics is important and needs to be explored in writing pedagogy more aggressively, we argue that an excellent way of helping students benefit from the pedagogic value of visual rhetorics is by letting them explore the pedagogical functions of visual rhetoric.

In the second assignment, students create instructional manuals or brochures. Students are invited to explore their past experiences and interests to reveal an area where they have expert knowledge. As an initial response, students respond with panic and dread claiming no expertise in anything. In some of the earlier assignments which include autobiographical or self-reflective elements, students see that there are areas where they may have unique know-hows that are interesting and shareable. Some of the areas are maneuvering John Deere tractors remotely to making stuffed cupcakes, washing hands the proper way, de-mystifying the art of writing complicated coding, tying shoe-laces in several ways, and so on. Students are encouraged to choose topics that they are genuinely interested in. In most cases, the students are excited to talk about them. They are challenged to transform ideas into pedagogic information. The process of creating an instructional manual puts the students in a pedagogic position where they can demonstrate expertise. Students create original visual instructional content depicting a step-by-step instructional. Although images are the main deliverable, some texts may be included to support the visuals. The project steers them towards the often-uncharted territory of visually representing the knowledge for instructional purposes for a target audience. Although visual rhetoric might seem intimidating to some students who do not see themselves as having good design skills or artistic acumen, the expertise of the topic gives them confidence. They are assured that they will not be assessed on the artwork but on their ability to use visual medium to communicate effectively to a target audience. In this assignment, students use their knowledge of the subject steer the project and provide ample assistance and resources for the composition and design of the product. Once students see the project taking shape, the fear of applying visual rhetoric is lost and students focus on the strategies that will enhance and optimize the delivery of the message through visuals.

Students create images, photographs, infographics, and flowcharts that are included in the instructional brochure. The brochures provide how-to instructions to a specific target audience to help them perform activities or develop understanding on the topics chosen by the student author. In a classroom, students are usually the ones receiving instructions. The reversal of roles in their new position as instructors and creators of the instructional content creates space for conversations on rhetorical nuancing for a range of audiences. It also makes them aware of the rhetorical commonplaces that need to be located before they begin delivering their instructions on the new knowledge that they have identified and have discerned important enough to be shared in the documentation project. They are asked to identify their audience and decide what the audiences *need* to know in addition to what they *want* to know in the

instructional brochure (Talarico, 2021; Cattrysse, 2010). Students develop original visuals to illustrate the brochure in the form of photographs, graphs, maps, sketches, and so on. Usually, as a method of illustration, images are used to fill in information gaps within the written text. In this project, the written words are used to complement the visuals.

Visual media scholar Mitchell (1995) recommends a “close reading” of images as a way to unlock the potential of images as makers of a multitude of meanings. In a more recent book, Mitchell (2005) theorizes the potential of images, both static and moving, to exert power over the onlooker and forcing them to be fixated as Medusa would (p. 36). The meaningfulness and power of images, to Mitchell, are not dependent on the maker of the image but the image themselves. Observing the presence and power of visual content in a generation that in general use frequently uses social media platforms and tools, Mitchell presents a “pictorial turn” that will supplant the linguistic turn of the twentieth century (p. 15). While the power of visuals is undeniable, we would like to shift the power back to the creator and manipulator of the images as having substantial power of inventing, arranging, and stylizing images in a way that triggers responses in the on-looker. Visual rhetorics are constructed and that makes the creator, in this occasion, the students who created the image-rich documents, in control of the image until it finds its way into the line of vision of the on-looker/interpreter. Context, *kairos*, and political climate instills meanings in the images, as well, but that argument has potential for further exploration in a separate work. In the next few pages, we explore the rhetorical situation of visuals in the two assignments under discussion.

Learning through Images

In this section, we will analyze the function of visual rhetorics in both assignments. The analysis will be comparative so as to tease out patterns that reveal critical engagement of students in visual rhetoric-infused pedagogy. In the first example of the letter to editor assignment, images help students realize the gaps in their understanding and information about a topic. These lead to a commonplace or *topos* on which the main argument of the letter is based. In the second example of the brochure assignment, a *topos* shapes the content of the brochure, which in this case is visual. The central *topos* is that topic brochure is important. Rhetoric and Composition scholars drew from the ancient understanding of *topoi* to define it variously (Welhausen, 2018). Crowley (1998) explains *topoi* as being an “(a)ncient invention (drawn from) communal epistemologies that privilege the commonplace; that is, they began with tradition, precept, generally accepted wisdom, what everybody knew” (p. 209). *Topoi* is the author’s way of connecting with the audience on a commonplace. In our examples, the student projects used visuals to connect with the research topic (first assignment) and audience (second assignment).

Kenneth Burke (1969) emphasizes the importance of rhetoric in situating commongrounds helping the speaker (author, in our example) and audience to connect. To strengthen persuasiveness, the author and audience need to be able to “acting together” after been connected through shared experiences or identifiable topics. Bazerman (2012) writes, “externalized words of the writer and the reader’s meanings evoked by those words depend on each participant’s history of engagement with those words within each person’s communicative

interactions” (p. 260). In both examples, the reaction to the visuals depends on a commonplace established by previous engagement or by preconceived impressions. Visuals form an interest and curiosity that have an impact that might often be stronger than words such as in the examples provided above. The rhetorical impact of images (both viewed and produced) is enhanced by the fact that images can manipulate the viewer into forming a certain rhetoric by highlighting or focusing on specific moments during an event. A photograph can cut up the whole reality and present only a part of the reality that it wants to highlight (Booth & Davisson, 2008). Students make meaning from this cropped image-segment. Students may also be in the role of those who are cropping part of a whole image to highlight certain meaning. In both cases, students use visual content to bring the audience “into” the commonplace.

Although the same prompts were provided for their reflection essays for the two assignments, students’ responses about the use of visual rhetorics were very different for each. Amidst the differences, we located interesting patterns. In the first assignment where students explored images as an inventive strategy for writing letters to the editor, students commented wordily about gaps in their understanding of intercultural affairs before having explored the images. Most of them were able to see a growth in themselves as critical thinkers. In the second assignment where images were used as a delivery method in an instructional brochure, we found that a large number of students commented on how the assignment helped them develop as writers. While working with images in the second assignment, students were building their compositional skillsets. They were making rhetorical choices and design decisions at every step while replacing alphabetic texts with images, thereby applying those composing skills. Their reflections highlighted how and what they “wrote.”

Locating patterns in reflective statements by students helped us theorize how students apply visual rhetorics in their process of invention and delivery to hone their strength in academic and professional writing. The post-assignment reflections revealed that images helped students see gaps in their knowledge and understanding of issues. These gaps were locations of meaningful curiosity and critical exploration (Peterson, 2001; Hocks 2003). In the first example, the curiosities are triggered by visual information. In the second example, visual information enacts the role of responding to curiosity about original questions or problems located at the beginning of the project. They also externalize their expertise during the acts of producing and communicating pedagogical information in the form of a brochure.

Understanding Internalization and Externalization of Visuals

The externalization and internalization of critical understanding involving visual rhetorics is presented below in an illustration that depicts the establishment of *topoi* and the role of visual rhetorics at various stages of the project. While Vygotsky’s theory of internalization and externalization is rich and applicable widely, we are using Bazerman’s explanation since Bazerman contextualizes this theory specifically to writing. Bazerman (2012) writes, “the processes of internalization may be, these words and the concepts they signify populate our minds as we make sense of the world to address action challenges” (p. 260). In the process of invention (in the letter to the editor assignment), students explore visual content to internalize

the information. They make sense of the world by letting the visuals seep through the crevices between their pre-existing concepts leading to the re-shaping of ideas they previously had. Bazerman further writes, “internalization processes ... change readers’ cognitive and affective landscapes (i.e., the symbols, gists, and emotions ...). Changes in mental landscape make new thoughts possible” (p. 260). In turn, this leads to rhetorical invention. In the letter to the editor assignment, visuals are internalized in the invention process.

In his explanation of externalization, Bazerman says, “any form of writing responsive to its situation involves some externalization of previous linguistic tools in ways prompted by the situation, even if it is only to repeat prior formulations of authoritative others, apropos to the moment” (p. 268). In the brochure assignment, students organized and presented the information in a way that is familiar to the audience. Their “publicly shareable thoughts” are produced in the form of a brochure by their act of “reformulating the linguistic repertoire,” which in this case is specific to the brochure genre (p. 268). Students make decisions regarding the level of difficulty or ease in the presentation of the information and the use of visual content through their prior social transactions. In the brochure assignment, visuals are the externalization of ideas used as a mode of delivery. Fig. 1 illustrates how students begin their

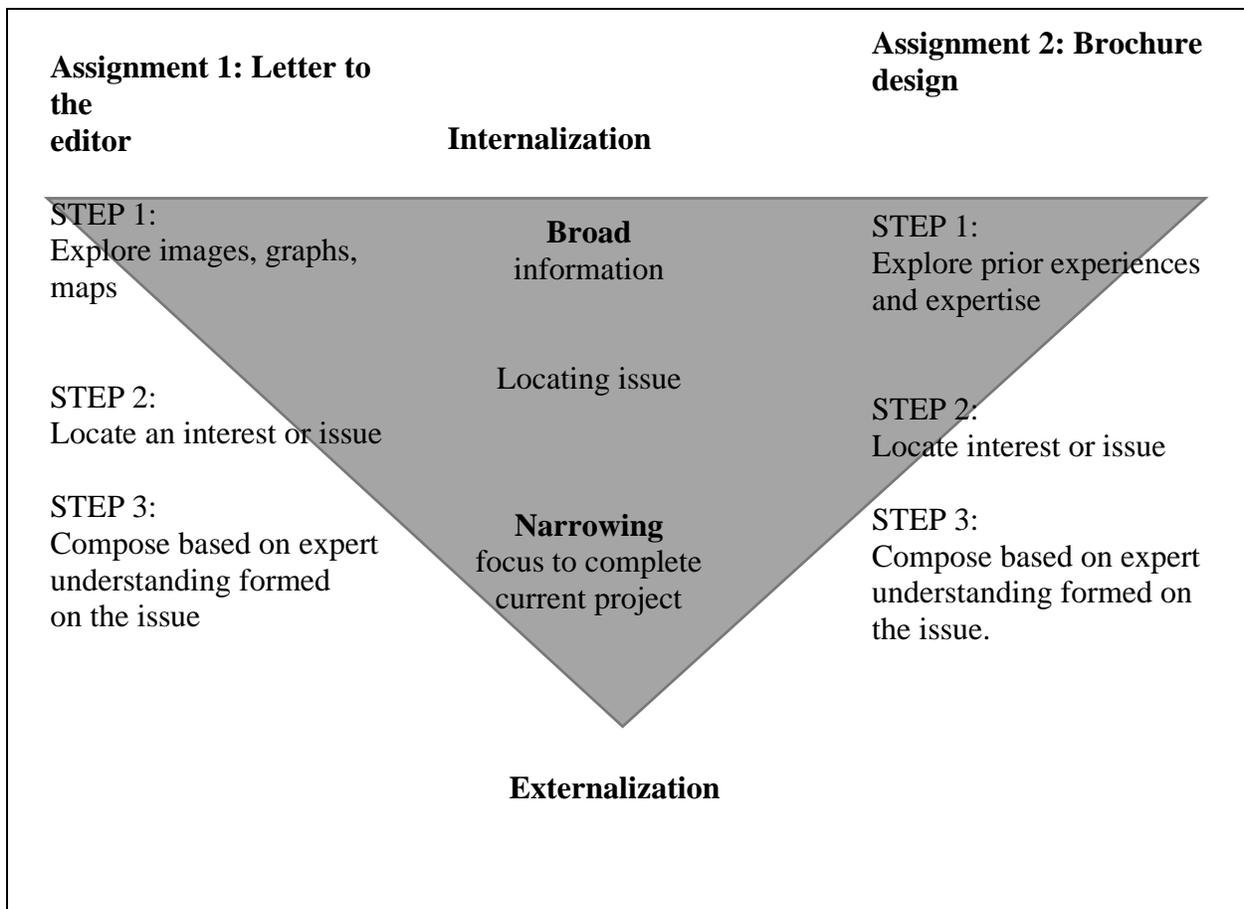


Figure 1: Using Visuals in Composition

project by exploring a plethora of information. In the letter to the editor assignment, this refers to the massive number of images, videos, and infographic maps that they view. In the brochure assignment, they explore their experiences and interests before narrowing down to one in which they have a strong interest or expertise.

In the next stage, the assignments call for locating an issue by narrowing down the options. The next stage is to compose deliverables in response to the requirements of the paper. Use of images can come at the initial stage or latter stage but it is important to keep in mind that visual rhetoric is central to learning and producing at these stages and should not merely appear as an illustration of the written word. Visuals function as an instrument of internalization in the meaning-making process in the letter to the editor and of externalization in the meaning-making process in the brochure assignment.

In a study of Vygotsky's theory of internalization and externalization in the matter of construction of mathematical models and scientific diagrams, Maschietto and Bussi (2009) explores how we understand visual cues and how does the mind interpret them. Vygotsky locates meanings in the signs to which the human brain is exposed. The meanings mediated by the signs are internalized (Van der Veer, 1997). According to Maschietto and Bussi, in the Vygotskian way of thinking about the interaction of students with the images in letter assignment, images are icons that help students internalize the global issue that they selected to write about. Here, "signs are the products of the internalization processes and are called psychological tools" (Maschietto & Bussi, 2009). The range of graphic information that the students interact with are part of the semiotic system. The formation of the common *topoi* and internalization of the visual icons lead to the formation of a good idea for their project. For example, images of refugee camps would be a starting point for students, leading to further exploration of images and texts that signify both the news coverage and human side of these stories. Next comes the written word in the formal letter format. The externalization of the response to the images is alphabetic. In the brochure assignment, externalization of images happens at the stage of development of the product. While working with visual rhetorics as central in the freshman composition course, students internalize and externalize images as part of the cognitive process. On one hand, in the letter to the editor project, students begin by exposing themselves to information that they do not know; students internalize the new knowledge. On the other hand (and project), they externalize knowledge for their audience in the form of visuals. For example, if the audience is not aware of seven different ways of tying shoelaces, this new knowledge is revealed by students with information on the ways of tying shoelaces. Students externalized this information in the brochure with the help of visuals.

Internalizing and externalizing visual cues contributes to negotiation of control/mastery/agency over the project. Reflections show that students appreciate the potential of visual rhetorics in raising social consciousness and intercultural understanding (assignment 1) and understanding the pedagogical function of visual rhetoric (assignment 2). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) write about the function of internalization of semiotics as essential to the learning of language. They explain that symbol systems are complex, intertwined, and messy but vital. The human brain is constantly negotiating its relationships with symbol systems, other humans, and semiotic cues

in the “external world of nature” (p. 197) in order to develop a distinct perspective. In the composing process, an author alternatively internalizes and externalizes inquiry during the activities of invention, arrangement, delivery, and so on. The author is in a constant state of oscillation of control/mastery/agency with the content. This happens when learning, interpretation, and application take place at various stages of composition. Both as producers and interpreters of content, the author is open and adaptable to this state of oscillation. While these stages are normal in the composing process, students might need help realizing that they are internalizing and externalizing. In addition to the content they are producing, they learn to compose and communicate meaningfully.

Limitations and Roadblocks

The authors of the current article are not scholars in visual rhetoric or visual literacy. However, we intended to incorporate visual rhetoric in our pedagogy with the conviction that with adequate resources and guidance, visual rhetoric can be universally implemented by instructors in spite of not being specialists. However, in doing so, our first major roadblock was finding instructional assistance for such projects in composition textbooks. Textbooks advertised as “readers” tend to feature alphabetic texts only and textbooks that base their writing pedagogy on rhetorics are, in general, handbooks containing text-heavy activities and readings. We did not intend to base our first-year composition course entirely on visual rhetorics. Although the Rhetoric and Composition discipline has a significant body of scholarship on visual literacy, English departments have a long way to go before they can envision a course in composition primary based on visual literacy (Selfe, 2004; Hobbs, 2002; Hill, 2004). Nevertheless, did not we want the visual rhetoric element to be an extra add-on element. We found a robust body of scholarship on how to incorporate visual rhetorics in first year composition classes (Little, 2015; Lundy & Stephens, 2015; Veach, 2019) that primary focused on the need rather than the process. We appreciated the tools we had but struggled to find a textbook that had elements of visual rhetoric assignments and instructional content. There are textbooks that are applicable to courses that entirely based on visual rhetoric. A seamless symbiosis of text-heavy composition pedagogy and visual rhetorics still needs more work. Instructors of composition with limited expertise but ample interest in using visual rhetorics need to be able to use textbooks that have both elements and choices of assignments to choose from within the lessons.

The student reflections we analyzed revealed insightful comments on the images that they were using at the stages of their composition process. This in turn helped us understand their cognitive process. However, many of the students focused more on tracing their growth as a writer based on the products at various stages of the composition rather than the process. In our analysis of reflection and assignment assessments, we were able to see the impact of using images. We strongly felt that visual rhetorics were effective in honing the skills of critical understanding and of successful delivery in the two example we are presenting in this paper. However, we cannot conclude that all students understood the role of visual rhetoric in helping them develop these skills. Nevertheless, once honed, these skillsets are transferable in their future professions both in academia and industry.

Conclusion

Peterson (2019) attempts to reassert the position of visual as the most important human sense, a position that was once held by the grand rhetoricians of ancient Europe where rhetoric included non-verbal communicative practices. However, in classrooms, the visual is often not used according to its potential as a means of persuasion or pedagogy. There is a need for more research on “visuals apprehended by the body’s eye ... and how these visuals might influence audience who perceive them” (p. 19). In this paper, we show how students perceive visual cues and form knowledge. In the second assignment, one can see how knowledge is presented by students through visual cues. We call for further exploration of the pedagogical application of visual rhetorics in strategizing all rhetorical processes.

When applied to other assignments, we find that the use of visual rhetorics as a pedagogical approach in composition should go beyond the application of images at the fringes of “real” writing. Visuals can etch non-written meanings on the mind of the readers like every other mode of meaning-making can. Visuals can be used frequently given that many students are constantly creating and interacting with images on social media platforms. Visual rhetorical approaches can be used as a way of remixing longer assignments in contexts that students have developed. They can be encouraged to re-envision a text-heavy project for an audience who can best be reached through the use of visuals. Again, in these projects, multimodality should ideally be central and not seen as an add-on component.

In general, students are often users and producers of visual content in social media with more than basic skills in recording, applying, and editing of visual content. Cyphert (2007) argues for the electronic eloquence of both students and instructors leading to a potentially seamless exchange of application and interpretation. Although Cyphert’s article pertains mainly to speech, the foundational theory is applicable to both the verbal and non-verbal. Keeping that in mind, Tracy Bowen advances a schema that suggests evaluating critical choices and awareness (2017). This is a new medium of meaning-making and students may be still developing critical skills as composers and interpreters of visual rhetoric. Instructors, too, need training and instructional materials to help them help students learn with more depth instead of depending on students to know how to manipulate or interpret images. Training in the field of composition and rhetoric has given us robust tools for assessing student writing. We use rubrics to assess the strength of persuasiveness of language, style, and argument. However, in projects that employ visual rhetorics, evaluation of the success of the project might sometimes pose a challenge. The artistic excellence of our students’ projects was not assessed. That said, we need more research about the construction of assessment rubrics for visual rhetorics in freshman composition. In an attempt to develop a rubric appropriate for assignments containing visual rhetorics, Sonja Foss came up with a schema that included criteria such as functionality, identifiability, and legitimacy (1994). This schema almost seems a defense of the use of visual rhetoric.

It is easy to marginalize the visual in the discipline of rhetoric and composition where text is considered central in the understanding the composition process. It is also easy to neglect the so-called fifth (or last) canon of rhetoric by bestowing on it a sense of finality and thereby

curbing its potential of growth and further interpretation. Our examples show the pedagogic value of visual rhetoric as a tool of invention and delivery. Visual rhetorical studies have a tremendous, yet less explored scope in meeting some of the most important learning outcomes in composition pedagogy. As composers and critical interpreters of meaning-making visuals, students can successfully apply visuals in almost all stages in the composing process. Visuals do not necessarily need to be in the fringes but can replace parts of the written word as a robust and rich alternative of a persuasive tool. Once we recognize the potential of visual rhetoric as a mainstream tool for knowledge dissemination in a freshman composition class, a vast scope for research will open up in the matter of assessment and developing study materials that are specifically targeted towards visual rhetorics in freshman composition.

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Tracing Turns: Affect in FYW

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Abstract

Through the application of affect theory to a case study of a multimodal student artifact, this paper argues that attention to affect in FYW assignments allows them to operate as sites of inception wherein affective channeling can occur over a temporal process, named here as turns, where affective intensities are concretized and continually altered into (re)newed emotions. These are argued as productive features of composing whereby students can voice their experience. This is done in a material, sensorial fashion via sonic events, such as playlisting music. Once this argument is made, speculative conclusions are drawn about the importance of affect in composing for developing agencies, as well as how attending to affect can be effective in FYW.

“I aim here only at revealing myself, who will perhaps be different tomorrow, if I learn something new which changes me.”

—Montaigne, 1:26:109

Introduction

Multimodal Scholarship has long been concerned with utilizing modal and technological differences to facilitate a classroom pedagogy that emphasizes the materials we compose *with* as much as what we compose at all (The New London Group, 1996; Selfe, 2009; Kress, 2010; Banks, 2011; Shipka, 2011; Palmeri, 2012; Brooke, 2014; Ceraso, 2018; Buckner, 2019). Many explorations of these concerns provide explicit examples of activity and assignment construction, classroom execution, and assessment. A significant amount of these explorations focus on more explicitly aural, or sound based, compositions, by asking students to either write about sound, listen, or even compose sound itself; music is constantly referred to as a frame or even source for future composing within these approaches.

For example, Adam J. Banks (2011) asks students to write pieces describing the soundtrack they would apply to their life experiences around technology and composing (p. 81). Banks (2011) centers his conversation on the African American traditions invoked by the DJ, who remixes and samples the tracks of others to negotiate personality, local community, and public memory, developing a sense of individual-communal identity in the process. Jason Palmeri (2012) provides examples of recording, editing, and transforming voice recordings via audio technologies, to critically reflect on the role of voice in rhetoric (p.58); Palmeri’s whole text, *Remixing Composition* (2012), is organized by tracks, reverberations, and the “remix

perspective;” Even Steph Ceraso (2018), critical of the individualist practices encouraged by musical focuses, must attend to it as a source of sonic pedagogy.

These scholars’ emphasis on the aural/musical inspired me to establish an experimental First Year Writing (FYW) course at the University of Minnesota, centered on concepts of Affect, identity, voice and personal soundscaping. In this course, the student-composers attempted to represent and evoke the transformation of sensorial and affective experiences into emotive—and therefore identifying—memories by designing both a playlist and a letter to their past selves. After conducting this course, I acquired a substantial archive of student work that I have titled “Affective Playlist Compositions.” By taking a case study from this archive, I intend to demonstrate the role affect plays in key aims of FYW, such as developing the self through *self-fashioning*, (Hanson, 2002; De Marzio, 2012; Pritchard, 2016) through the modulation of affect and sensation over time into emotive, *voiced* experiences (Lechuga, 2014; Frischerz, 2015).

By reading these assignments as moments of *self-fashioning through voicing*, I contend we can determine the importance of both affect and emotion in the composition processes, distributions, and ethics thereof. We could also motivate the effectiveness of multimodal pedagogy in communicating this importance. This can serve to inform (non)multimodal pedagogues of the transferability of sonic pedagogy to FYW contexts, but also further motivate the importance of considering material realms, technologies, and affects in the composing process, argued for by many (Banks, 2011; Palmeri, 2012; Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016; Ceraso, 2018; Harley, 2018).

In this application, we’ll explore the way a student artifact operates as a site of inception wherein affective modulation is traced as a process of change over time, or “turns.” I will begin by providing more detail on the specific assignment, its construction, and the goals it was meant to accomplish in a First Year Writing course in relation to multimodal scholarship, to properly contextualize how I applied conceptual work in pedagogical praxis. I will follow up by explicating the key theoretical lenses from affect theory and educational philosophy in more detail, before moving into an analysis of the artifact.

On Sound and Affect in Pedagogy

Context: assignment design and the artifact of study

The assignment for which this artifact was developed came out of theory intersecting public facing rhetoric, sound studies, and multimodal pedagogy (Banks, 2011; Goodman, 2012; Palmeri, 2012; Ceraso, 2018; Harley, 2018). By looking at soundscapes, or ecological networks of “sound, bodies, aesthetics, materials, technologies, and spatial features that make up an environment” (Ceraso, 2018, p.71). The assignment looks to demonstrate the intersection of social and personal soundscaping by connecting personal soundscaping not only to the “ontology of vibrational force” (Goodman, 2012, p.xv, p. 46) in the social realm, but also the

way material technologies that produce sound are bound by individual composers in collective memories and rhetorics, such as the compositions circulated by Banks' DJ (2011).¹

The assignment was also meant to attend to how affect shapes identity—in particular using music to, as Harley (2018) notes, experience emotions in richer ways and co-create senses of identity—so an assignment revolving around composing playlists to re-experience affectively charged events allowed the co-creation of identity to extend to agency, our ability to enact or not enact the identities we form from engagement with sonic-events. For example, playlists could potentially invoke events of success, calm, belonging, failure, or trauma, and give composers the ability to recast their affective responses to these situations through tracing affective importance.

Our case study is an artifact wherein the student explores the affective attachment developed for a space—and the way that affect is modulated when a shift in space is imposed upon them. The Playlist is meant to represent a shift in emotional representation of the student over time, operating as a “as a tribute to the emotional instability [they] felt when [they] had to leave a place [they] had always considered home” (Artifact D2, p.1). The Letter, making up half of this artifact, is set up as a persuasive, educational supplement to the playlist, directed to the student's past self undergoing this emotional shift. The hope is to help their past self “process their emotions” to avoid the hostility and misery they experienced.² We might consider this an act of social or *lived* argumentation as articulated by Lechuga (2014).

Lechuga takes social argumentation from Natanson on risk (1965), and argues that *lived argumentation* is a way by which bodies or selves are called into argumentation while “opening them to the risk of being moved by affect” (p.88). These affects are felt changes in intensities¹ that once felt and mediated by the self, are narrowed into emotions and this occurs through movement “within those environments of fluctuating intensities” (2014, pp. 86-89). Insofar as this list and letter state their intentions to argue with oneself over the importance and transformative nature of the list, we can imagine the student opening their current selves and past selves to risk by explicitly attending to the affective importance of their movement through the environment. As such, attending to the tracklist as it develops over time, with the supplementation of the student's letter, will help us see how affect tracks over the course of time, as mediated materially via these compositions. In this temporal exploration, affect and educational theory can allow us to explore the ways this act of composing can develop a sense of self/agency, using the lenses of voicing and self-fashioning.

¹ Other authors also argue about the importance of attending to the “bodily process” of the senses as rhetorical, therefore socio-culturally mediated, or as a way of revealing how selective naturalizations of sensory experiences or selective personifications of them can be employed to colonize and oppress (Hamilakis, 2013; Edgar, 2017). Listening, for example, is also subject to cultural mediation, as compositions and practices of listening reify cultural memory

² Other students, of course, had their own aims in their letters and playlists, some wholly unrelated to misery or hostility—these aims are idiosyncratic to the student-composer

Voicing and Self-Fashioning: How to look at sound and music

Compositionists in writing instruction have preferred to build off our conversations of voice as a metaphor for communication of the authentic internal self, rather than on the material voice as an extension of embodiment. This misremembers much of our expressionist history, and its attention to the material voice as a method for instruction, identity formation, and personal development (Palmeri, 2012, p. 55) as well as critical pedagogical tradition around speaking, listening, and responding to particular bodies in space (hooks, 1994; Freire, 2000). Moving forward, I'll be defining and tracing the history of some key terms and a justification of their application to our case study.

I take voicing as a practice from affect theorists and multimodal compositionists, wherein “[i]ndividuals cull personal psychic experiences from interior depths and articulate those experiences to the spaces of shared and collective discussion, action, and politics” as well as “a sense of affective agency through this practice” that offers a “contact zone” for reconsideration of the self (Ahmed, 2004; Frischerz, 2015, pp. 261-268). Voicing also blurs the boundaries between self and other in a material way, by the weaponization or invitation to intimacy, as scholars note the permeating power of corporeal sonic events (Edgar, 2017; Harley, 2018). Edgar, for example, discussing sonic abortion rhetoric, notes how the voice always “points to a physical, live person... the communication of a secret inner self...as a direct extension of the material body” (2017, p. 354).³ That is, voice mediates a sense of self and person in its voicing.

So voicing operates as a mediating act between the individual and the collective, at once a deeply personal, internal action and yet one that cannot occur without an audience/collective to *listen*. Attention to voicing in this case study, then, will be as much as socio-individual exercise as the decision to focus on music was in assignment design—being able to *voice* is predicated on a material and social (what’s the difference?) location to voice out of. In looking for voicing, we are looking for moments in which the student remixes the compositions of others, thereby invoking their histories and significances, to also speak to others about themselves, providing a voice to their own experience. These we may consider actions self-fashioning.

Self-fashioning terms an enacting or making actual a sense of self, as argued by Montaignian educational theorists—composing is an act of becoming, being made in relation to the social milieu in which one is composing (Montaigne, 1965/1588; Hansen, 2002; De Marzio, 2012). De Marzio (2012) finds the examples of Montaigne and Plutarch, and their epistolary exercises as understood through Foucauldian analysis of ethical formation, to be “pedagogical in that they are the actual products of a teaching, the aim of which is to shape and influence, ideas, actions, and beliefs of their recipient” (p.387). By acknowledging these letters as a part of widely circulated texts, De Marzio argues the pedagogical value of these exercises is far from mere

³ I take issue with this notion of external expression of the inner, often discussed as the Authentic Self, as it’s often weaponized to prevent “less stable” categories from voicing their experiences of struggle and oppression. See *Bi!* (Eisner, 2013) for a critique of authenticity as it applies to sexuality. As I argue later, a Montaignian theory of education avoids this problem.

knowledge transmission—they are essentially evidence of “the attempt by their respective writers to initiate a transformation in the lives of the recipient” (2012, p.388).

In short, when writers like Montaigne state examples of proper tutoring, or effective pedagogy—the critical assessment, modification, and reapplication of past knowledge referred to as “Cultivation of Judgment”—he models this act of cultivation in *forming himself by describing himself*, and describing himself by expressing thoughts, feelings, and judgments on the thoughts, feelings, and judgments of others (De Marzio, 2012, p. 391). The self, for Montaigne,

is not something that is pre-formed and thus waiting to be described as it is... The only truth the self reveals is its own self-contradictory intentionality— a constant becoming other than it is by grasping hold of “different attributes or aspects” of the subject. The self—that is, Montaigne’ self—takes part in its own becoming “not accidentally” but “intentionally” (De Marzio, 2012, p.389)

What follows from the intentionality of self-fashioning is not reiteration of knowledge, or a passing down of it, but a mutual transformation of character and behavior—that is self-fashioning. This is only possible through material technologies—writing—and the material produced is considered by Montaigne to be consubstantial with his self, a material extension that forms him as he forms it—his voice does not cull internality and express it, as in the expression of the authentic, but rather makes the self externally, and materially (Montaigne 1965/1588, Section III: II, p. 611-612).

This could be seen as a process of negotiating what Eric Darnell Pritchard (2016) calls *literacy normativity* and *restorative literacies*, countering and repurposing the standardizing practices of learning to restore a sense of “self- and communal love” for the purposes of “making a life on one’s own terms” (p.33). While Pritchard’s (2016) work is designed by and for Black queer/LGBTQ+ literacy development and theorizing, restorative literacy as a method of repurposing practices one is exposed to in an effort to subvert their harmful effects is resonant with the broader idea of self-transformation through composing articulated in self-fashioning. Whereas Pritchard (2016) challenges us to consider the queer, intersectional applications of a fashioning pedagogy, this piece seeks to welcome affective experiences into pedagogical space alongside these features of the self. Self-fashioning, I would argue, pairs especially well with queer and intersectional approaches to literacy in the classroom (Alexander, 2008; Pritchard, 2016). Bi+ and Queer theory in general is aimed at disrupting static notions of identity, and approaches like Bi+ politics/history (Angelides, 2001; Eisner, 2013), my other primary interest in rhetoric/pedagogy, inform the hybridic and chimerical nature of self-fashioning in this project.

What we will want to look for, then, in applying affect and the writing about it, is how it operates as a way our student can *voice who they are*, insofar as voicing operates to procedurally fashion their behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. As affect is prelinguistic and conceptually mediated through emotional language, while also in some ways determinative of potential behavior or initial thoughts, it plays a motivating role in composing the self;

understanding the role this plays in self through self-making can be key in motivating the value of it in composition (Lechuga, 2014; Frischherz, 2015).

Description of Analysis

I will read our case study through the lens Michael Lechuga's (2014) "channeling of affect," an embodied, ecological/process approach of identifying how affect manifests, through technologies, to "manifest moments of immediacy where the self is at risk of being moved" (p.90). In doing this, I will be drawing also on Lechuga's notion of Affects as "felt changes in intensities" that are "deeply embodied, and activated by certain somatic perceptions that happen prior to thought" (Lechuga, 2014, p. 88). The case studies then, will be looking for how the artifacts fit into a process of affective modulation—or "the packaging of affects for channeling"—through personal soundscaping and reflection (Lechuga, 2014, p. 90). Modulation allows subjectivities and boundaries to be drawn around material bodies, creating felt changes in intensity, and therefore experiences/enactments of agencies (Lechuga, 2014). This requires attention to:

- How the artifacts operate as an "act of inception" which embodies affect—how does the sonicity and textual features of the artifact serve to "illuminate that field of relation" in which a body and/or self is located (Lechuga, 2014, p.90)?
- The way in which the artifact constitutes an act of *Voicing*—how does this personal act generate a social relationship via the "culling" of psychological experiences for public expression? How is affect "packaged" here, perhaps into discrete emotion(s), over time (Lechuga, 2014; Frischherz, 2015)? Theory on discrete emotions, such as Ahmed (2004) on fear, or Lorde (2007) on anger, might be useful in this analysis in identifying more implicit moments of discrete emotion or how they operate in the act of inception.
- In the act of voicing, how are selves fashioned, made sense of, and shaped in material/semiotic ways? How might we be able to indicate within these acts of inception, the boundaries and subjectivities of affect that are articulated? How does this propel into motion activated bodies, even if those bodies simply are the composer themselves (De Marzio, 2012; Lechuga, 2014; Frischherz, 2015)? This may include how discrete emotions effect somatic responses, behaviors, and changes in patterns of behavior.

With this laid out, we can turn to our object of study: the tracklist.

Emotion from Movement: "From CO to MN"

The tracklist below is composed by one student, consisting of 10 songs totaling 35 minutes, which I will lay out here.⁴ Within this list, I will be discussing both my initial impressions of the tracks in relation to each other and the way the student purported to be using the tracks to express features of themselves. In doing so, I hope to weave in narrow discussions of how the tracks move affects, name them, and how their organization modulates them for a different act

⁴ This playlist and letter were collected in a pedagogical study within IRB guidelines in my institution, and with the explicit informed consent of the student-author.

of voicing than the track in isolation. Some of these tracks are discussed in tandem as they are interwoven in purpose. These tracks are also discussed in tandem with the secondary artifact.

Relevant to this analysis is my own familiarity and history with the tracks—beyond BROCKHAMPTON, Lana Del Ray, and Childish Gambino, I was unfamiliar with all the artists in their capacity as musicians upon my initial engagement with the playlist, and the two particular tracks I did know (“Me and your Mama” and “WASTE”) are not common knowledge in my musical world. This means that the artists and their own projects outside of their inclusion for the student’s purposes were largely unknown to me, and I myself was often tasked with acting in a self-transformative manner by researching each track and artist as they were revealed to me, albeit with some aid from the letter portion of the artifact. While the assignment is obviously transformative for the student, learning as I read and engaging with the student emphasizes the transformative nature of the assignment for *me*, allowing me to further fashion myself in the process of advising my student’s own fashioning process.

Tracking Affect

1. “Love” by Lana Del Ray (2017)

A love track, producing feelings of nostalgia and yet forward movement, with lines like “The world is yours and you can’t refuse it” and “it doesn’t matter because it’s enough/to be young and in love” (Del Ray, 2017).

According to the student, Lana “wrote this song as a nostalgic piece about the feeling of being young and in love, whether that is with a person or just life in general. I used this song as my first track to portray my feeling of comfort and complete contentment that I originally felt when living in Colorado.” They argued to their past self, “I feel that you will be able to relate to her because although I eventually found happiness and refuge in Minnesota too, I don’t know if I can say it will ever be the same feeling” (Artifact D2, p.1).

This moment of recognizing a continuing disconnect for their relationship to Minnesota will be important later, but for now we can clearly see the beginning of voicing—the student is culling experience to provide to others some “tribute” to a time in which their sense of emotional agency is being disrupted, changed, and challenged—but this starts with establishing a “site” wherein this journey occurs—the feeling of happiness and contentment in Colorado, a “comfort” or sense of belonging. This is the initial “world of affects in which the self is found” for the student (Lechuga, 2014, p. 86). It is in this presumption of comfort and connection that the students' world will begin to shift, and is as such where the voicing, the articulation, the “social argumentation” of how it changes, begins (Lechuga, 2014, p. 86). The student starts at the existing network of bodies in their past selves’ current environment. Starting here allows them to mediate the way the affect is modulated through movement in the tracklist itself—operating both as representative of and itself *is* an “act of inception” or that which embodies/mediates affect through a composition.

2. “Me and Your Mama” by Childish Gambino (2016)

A dissonant and jarring track, Gambino starts with a soulful approach and a dramatic shift in tone to a rock-style ballad full of anger and anxiety, with lines like “Can’t stand it/backhanded/they wanna see us fallin’ apart!” (Gambino, 2016).

The student explains that this track was utilized to “illustrate how hard it hit me when I was told my family was relocating” and pointed out the dramatic contrast within the song to represent how their emotions “turn” at this news (Artifact D2, p.1). Because of the established histories, their current environment “perfectly embodied how [they] wanted to live [their] life” and the “guitar riff embodies that blindsided feeling of anger” at the news (Artifact D2, pp1-2).

While the process of packaging had begun within the comfort and belonging of the first track, and this channeling maintains a consistent key through a portion of Gambino’s music, what I find interesting here is the way the student employs the jarring transition of the track to create an affective “turn” in this process of modulation, something like a key change—this idea of “turning” helps us understand the way affect can change over time, here suddenly, into something different through extreme ruptures in one’s environment.

Tracing these “turns” in affect operates as a method by which the student can understand the “felt changes in intensities” and allows us to see the way affect changes over time in its modulation and channeling through material technologies—what was once a nostalgic yet pleasant mood of comfort and belonging is ruptured and torn into a sense of shock and awe, mediated through the vibrations of guitars and speakers. The feeling of anger is made out of this, which “blindsides” even the body undergoing the experience, the student—meshing well with the pre-linguistic, somatic uptakes of affect discussed by Lechuga (2014) prior to modulation—and is only named retroactively in the process of voicing/packaging. Moving forward, we might be able to see how these momentary ruptures generate a new *mood*, or persistence of affect, and a more gradual affective “turn” as the tracks progress.

3. “Riot” by Jaden Smith (2019); 4. “Badlands” by Bakar (2018)

A very aggressive and claustrophobic track, “Riot” seems to build off the energy of the previous track, and themes of anger well up as Jaden “Can’t breathe” along with a sense of toxic interpersonal dynamics, as he seems to assert to someone “I care about you so much more than you know/I’m calling girl, but you don’t answer the phone” (Smith, 2019). The content of the lyrical work seems less important than the oppressive beat, frustrated vocal work, and increasing tempo. “Badlands” spins off this claustrophobic track, starting a trend of specifically emphasizing certain spaces, Bakar is speaking of the grim “dungeons” in the “town of hard times called London” and to himself about being his own worst enemy in fighting the grim day this space creates (Bakar, 2018). The pace is still high and seems to be channeling some sense of despair or frustration.

Both “Riot” (2019) and “Badlands” (2018) are explained by the student as ways to “imitate the short-lived angsty phase that you [their past self] will go through whether you like it or not” and notes this time was a point of hiding the “biggest anxieties about moving” with “rage and resulted in some questionable decisions for a 16 year old” (Artifact D2, p.2). The affect of anger was produced in lieu of sadness because the student “hadn’t fully accepted what was happening...until [they] were practically across the border” (Artifact D2, p.2) they instead wished to deny the possibility of this movement occurring.

As a pair, these tracks are interesting in the ways they’re being used to trace a maintenance of anger and anxiety over time, some mood like “angst” in an attempt to avoid the emotional impact of loss. Rather than accept or continue the modulation of emotions beyond the immediate shock and anger, therefore accepting the loss of a space along with the belonging in it, the student makes sense of their behaviors in that space prior to moving as those of a “angsty phase” that circulates out beyond them into the environment via “questionable decisions” left undescribed.

This feature of affective maintenance that the student articulates around anger is provides interesting contrast from common articulations of anger in the literature—particularly Audre Lorde (2007), who sees anger as a galvanizing force, that which creates actions that are “liberating and strengthening act[s] of clarification” and provide focused calls to behavioral change over thing like guilt and hate (p. 127). Anger in my student’s case, however, develops into an affectively stagnating mood of angst, which chooses to express itself in destructive or cacophonous capacities, more akin to what Lorde might call hate, or a cacophony of anger in contrast to a symphony of angry voices (p. 129). In this way the mood is shown to restrain movement emotionally in an effort to deny a more obvious spatial transition in the move from CO to MN—this stagnation that only ends with the actual physical removal from the state, a cross of borders that mark out the student’s world of affect. From this stagnation we will begin to see a slow turn of affect into a sense of loss with the next three tracks.

5. “Westcoast Collective” by Dominic Fike (2018); 6. “WASTE” by BROCKHAMPTON (2017); 7. “Creature Fear” by Bon Iver (2007)

“Westcoast Collective” has a slight return to the nostalgic content of the first track—a focus on “used to live” and memories of the past space wherein one lives, with a more west coast twang in the rock to boot (Fike 2018). “WASTE” is reminiscent of regret and wonder, implying themes of embodying new points of view and moments of infidelity and loss; lines like “Sat by the fire, behind your eyes.... but I might see something I don’t like/like your hands in his shirt” provide a basis for this vague feeling (BROCKHAMPTON, 2017). Another soft song regarding the world as a place of loss, “Creature Fear” expresses a sense foreignness, but belonging to someone (“I was lost but your fool”) and an interesting moment of resistance (“don’t let it form us/don’t let it form us”) centering around a moment of “creature fear” (Bon Iver, 2007).

The student takes “Westcoast Collective” to represent “transition,” in particular, the “the changeover from resentful to depressed” and tells their past self that “it was almost as if you

had been evolving..." in relation to this song (Artifact D2, p.2). This is the second time transition or changing of affective charge is pointed too, from the initial happiness and shock of Gambino to the sullen move from anger to sadness in Dominic Fike. "WASTE" is argued by the student to further the transition into a sense of loss and sadness from track 6, as "the song encapsulates the loss of control and uncertainty [they] experienced when moving to a place [they] didn't know" (Artifact D2, p. 2). This affect of desolation and isolation maintains into the next track as well.

The third of the tracks representing sadness and loss, "Creature Fear" and the prior two tracks are all discussed together as a slower turn and progression into new affects—"Creature Fear" develops out of the "Cliques" nature of the new school the student was starting in Minnesota, which pushed them to "spend [their] time in high school just trying to get through everyday....without [their] friends and community...[they] felt so small" which produced in them a "creature fear" (Artifact D2, pp.2-3). They would later argue, however, that this fear of isolation and emotional smallness would dissipate as the third transition occurs.

Fear is often associated with distance between bodies, involves "relationships of proximity" especially in the way bodies are marked and organized by those marked—Sarah Ahmed's (2006) discussion of a racialized cannibal fantasy helps us note that the politics of fear is weaponizing the prospect of "being incorporated into the body of the other" and how such a sublimation threatens our very existence (p.64). This itself allows the blending of loss and fear apparent in the student work as they are forced into a new environment, a proximity that generates a series of "cliques" in their new school, and the feeling of being small in their proximity to the other (Minnesota and their school) and distance to the self (CO and their friends and family).

This also meshes with the way affect, in more circulatory views, can mark, bound, and subjectivize individuals in its channeling, especially in negative affects (Lechuga, 2014, p. 90). Negative affect can be activated as fear in modulation, and this is an emotion directly named in the tracklist—in this case, their personally formed affective relationship to the new environment seems to activate a fear-driven response from the student, such as avoiding new connections, just trying to "survive the everyday" as a "somatic response" to the space (Lechuga, 2014, p.91). Once the student is forced to accept that which their angst allowed them to avoid, they articulate being faced with a sense of loss, of distance, and the accompanying fear of the other being forcefully presented to them both *in* and *as* a space. Their negative affect, modulated as anger, is now further modulated as fear, as the forceful tearing away from space is complete. It's important to note how this results in changed behaviors and somatic responses on part of the student as it makes sense in their composition—it acknowledges the fear created real changes in approaching the world.

8. "Pretty Ugly" by Tierra Whack (2018); 9. "Feeling Good" By Avicii (2015)

"Pretty Ugly" operates in an interesting fashion—the track itself seems to operate as a transitory moment to a more uplifting affective charge—"feeling good" and filled with confidence with one's "ugly glow" and how it might clash with the target (Whack, 2018).

After realizing they were going to have “to make an effort” to achieve any sense of comfort they had previously felt, the student began to realize that there are similarities in the states of CO and MN, using this track to note “the light at the end of the tunnel.” (Artifact D2, p.3). Though they still miss home, new relationships occurring in the location helped “fade” both the anxiety of loneliness and the anger towards their parents—by the time we get to this track, they “no longer thought about Colorado every day and [they] began to call [their] new location ‘home’” (Artifact D2, p.3)

Made an especially impactful shift by the quick cut and ending of the prior track, “Feeling Good” expands on the uplifted nature and deepens it. An emphasis on literal altitude (“Birds flying high”) and newness associated with dawn and daylight (“It’s a new dawn/it’s a new day/it’s a new life for me”) allow the communication of “feeling good” that builds off the previous shift (Avicii, 2015). It’s very interesting that this track is given no explanation for its presence nor how it fits into the other tracks. Ostensibly, the way it explodes out of the prior track, one can assume what is said about the prior track applies, but the silence on this one speaks volumes to the potential place it does or does not take up in the sense-making of the student, given that it’s the only track not even name-dropped. The student’s letter simply skips to the final track.

The affective turn into a gradually more positive affective environment, as friendships are made and connections forged with the other, is not insignificant to the tracklist, as it shows the following of certain narratives wherein the student feels they must articulate overcoming the negative—it’s the end of the arc, the claiming of the victory—but it is interesting how subtle and understated these features of the tracklist are in their articulation, both there and in the letter. As noted, the dedicated space in the letter to describe their function is minimal—one of the tracks isn’t even mentioned—and this can make us wonder how much the student misses in their capture of these moments. In one way, this can remind *us* that affect is always in excess to attempts to name it or express it—playlists included—and this has been a standing feature of affect as pre-linguistic (Ahmed 2004; Lechuga 2014; Frischerz 2015; Hawhee 2015). We can also consider the way prior environments and exposures to affective arcs in other materials may or may not condition the way a student may think emotions *ought* to change over time—not to mention the contemporary purposes of writing this for an instructor who may or may not be someone they feel comfortable deviating from known scripts of emotions or desires (Ahmed, 2004). We will return to this in the last track.

10. “The Other Side of Paradise” by Glass Animals (2016)

Somewhat “feels” fitting and yet is an interesting swerve from the uplifting experience of the last two tracks, this one provides some interesting expressions of regret, numbness (“the bullet hit or maybe not/I feel so fucking numb”) and settling for the non-ideal (“I’ll settle for a ghost I never knew”). Mystifying and nostalgic symmetry with the initial track on the list.

This song is the most interesting track for several reasons—it represents a time skip of a whole year for the student’s narrative, moving from the junior year of high school to the senior year

(artifact D2, p.3). It also is supposed to represent a “realization” of taking one’s life for granted; the student had not thought about Colorado for “a while” and the track “represents [their complete transition to [their life] ...the line ‘bye bye baby blue,’ represents the feeling of euphoria when [they] finally realized that everything was going to be okay...” (Artifact D2, p. 3)

The symmetry and almost at times contradictory expressions from the song itself here and the authorial intent in its usage by the student are fascinating, both as additional examples of how affect can never be fully captured in mediation, even when accounting for “turns,” as well as reminding us of small moments of resonance in the beginning of the list and letter. Despite being able to acknowledge this new environment as a “home” or place of belonging, the student had stated that they couldn’t know if “it will ever be the same feeling” as the sense of belonging in Colorado (Artifact D2, p.1).

This refusal to identify the positive sentiments towards the locations as the same can be taken to imply there’s more to this turning of affect than the student either knows or lets on here— but this also doesn’t mean we should reject the way the student transforms this modulation in a tale of victory. Acknowledgment of difference here along with the notion of “settling” *could* make that argument, but it could also be a simple recognition that no two affective worlds are identical, and that belonging in one is not the same as belonging in another. This would mesh well with the idea of turning and modulation of boundaries in affect theory, as well as the transformative capacities of composing on the self in educational theory (Hansen, 2002; De Marzio, 2012; Palmeri, 2012; Lechuga, 2014; Frischerz, 2015).

What we *can* see here in this act of inception, is a representation of affective channeling, carving new boundaries around a single person *over time* as they process movement, removal, and acceptance in a composition all their own. While doing this, the composition also operates as an act of inception, using this trace to effect modulation and induce new boundaries on listeners and readers. In short, the student both traces (represents affective channeling) their emotional progression, therefore making sense of it, and is itself a material product of said emotional progression (act of inception itself) in process, as they composed the playlist/letter. This is rendered especially visible (though is not a necessary condition for this visibility) by the subject matter of movement itself, making this a kind of exemplary case for demonstrating the fruits of such an assignment.

Tracking Self Fashioning

Immediately, we find the combination of external sourcing for affective material and epistolary model functioning in the mode of ethical transformation that we might find conducted by Montaigne, or an act of self-fashioning (De Marzio, 2012). Much like how “the teacher works at self-transformation at the same time that they work toward the transformation of the student,” the author here had organized the compilation of songs not only to make sense of their current relation to the past, but also ostensibly transform their dialogic counterparts’ experience of the same events (De Marzio, 2012, p.338)—even if this possibility is simply imaginary, we can also consider the broader methods in which this can be applied, in the same way De Marzio argues for the broader pedagogical applications of Montaigne and Plutarch’s letters.

These features and exercises performed by the students (saying nothing of their instructor's exercises in providing feedback) can serve not only as procedural substantiation of identity, but a model insofar as the product of such a process provides evidence of a substantive act for audiences far broader than the specific individual being voiced to. As we all know, voices can carry. This also meshes well with the consideration of the material "moments of immediacy" can mediate movement of the self in social argumentation (Lechuga, 2014, p.89).

Attendance to affect is necessary to understanding the relevance of a such a composition to the composer and other—in order to ascertain the potential impact of the artifact, one has to attend to the way the songs capture, induce, or channel affective experiences, environments, and turns. That is, only by acknowledging how the artifacts voice the experiences of the student beyond the discursive, and points toward the "affective, bodily, *lived* experience" of the student can we see how the composition serves the goals of developing rhetorical and compositional awareness, such as using the sources of others, or expressing a sense of identity. (Palmeri, 2012;Frischerz, 2015; Ceraso, 2018).

By producing a *personal soundscape*, the student is able to enact their sense of self agentially, circulate out to the social soundscape—in some ways composing themselves in the process, in other ways attending to how others might wish to make sense of themselves. In order to see this, one has to recognize the way a student articulates feeling, intensity, and its impact on their bodily responses/actions, and this is enabled by attending to affect. The student attends to affect in their own way, naming experiences, feelings, moods, emotions, and spaces, to better understand how their identity and sense of self was built into the environments they moved through. We attend to how that affect modulates, "turns," and circulates via their own attendance to it.

Concluding Speculations: Voicing Affect in FYW

In short, what we have explored here is how to apply the theories around the mediation of affect, modal technologies (in particular audio and textual composition), and educational theories in the design and analysis of student assignments. This study was conducted in the hopes of revealing the importance of affect and sound in composition classrooms, as it can reveal a value of "writing to think" beyond making sense of only discursive thought; it can also help us make sense of our material environments and emotions (Banks, 2011; Palmeri, 2012; Ceraso, 2018; Harley, 2018). This helps us develop voice, a sense of agency, the limits of that agency, and the roots of that agency in the world around us. We can develop this voice by practicing it, by voicing our experiences in the act of inception (composing) and channeling affect to self-fashion.

As we wind down, there are a few limitations of this case study to attend to, as well. While my methodology for exploring the artifacts at my disposal was holistic, I also could not take the time to articulate interesting comparisons to other artifacts, which may have included ways these artifacts did *not* do some of the things this artifact set did. This was also influenced by the way this case in particular was exemplary of the conceptions of circulation, turning, and movement via the subject matter, and other artifact sets did not focus on these features in the

same way. The real test of the importance of these features is to attend to them in a more systematic fashion than done here, across artifacts of similar aims but different worlds of affect. In the future, I would hope to both focus on comparative work between artifact sets, but also decenter the discursive emphasis presented in my own receptions of the tracks—attend to the material sound, as Ceraso (2018) may ask us to; the limitations of this alphabetic text may have contributed to this as well—it may also be that voicing affect necessarily includes the discursive.

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“Someday a Real Rain Will Come” – Apocalypse, White Supremacy, and The Cinema of Reckoning

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“All the animals come out at night... Someday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets.” — *Taxi Driver* (1976)

In an early scene in Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver*, the camera cuts to white taxicab driver Travis Bickle as he writes in his journal to a first-person perspective of his drive down Times Square in mid-1970’s New York City. Travis narrates his journal in voiceover as the camera follows him in a stunning display of ignorance and bigotry. He first describes his clients using racist, homophobic, and sexist insults, describing them as “sick” and “venal.” Then he proceeds to brag about how he is willing to work in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Harlem, areas that racist cab drivers avoided. Travis peppers his slurs with the phrase, “Don’t make no difference to me,” suggesting a sort of colorblind approach to his occupation at odds with his both his overt and implied racism. But Travis just can’t hide his contempt for the people he sees in Times Square, and he condemns them, saying that “someday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets.” Travis makes it clear that under the veneer of his self-proclaimed tolerance is a deep and abiding hatred of the LGBTQ community, sex workers, and people of color.

However, in wishing for a “real rain” to scour the streets of New York, Travis also deploys a specific sort of apocalyptic rhetoric that finds a comfortable home in many white evangelical churches. This rhetoric invokes images of natural disaster being harnessed by the faithful in a reckoning against their “faithless” counterparts. While metaphors of apocalypse are common in rhetorical scholarship because they provide a sense of urgency, in this essay I hope to provide a compelling case against their continued use, most importantly because they often mirror rhetorical strategies used to promote white supremacy. This similarity has significant implications for posthuman and new materialist scholarship focused on climate change.

Apocalypse and white supremacy collide most violently in the Christian white supremacist concept of “accelerationism.”¹ I began writing this essay in 2019, months before COVID wracked the world, but after several white supremacist attacks on people of color. At the time, a white supremacist had just entered a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, to commit the 249th mass shooting of the year, killing twenty-three people and injuring another twenty-three, just months after a man live-streamed his killing of fifty people and injuring of another 40 in Christchurch, New Zealand.

¹ Accelerationism is most notably associated with former Congressional candidate Paul Nehlen, whose abhorrent ideas I refuse to cite further.

Since that time, attacks that specifically target marginalized communities have only grown more common. Just in the last month before the publication of this essay, attacks in Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York, targeted Latinx school children and Black grocery shoppers, respectively. The white supremacist terrorist attack on the El Paso border community renewed U.S. interest in topics like gun reform, violence, toxic masculinity, as well as the white nationalist concept of accelerationism. The Southern Poverty Law Center describes accelerationism as “the belief among some far-right extremists that committing acts of terrorism will cause society to collapse. Following the collapse of Western civilization, the accelerationists believe that they will have opportunities to build a country for only white, non-Jews that are unimaginable under the current system” (Hayden, 2019).

The link between white nationalism/supremacy and accelerationism is clear, but what remains obscured is how closely the concept of crisis is linked to the idea of starting society over with a “clean” slate. While the SPLC suggests that accelerationism is a fringe concept not widely endorsed by the Right, I argue that we often find accelerationism – coupled with dangerous colonial frontier mythologies – in much of apocalyptic climate change discourse. Certainly, we can see that in the case of Travis Bickle with his conviction that his crusade against marginalized populations in NYC is sanctioned by God and nature. Travis sees a sinful city deserving of destruction and fully expects his God to send a biblical rain to restore it to order. However, I argue that with the aid of apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and disaster films, these apocalyptic rhetorics have metastasized into a discourse of climate change that drives a large subsection of the scholarly posthuman and new materialist turn.

Apocalypse and the Anthropocene

While the word “apocalypse” is often shunned for its dim connotations in rhetorical scholarship, its conceptual roots remain intact in discussions of the Anthropocene. These roots are most visible in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly's* recent special issue, “Rhetorical New Materialisms” (RNM) which situates itself in the “death, memory [and] loss” (Gries, et. al, 2020, p. 140) that defines pandemic time, acknowledges the “consequences of climate change escalating at unimagined rates” (p. 145), and the “failure” of “social justices” (p. 145) that force us to “finally reckon with the limits of our knowledge” (p. 145). Without using the word “apocalypse,” the issue conjures images of the imminent collapse of the climate and democracy. As the issue acknowledges, climate change is a very real threat to global ecosystems, requiring that we continue to urge for immediate action. However, because the roots of apocalyptic rhetoric and environment in American culture are so thoroughly imbricated with white supremacist ideology, those discourses have become nearly impossible to disentangle, especially in frames that view democratic breakdown, “pandemics and [multiplying and worsening] climate collapse” as “disturbance[s]” and “opportunit[ies]” (Nicotra, in Gries, et. al, 2020, p. 160). It is this very framework that reveals the “apocalyptic” rhetoric that can underpin new materialism, because it sees the systemic collapse of global support systems as an opportunity to exploit.

This therapeutic view of climate and political trauma invokes the same process of white supremacist apocalypse-making that the United States used to colonize North America,

whereby white “survivors” created a post-apocalypse for Indigenous people and exploited the newly available resources that they left behind. Current white supremacist lenses render climate change a matter of urgency mainly because it threatens to affect white people, erasing how many vulnerable populations have already experienced environmental apocalypse. In doing so, not only does climate change become an issue that matters in proximity to whiteness — it also requires whiteness (white activists and scholars) to resolve it. By drawing attention to this overlap, I hope to nudge rhetoric scholars toward more inclusive metaphors for climate change, answering the *RSQ* special issue’s call to “do better in interrogating [RNM’s] own inadequacies and complicities in ongoing racisms and colonialisms” (p. 141).

Below, I discuss accelerationism’s basis in religious apocalypticism to explain how the temporal boundaries that apocalypticism and accelerationism encourage exploitative colonial approaches to the trauma of the end of the world by focusing more on the world *after* the trauma than the trauma itself. Because marginalized populations are more likely to experience the trauma of a given apocalypse, this framework inherently discounts their suffering. Then, I tie that history to white supremacist evangelical traditions and frontier mythology, differentiating what I have so far in this essay called “apocalyptic” rhetoric from the rhetoric of reckoning and demonstrating how rhetorics of reckoning function by distinguishing righteous insiders from nonbelievers. I then demonstrate how rhetorics of reckoning have seeped into new materialist scholarship, and how such rhetorics draw deeply from what I call a cinema of reckoning. Finally, I suggest that calls to unity and the dissolution of the subject/object do more harm than good, especially when used to try to ontologically and philosophically flatten diverse groups as a response to apocalyptic exigencies.

Apocalypse, Acceleration, and White Evangelism

The postapocalyptic anticipation that props up accelerationism draws deeply from religious studies; the work of Nick Land suggests that somehow the world could find “redemption with the coming of a post/inhuman state” (Galindo Hervás, 2016, p. 312) by accelerating the dehumanizing elements of capitalism.² In its religious, ideological, or political contexts, accelerationism seeks to capitalize on or exacerbate rapidly deteriorating conditions in order to prompt a crisis, a transformation, and to reshape the results in their desired image. Unsurprisingly, right wing evangelical Christians have picked up the accelerationism banner, arguing that we should intentionally perpetuate harmful policy such as the continued occupation of Palestine by Israel in order to create the conditions for the end of the world according to white evangelical interpretations of the Book of Revelation.

In this way, accelerationism and apocalypse seem tailor-made for each other. I grew up in a hardline, highly segregated evangelical church, where stories of the impending destruction of the Earth were common in Sunday school alongside “reassuring” tales of how those not destroyed in the lake of fire would live forever in heaven, praising God. But not all of the lessons

² This theory draws heavily on the Marxist idea that we can accelerate through capitalism’s stages by emphasizing its contradictions.

were about the end of the entire world. Many of them focused explicitly on God's punishment for non-believers, such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or Noah and the Great Flood, a catastrophe like that anticipated by Travis Bickle. In these examples, non-believers perished in rains that served as metaphorical warnings but were enacted very much on the physical plane and through environmental action — as the rain of fire that claimed Sodom and Gomorrah and the rains that flooded the Earth. These lessons instilled a lasting impression of apocalypse, particularly that they were something that happened to someone else — a judgment for failing to live a holy life that was, not coincidentally, heavily coded as white, male, and straight.

I must have listened to thousands of sermons on the end of the world by the time I finally left the church at the age of eighteen, and each was marked by a sort of giddy anticipation of the rapture and sick fascination with the punishment doled out to the “lost.” The apocalypse as it was framed by these pastors was never really an apocalypse (or revelation) at all, but rather what religious studies scholars call a “Day of the Lord,” a moment in which God's wrath is weaponized by the righteous to punish their enemies. In this essay, I trace how this sort of apocalyptic rhetoric has metastasized with the aid of post-apocalyptic and disaster films into the discourse of climate change and the Anthropocene in posthuman and new materialist scholarship.

Reckoning, Rhetoric, and the Frontier

To return to the epigraph of this essay, these famous words by Travis show that he's a straight white man convinced of his own victimization at the hands of the minority populations of New York City. Travis sees New York as a place beyond hope, a lost place littered with literal and figurative trash — the literal trash provided by the garbage carriers' strike during the film's production and the figurative trash concocted by Travis' racist, sexist, and homophobic imagination — to the point that he believes nothing short of a divine rain can save the city. But Travis implies that the “real rain” would sweep away only the garbage, that the reckoning would spare the righteous and return New York City to its “rightful” owners, embodied, of course, by his whiteness and masculinity.

While the current cultural interpretation of apocalypse invokes images of the end of the world, religious studies analyses break down the difference between apocalyptic texts and “Day of the Lord” texts, with the most important distinction being *for whom* the world ends. Apocalypses are for everyone, while Days of the Lord target a specific population of people such as the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the wider audiences of the flood narratives of Noah and Gilgamesh. Days of the Lord are more in line with Bickle's “real rain” in that they are designed to restore order or provide opportunity for those spared by whatever wrath is dispensed. Apocalypses, however, are transcendent in their initial effect: where Days of the Lord only end the world for a select few, apocalypses are for everyone. In an apocalyptic narrative, the world simply ends for all life, and “a revelation is mediated by an other-worldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural

world” (Collins 1998, p. 9). This distinction of transcendence is an important one, as the apocalypse serves as a transitional moment after which all life has changed and all people now occupy a transformed space. While Day of the Lord narratives certainly transform the targeted spaces, these narratives are less stories about the end of the world and more examples of a divine power avenging their chosen people, tacitly endorsing their behavior as righteous in the process.

What comes after the disaster is critical to distinguishing between the apocalypse from the Day of the Lord; the apocalypse is essentially a reset button for everyone, where a Day of the Lord favors the “worthy” and provides a divine reward for the “chosen.” While both serve an eschatological function, the Day of the Lord is more closely linked to a reckoning, or a sense of justice, than it is to divine judgment. The Day of the Lord serves as a violent instrument used to restore land and property to its “rightful” owners, a clean slate on which the survivors can begin again. In terms of land, the Day of the Lord’s primary function is to clear any undesirable human influence and re-establish the area as a frontier for the chosen. To this point, I have used the word “apocalyptic” to describe events that more readily fall under the “Day of the Lord” category. But because “apocalypse” signals a very specific sort of ending — one in which the world ends equally for everyone — and because “Days of the Lord rhetoric” doesn’t exactly roll off the tongue, for the remainder of this essay I will substitute “rhetorics of reckoning” for “apocalyptic rhetoric.” These rhetorics of reckoning are crucial to understanding the role that white supremacy plays in the discourse of climate change, because they imply a twisted sort of restorative justice characterized by a violent divine intervention which re-establishes a frontier tailor-made for “The Chosen,” i.e., white people.

New Materialism and Rhetorics of Reckoning

Rhetorics of reckoning’s genealogical ties to white supremacy/nationalism/evangelism and the frontier make them unwieldy at best, and dangerous at worst. There seems to be at least some acknowledgement in rhetorical circles of the inadequacy or even distastefulness of the use of apocalypse when discussing climate change. Scot Barnett argues that we must “confront the prospect of the end of the world, or at least the end of human civilization” while shortly thereafter conceding that “statements like this might seem too apocalyptic” (2017, p. 387). Likewise, Donna Haraway asks, “How can we think in times of urgencies *without* the self-indulgent and self-fulfilling myths of apocalypse?” (2016, p. 35) There is an apparent tension in rhetorical scholarship surrounding the use of apocalyptic metaphors that remains just out of grasp, a gnawing uncertainty about contemplating the end of the world that has yet to be clearly articulated. These attempts to abandon apocalyptic rhetoric because of its inherent baggage might be noble, but rhetorics of reckoning seem to have taken root there instead.

Perhaps some of the discipline’s distaste for the apocalypse stems from the fact that portrayals of such reckonings in popular culture since the late twentieth century are laden with raced ideological baggage that endangers the effectiveness of eschatological appeals. Yet despite how problematic they are, these rhetorics of reckoning find their way into the rhetorical scholarship on climate change. In his 2015 article, “Deep Ambivalence and Wild Objects: Toward a Strange

Environmental Rhetoric,” Nathaniel Rivers suggests that William Cronon’s meditations on the American Wilderness as a place teeming with nonhuman agency to suggest that our understanding of environmental rhetoric is incomplete if we do not “[give] wild objects their full due” (p. 423). However, Cronon situates his deep ambivalence toward wilderness in terms of a frontier mythology. Cronon’s sense of land hinges on erasure of Indigenous understandings of how that land is inextricably linked to Indigenous ways of understanding, which frontier myths suppressed in favor of the idea of an “uninhabited” wilderness. Another way that this environmental context is whitely construed is illustrated by Richard Slotkin’s definitions of frontier that consider it a place that exists at the edge of civilization. While this edge has traditionally been defined spatially — as a physical border between “civilized” white settlements and “uncivilized” Native lands — rhetorics of reckoning conceptualize this edge of civilization as temporal, a precipice of time over which civilization is hurtling as a result of climate change, nuclear war, failure of democracy, or pandemic. This temporal edge of civilization plays a recurring role in new materialist and posthuman scholarship both inside and outside rhetoric.

The whiteness of these environmental attitudes becomes clearer in contrast to Indigenous thought. Where Cronon and Rivers promote a newly discovered deep ambivalence, and Slotkin advances the notion of civilization as necessitating borders, Daniel Wildcat demands respect for a “deep spatial relationship to the land” cultivated by Indigenous people (2009, p. 17). Rivers, Cronon, and Slotkin all propose a connection between land and human, but Wildcat’s connection draws on Indigenous peoples’ “long-term relationships with particular landscapes and ecological systems [which] make their observations very useful, for their longitudinal time frame ‘study’ is not five or ten years, but often seven or more generations” (p. 29). For Wildcat, the deep connection to the land is not merely a useful tool in the battle against climate change, but an ontological position — a reality, he argues through his use of an Octavio Paz epigraph, that must be “known” and not just “used” (p. 1). This divergence in thinking with regard for human-land relations and temporality have significant repercussions for rhetorics of reckoning.

Because the impending apocalypse is temporal, much of the focus on climate change rhetoric hinges on the amount of time we have left to change things before its effects become irreversible. In 2018, it was twelve years (Watts, 2019). More recently, the world has been given as few as eighteen months (McGrath, 2019). But this sort of temporal focus blinkers climate change evangelists to the prior and continuing postapocalyptic existences of Indigenous communities. John Mohawk argues that the forced separation of Indigenous communities from their land, and the conceptual separation of the individual from nature, has forced many Indigenous communities into a state of crisis not unlike the hypothetical postapocalyptic landscapes offered by posthumanism (2008, p. 218). The frontier mindset has resulted in a colonial Day of the Lord for Indigenous people complete with the purported divine exigence in the shape of Manifest Destiny.

Not coincidentally, religious studies scholars articulate two phases of the apocalypse — spatial and temporal. In spatial apocalypses, the new plane of existence that is revealed is transcendent, whereas in the apocalyptic language such as that found in new materialist

rhetorics, the world often becomes largely uninhabitable, at least temporarily. This narrative framing fits the mold of the Day of the Lord, especially in flood narratives such as that of Noah and Gilgamesh, or fiery vengeance stories like Sodom and Gomorrah and Jericho. In those stories, a wrathful deity spares a chosen people from annihilation and, in the case of Noah, asks them to repopulate the world. Having given up on the hope of converting non-believers, deities choose instead to wipe them out and start again with an ideologically homogenous chosen few. The selective destruction of the world results in a *de facto* unification — in Noah-story terms, every human and animal are literally in the same boat after having been given the ultimatum, “join us or die.” To join is to abandon every nonconforming ideological affiliation in favor of a looming threat of extinction, a prospect that often surfaces in apocalyptic rhetoric. But where Days of the Lord offer an appeal to unity before enforcing it through a systematic purge of nonconformity, apocalypses simply reorganize the human ideological population through the revelation of a new transcendent plane, requiring no persuasion. Paul writes in Romans 14:11 that God says of the apocalypse, “every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God,” offering no indication of the possibility for denial. In the post-apocalypse, we are simply re-oriented regardless of our affiliation or proximity to righteousness.

Posthumanism was not always so focused on appeals to unity. Rosi Braidotti offers a careful critique of the sorts of posthuman unification we should strive for in *The Posthuman*, noting that “[t]he global economy is post-anthropocentric in that it ultimately unifies all species under the imperative of the market and its excesses threaten the sustainability of our planet as a whole” (2013, p. 63) and that “the size of recent scholarship on the environmental crisis and climate change alone testifies to this state of emergency and the emergence of the earth as a political agent” (p. 63-4). This first half of Braidotti’s argument for unification through crisis seems to be the major focus of posthumanism, to the point that it has become a defining trope of the subdiscipline. But Braidotti does something quite valuable when she notes that we cannot simply abandon individualism as a whole, noting that “one needs at least *some* subject position: this need not be either unitary or exclusively anthropocentric, but it must be the site for political and ethical accountability, for collective imaginaries and shared aspirations” (p. 102). In the rush to embrace a posthuman subject, rhetorical scholarship seems to have neglected this key point. Importantly, Braidotti fully rejects apocalyptic exigence, warning the reader against a unification that derives itself from a “sense of shared vulnerability, that is to say a global sense of inter-connection between the human and non-human environment in the face of common threats” (p. 50). This framework functions kairotically, with Braidotti acknowledging that individualism is useful as a critical tool in moments of raced and gendered crisis, and warning explicitly against the “full-scale humanization of the environment” (p. 85). This warning is not heeded in later posthuman scholarship.

Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) follows a similar path, but instead of qualifying on human unification, Haraway expresses her commitment to the apocalyptic metaphor to describe the effects of the Anthropocene:

These times called the Anthropocene are times of multispecies, including human, urgency: of great mass death and extinction; of onrushing disasters, whose unpredictable specificities are foolishly taken as unknowability itself; of refusing to know

and to cultivate the capacity of response-ability; of refusing to be present in and to onrushing catastrophe in time; of unprecedented looking away... How can we think in times of urgencies *without* the self-indulgent and self-fulfilling myths of apocalypse, when every fiber of our being is interlaced, even complicit, in the webs of processes that must somehow be engaged and repatterned? (p. 35)

Haraway rightly wants to avoid apocalyptic frameworks for their fatalism, but her examples of death, extinction, and disaster are distinctly stuff of Days of the Lord. The apocalypse is meant to be a narrative of great human transcendence, but the effects of the Anthropocene as described by Haraway offer only human suffering as a result of a human tendency to cling to individualism as evidenced by the argument that “bounded (or neoliberal) individualism amended by autopoiesis is not good enough figuratively or scientifically; it misleads us down deadly paths” (p. 33). Haraway, it would seem, offers the same choice to either “join us or die.”

Perhaps the binary “join us or die” is too restrictive, as demonstrated by Scot Barnett’s article, “Living Well in the Anthropocene,” in which Barnett responds to Roy Scranton’s statement that “we have to learn how to die not as individuals but as civilization” (2017, p. 21) by saying that “[o]n the surface, statements like this may seem a bit too apocalyptic” (p. 387). Despite Barnett’s qualification, apocalyptic language seeps into the essay. Even the invoking of the Anthropocene immediately channels thoughts of extinction-level events, a point Barnett concedes in his definition of the era, “What is unique about the Anthropocene is that it is forcing us to confront the prospect of the end of the world, or at least the end of human civilization” (p. 387). Here, Barnett approaches the temporal border of civilization, a frontier of posthuman existence that requires exploration. Barnett sees the Anthropocene as an exigence that forces humans together regardless of the outcome, a prospect that Scranton might frame as “join us AND die.” Barnett suggests that “when we learn to die, we detach ourselves not from the world or others in the world, but from ideas such as the self, individuality, certainty, and stability that are increasingly unhelpful for the hybrid problems and opportunities posed by the Anthropocene” (p. 387). Unification is hardly inevitable and might not even be desirable depending on what a given person would stand to lose by taking up this bargain. But Barnett takes this position one step further, arguing that not only is unification helpful but that to resist unification by remaining attached to individuality is “unhelpful.” According to Barnett, to remain disunited in the face of the Anthropocene is to actively hinder the solution to its problems. Most troubling, however, is Barnett’s reference to the “opportunities” provided by the Anthropocene, hinting at the accelerationist attitudes toward climate change as a chance to reestablish the frontier.

While Barnett explicitly calls for unification, the benefits of abandoning individuality are more often simply assumed. Thomas Rickert’s *Ambient Rhetoric* takes as its goal “the dissolution of the subject-object relation” (2013, p. xii) and Karen Barad asks us to “renounce the very idea that individual objects possess discrete attributes” (2007, p. 292). Nathaniel Rivers quotes the National Climate Assessment that stresses “the need for the American people to prepare for and *respond to* [climate change’s] far-reaching implications” (2015, p. 421, emphasis in Rivers’ quote), and then argues that “[w]e are in a moment when fully thinking through response-ability is a pressing national and international need” (p. 421). Rivers sets an apocalyptic

exigence and seems to suggest that “the American people” and “we” are responsible for avoiding the end. I wish to draw attention to the ontological flattening of diverse American culture in the NCA’s own quote, suggesting a monolithic American people that are both responsible for and equally concerned by the looming end of the world, and the assumption of “we” in Rivers’ statement that performs the same function. The presumption here is that all Americans, if not all humans, should be gravely concerned with this developing threat to the end of civilization, this encroaching temporal frontier, and that the most pressing issues facing the world today are those that threaten nations and species. Each example of scholarship here presents unity as the solution to the apocalyptic threat of the Anthropocene, this in itself is not troubling until we examine the circumstances under which unity has been presented as a salve to apocalyptic threat in popular culture.

The Unity Soliloquy and the Cinema of Reckoning

I return now to film to illustrate the problem of unity as “convenient consubstantiality.” Our understanding of apocalypse seems to be driven primarily by the misnamed apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic genre of film which mischaracterizes the Day of the Lord narrative as apocalyptic. Apocalyptic film — with its focus on the death, destruction, and chaos of the fall of civilization — might be better categorized as a cinema of reckoning, and these reckonings like other reckonings are targeted and they discriminate. Cinema of reckoning does significant ideological work, often in the historical context of perceived racial crisis. The seeds of white victimization were sown as early as 1915 with *The Birth of a Nation*, but they sprang forth during the tumultuous 1960’s when the fear that white Americans might lose their stranglehold on governmental power in the United States went mainstream. A cinema of reckoning began to develop and flourish as a stark warning of the “dangers” of desegregation. The fact that *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) featured a Black man as its protagonist was as scary as any flesh-eating zombie to the crowd that feared a widespread political realignment in favor of historically marginalized Black Americans. This fear is made painfully explicit in *Planet of the Apes* (1968), where the land — revealed at the end of the film to be a post-reckoning United States — is governed by tribes of anthropomorphic apes onto which the protagonists project their own backwardness, lack of education, and tendencies for violence. That said, it must still be noted that for all their failings, the protagonists who are human are also white. The apes, for all their “civilized” qualities, are still meant to be seen as racialized animals who are incapable of advanced thought, as illustrated by their inability to believe that Charles Heston’s character flew into their midst. Cinema of reckoning took vaguely articulated fears of “white genocide” and spun them into cautionary tales of the disintegration of social fabric at the hands of zombies and six-foot-tall anthropomorphic orangutans.³

³ It is no coincidence that two of the most significant films in the cinema of reckoning were released in 1968 — George Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* and Franklin J. Schaffner’s *Planet of the Apes*. These films debuted in the thick of the Civil Rights Movement, just three years after Lyndon B. Johnson signed the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* and Malcolm X’s assassination, and the same year that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. At a time when white Americans

Another way that cinema of reckoning articulates white anxiety is through the deployment of colorblind rhetorics. As a preface to the Day of the Lord, cinema of reckoning often employs what I call the “unity soliloquy” to prime its audience for its vision of a new post-racial world. The unity soliloquy given by the ostensibly white protagonist of the film has roots as far back as *Planet of the Apes*’ opening sequence, when George Taylor muses on the conflict that defined the Civil Rights Movement in terms that would today be at home in an #AllLivesMatter rant. Looking out the window of the Icarus as it orbits a strange “new” planet, Taylor says,

Seen from here, everything seems different. Time bends, space is boundless. It squashes a man’s ego. I feel lonely. That’s about it. Tell me though — does man, that marvel of the universe, that glorious paradox who sent me to the stars, still make war against his brother? Keep his neighbors’ children starving? (*Planet of the Apes*)

Planet of the Apes’ use of “man” as a catch-all term for humanity is the first indication of the film’s position on how humans should organize themselves in the face of potential extinction. According to Taylor, the concept of humanity should trump embodied identity differences, resulting in people treating each other as “brothers.” This reference to “man,” read as “mankind,” is a call to a particular species identification at the expense of raced individualism. The second sign of the film’s flattening humanistic approach is that Taylor mentions in passing that his ego is “squashed,” noting a radical realignment of his identity priorities through his newfound exterior perspective. In noting his squashed ego, Taylor signals that his individual identity has taken a backseat to his species identity as a result of his widening universal scope through his interstellar travel. Taylor’s ego is suggested to have impeded his ability to see the “whole” picture of humanity, implying that a more harmonious human existence relies simply on the ability of Othered humans to set their egos aside as well.

The rhetorical function of the unity soliloquy closely mirrors calls to abandon subjectivity in rhetorical scholarship. Both calls heavily rely on the aesthetic of the post-apocalyptic landscape to set the scene for their arguments. Both place a premium on the ability to make wider connections outside of “personal” identification in service of a wider perspective that flattens human difference, a critique continuously leveled at posthumanism by scholars like Alexander Weheliye and others. Both appeals hinge on the rhetor’s ability to call their audience to a state of shared vulnerability that Braidotti warns we should avoid. But colorblind rhetoric as a response to white victimization is not the only thing that racism and the cinema of reckoning have in common. When Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, he urged citizens of the United States to “lay aside our irrelevant differences” (Miller Center, 2022). Similarly in *Night of the Living Dead*, Helen cajoles her fellow survivors that “We may not enjoy living together, but dying together isn’t going to solve anything.” Finally, in *Planet of the Apes*, Taylor muses about human difference in the *Icarus*, wondering “does man, that marvel of the universe, that glorious paradox who sent me to the stars, still make war against his brother? Keep his neighbor’s children starving?” Together, these three representative quotes demonstrate a deep skepticism toward the validity of human racial difference. Johnson implies

likely feared their own Day of Reckoning for the enslavement of Black Americans and the evils of segregation, the cinema of reckoning really began to take hold of the American imagination.

that race is an “irrelevant” distinction, Helen questions the point of racism in the face of an impending Day of the Lord, and Taylor simply flattens human ontology in familial species terms.

Even criticism of cinemas of reckoning drift into this colorblind rhetoric. In *Eli Roth's History of Horror*, the eponymous host reacts with incredulity to a racist character in Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, the follow up to *Night of the Living Dead*. He asks, “Why is this guy concerned with racism? Like, there's zombies in the building! Aren't there bigger problems?” (Sayenga). And it is here that I believe we find real exigence for cinemas of reckoning. Faced with accountability for their atrocities, white Americans flock to cinemas of reckoning as an attempt to lock racial arguments in American discourse into stasis by offering trauma on a worldwide scale as the “more important issue” and casting racial identity as “irrelevant” and “inconsequential” in the face of a looming worldwide trauma. Faced with the repercussions of generations of institutionalized racism, cinemas of reckoning offer a sort of *deus ex machina*, a Hail Mary for white Americans to imagine an end run around reconciliation and reparation.

There has been a veritable deluge of disaster film and cinema of reckoning in the post-9/11 American cinemascap. Zombies, climate change, earthquakes, volcanoes, meteors, viruses, aliens, apes, nuclear war and even trees have served as agents of catastrophe. While the agents and agencies shift according to filmmakers' sensibilities, the disaster film narrative follows a distinct formula: dispossessed white humanity endures an extinction-level-event, is delivered through some stroke of luck or divine intervention, and then begins to rebuild civilization. We can tie this back to the Frontier Mythology that shaped American westward expansion during the 19th century. This mythology violently “reset” the United States for the exploration and colonization of white Americans and established those same attitudes regarding “civilization” and “wilderness.” At times of intense racial tension, cinema of reckoning sides with those like Travis Bickle, reveling in the idea that “[s]omeday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets.” Like Sodom and Gomorrah, the story of Gilgamesh, and the Great Flood, these movies and television shows are concerned with restoring a pastoral sensibility to the United States that can then be repopulated by “chosen” people who automatically buy into accepted morals and beliefs.

The second issue with cinema of reckoning is the historical moment when it continually resurfaces. While scholars have often read the cinema of reckoning as a response to anxiety about the state of the nation, the racial component of the genre has been obscured. Whiteness as portrayed in the cinema of reckoning hinges upon the victimization of “white” culture to the point that “progress” becomes impossible, a sort of paralysis through political correctness that stalls the white civilization mission. Unable to reconcile the disproportionate use of state violence against people of color with the assertion that the United States now occupies a “post-racial” era, cinema of reckoning instead wipes the slate clean through an external agency (be it a meteor, climate change, alien invasion, pandemic, or zombies), resetting the United States' population and eliminating the racial diversity that thwarts the Lord's Chosen People for whom the world is made.

Unlike the disaster film, which dramatizes the dissolution of American society on screen, the cinema of reckoning joins the action after its dissolution. Disaster films generally end with a sense of possibility of rebuilding, while cinema of reckoning tends to take a bleaker view, with the action taking place almost wholly within a broken society.⁴ Both the disaster film and cinema of reckoning offer implicit arguments about who exactly is expected to survive the extinction-level events, and what the world would or should look like in their wake. The United States and its analogues are often shown in a state of desolation, with wandering groups of heavily armed white males staking claims to precious resources such as water and arable land. In this sense, the cinema of reckoning reinvigorates Frontier Mythology by literally killing off marginalized Americans by the millions, and plopping their white male antagonists in the middle of a *new* New World ripe for exploitation. This Frontier Mythology, in turn, grounds evangelicalism's environmental dominionism claims.⁵

In these terms, I would hesitate to characterize the cinema of reckoning genre as apocalyptic at all, primarily because of the scope of judgment associated with the societies in these films

⁴ For example, *Independence Day* (1996) is a disaster epic because it is a two-hour journey through the systematic destruction of the United States by extraterrestrials, culminating in a rebuilding effort. *A Quiet Place* (2018), on the other hand, reflects the aesthetic of the cinema of reckoning because it takes place after the supposed extraterrestrial invasion and the possibility of rebuilding seems much more remote. Notable disaster films of the late 20th / early 21st century include *Independence Day* (1996), *Mars Attacks!* (1996), *Deep Impact* (1998), *Armageddon* (1998), *2012* (2009), *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), *Cloverfield* (2008), and *Poseidon* (2006). Cinema of reckoning has a long-storied history, but to give an example of the genre's breadth and ubiquity here's a short list: *12 Monkeys* (1995), *Waterworld* (1995), *The Matrix* (1999), *The Road* (2009), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), and *Oblivion* (2013). This non-exhaustive list serves as only a partial representation of how frequently Americans are encouraged to think about the end of the world.

⁵ This is dramatized to the extreme over the arc of HBO's *Game of Thrones*. Daenerys Targaryen's legions of brown-skinned formerly-enslaved people are simply sacrificed to the Night King and his army of the dead, which has been widely theorized to be an allegory for climate change (Fortuna, 2019). *Game of Thrones* devotes considerable screen time to the troubles faced by Daenerys in her quest to end slavery. When she liberates the Unsullied and then the slaves of Astapor, Yunkai, and Meereen, she faces significant resistance from the slaveowners who argue that they are unable to realign their ways of life on such short notice. The cities fall back into slavers' hands, formerly enslaved people petition Daenerys to sell themselves, and Meereen becomes the target of terrorist attacks funded by former slaveowners. As the series progresses, the white inhabitants of Westeros refer to the formerly enslaved as "foreign scum," "dirty," and "savages" (see Season 7, 2017), and speculate on the ability of the series' people of color to acculturate and fit in. Faced with a difficult racial problem, *Game of Thrones* takes the easy way out, eliminating its peoples of color systematically through a series of Days of the Lord and white purity fantasies.

whose worlds have “ended.” The worlds that cinema of reckoning characters find themselves in are as far from transcendent as possible. Instead, these films portray a world in which, Stephen King notes, “we’re getting a chance to exercise our most anti-social emotions. You know, that mob impulse. It’s like ‘kill ‘em all and let God sort ‘em out’” (Savenga, 2018). If anything, cinema of reckoning seems to set the world back to a time during which extreme violence, food poverty, and precarious living were the rules of the day — much like the prototypical Western and the frontier it mythologizes.

End Game: The Divine Reward of the Apocalypse

“If the only thing keeping a person decent is the expectation of divine reward then, brother, that person is a piece of shit.” — Rust Cohle, *True Detective*

While post-apocalyptic landscapes in cinema often are meant to *look* bleak, they carry a sense of white possibility and wonder that is usually only found in space exploration and western films. Having weathered the “real rain” of the apocalypse, Earth’s remaining inhabitants find themselves in a position to remake the world. Sheltered from the flooding, the predominately white survivors are gifted a true New World to repopulate, only this time their progress through an unpopulated wilderness ripe for exploration and settlement is unimpeded by Indigenous populations. In true Day of the Lord fashion, the world has only ended for *some* of its inhabitants, and the remaining humans can count themselves among the chosen. In this way, the post-apocalyptic landscape of popular culture evokes a concept of frontier that never existed outside of the whitewashed history books of the twentieth-century United States. This frontier gives its occupants an opportunity to establish their utopian society unencumbered by its history of racism through an ethnic cleansing with no human agent to shoulder the blame.

It is in this utopian future that the whiteness of evangelicalism and climate change thought converge with disturbing results. The fatalistic rhetoric of white evangelicalism toward the end of the world has driven particularly harmful policies, especially in the context of climate change. I myself was raised to believe that the rapture — an event during which Jesus would descend from heaven and physically take his most devout followers back to paradise — was always imminent. We were told that catastrophic geological, weather, and climate phenomena such as hurricanes, earthquakes, famine, plague, drought, and flood increased in frequency the closer we came to the rapture, and so the only people who had to fear these phenomena were those who were not “saved.” The dread we experienced as a result of these deadly events was to be supplanted by the anticipation of an impending *deus ex machina* that would spare us from the worst of the apocalypse. In 2017, House Republican Tim Walberg from Michigan offered a wrinkle on this theory, stating that he “believe[s] that there is a creator in God who is much bigger than us. And I’m confident that, if there’s a real problem, he can take care of it” (Gajanan, 2019). Unsurprisingly, the evangelical party line on climate change seems to be that either God will fix it, or that they welcome the effects because it means they are closer to their divine reward.

While apocalyptic rhetorics of climate change in the discipline of rhetoric are more skeptical of a *deus ex machina*, the divine reward that awaits survivors of the apocalypse have been laid out at length for survivors of the cinema of reckoning. The argument that the relinquishment of individualism would avert a climate disaster or better help us cope with a world ravaged by the catastrophes of climate change brings apocalyptic rhetoric too close to white evangelical and popular culture representations of the end of the world. To put it bluntly, this way of thinking and arguing has historically privileged white, straight, able-bodied men. The posthuman appeal to a sense of shared vulnerability threatens to humanize iguanas and ice cubes while Black Americans are killed in the streets by cops who, on the whole, face fewer consequences than promotions for their actions. In short, white climate change evangelists are newcomers, tourists in the realm of vulnerability. Adopting apocalyptic rhetorics that have historically marginalized people of color threatens to alienate marginalized communities in the United States while promoting accelerationist understandings of climate change that would provide a frontier-like space for white survivors to build a world “saved” from having to reckon with its violence toward people of color.

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Teaching Methodology and Methods through Rhetoric and Social Media

Laura Gonzales, University of Florida

In Fall of 2021, I had the honor of teaching a course, “Rhetoric and Social Media” at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in the English Department at the University of Florida. This course was intended to establish a space for analysis, discussion, and content development surrounding the intersections of rhetoric and social media. Given that my students and I (and the rest of the world) were (and are) still navigating a pandemic during this course, and given that we were trying to learn together in Florida, a state that has continued to attack academic freedom, the goal of the course was to establish a space for analyzing and discussing how people use social media to establish spaces for resistance, survival, and joy.

In the course description, I communicated to students that

our goal in this course will be to analyze how social media activists and researchers use social media platforms to communicate information. Importantly, we will also research the infrastructure of social media platforms to better understand the algorithms used to both build and collect information on social media. With attention to methodology and method, we will then develop our own social media projects to showcase the intersections of rhetoric and social media in relation to our own scholarly and activist interests.

Course readings included *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice* by Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, Brooke Foucault Welles, and Genie Lauren, Laura March’s Social Toolkit (<https://lauramarch.com/portfolio-item/social-toolkit/>), André Brock’s “From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation,” Temptaous McKoy’s *Y’all Call It Technical and Professional Communication, We Call It #ForTheCulture: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and Their Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies*, Michael Trice and Liza Potts’ “Building Dark Patterns into Platforms: How GamerGate Perturbed Twitter’s User Experience,” John Gallagher and Aaron Beveridge’s “Project-Oriented Web Scraping in Technical Communication Research,” McKinley Green’s “Risking Disclosure: Unruly Rhetorics and Queer(ing) HIV Risk Communication on Grindr,” Sweta Baniya’s “Transnational Assemblages in Disaster Response: Networked Communities, Technologies, and Coalitional Actions during Global Disasters,” and Janet Chávez Santiago’s “Tramando la Palabra/Weaving the Word.”

As we read these texts, students and I primarily discussed two questions: “What methodologies are these scholars and activists using in their work?” and “What methods are these scholars using in these projects?” Through these questions, I wanted students to understand that first, there is a difference between methodologies and methods, and second, that our

methodologies, the frameworks that we use to read, gather, understand data (and the world), influence *all* methods. Often, especially in projects related to technology, methodologies are ignored in preference for expansive methods that demonstrate technological skill. However, methodologies always influence our research praxis.

Thanks to the generosity of colleagues across multiple countries, students also benefitted from Zoom visits from several of the scholars whose work we read. A huge thanks to Janet Chávez Santiago, Temptaous McKoy, Suban Nur Cooley, McKinley Green, John Gallagher, Aaron Beveridge, Michael Trice, Liza Potts, Laura March, Cherise McBride, Anna Smith, Sweta Baniya, and Ashley Beardsley for visiting our course and sharing their expertise.

As students read this scholarship, asked questions, and interacted with authors, they were also asked to develop their own social media research projects. The goal of this project was to trace any social medial conversation that students are interested in, and to explicitly discuss the methodologies and the methods that they used to research the conversation they chose. Students thus used web scraping methods to analyze data sets through intersectional feminist methodologies, used Chicax feminist methodologies to do a content analysis of specific hashtags, and more.

The three pieces included in this issue of the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics* are written by undergraduate students in this social media course. These students — Malori Malone, Savannah Baggett, and Noreen Khan-Qamar — each explore different social media conversations as they practice using methods and methodologies that they deem appropriate for their specific project. While each project is different, what stood out to me, and what motivated us to send these projects off for publication, is how these students showcase their reasoning through methodology, methods, and their intersections as undergraduate students. I'm very proud of these students' work and I hope they can help us continue conversations about the need to expand our teaching of methodology and method in our digital rhetoric courses and programs.

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An Intersectional Feminist Reading of Social Media Conversations about the Duke and Duchess of Sussex

Noreen Khan-Qamar, University of Florida

Introduction

In May of 2018, American actress Meghan Markle married Prince Harry — formally becoming a working member of the Royal Family of the United Kingdom. Upon their marriage, they were granted the titles Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Following the televised wedding at Windsor Castle, the couple received immense amounts of attention and media coverage. People across the globe wanted to read all about the newly married royal couple, whether it be about their wedding, honeymoon, or everything in between. However, the attention they were receiving was not all positive. The media, social media specifically, was quick to express harsh judgment regarding their marriage. Tweets, Instagram posts, and news headlines became critical of Meghan's every move. Social media was relentless, spewing unnecessary hatred which caused the Duke and Duchess of Sussex to both suffer heavily.

Nearly a year after their marriage, the arrival of Meghan and Prince Harry's first child in May of 2019 gave social media an advanced outlet for their negativity. Racist posts about their son, Archie, flooded social media platforms with concerns regarding how dark his skin tone would be. It can be inferred that this was the final straw in what led to their decision to renounce their royal duties. Hence, in January of 2020, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex released a statement announcing that they would be stepping back in their roles as working senior members of the Royal Family (Duke and Duchess of Sussex, 2020).

After their departure from the Royal Family, the royal couple participated in a tell-all interview in which they spoke on various aspects of their time as working royal members. In perhaps the most heartbreaking moment of the interview, Meghan says "I just didn't want to be alive anymore," referring to all the hurtful media attention she received while she was pregnant (Landler, 2021). It reached the point where Prince Harry felt as if he could not leave his wife alone for fear that she would harm herself. It is hard to imagine what it was like for the Duchess of Sussex to live her life in the spotlight, terrified of which simple move of hers would be criticized next, all because of the color of her skin. Given the role that social media played in perpetuating racist narratives related to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, I began this research project focused on social media posts that were perpetuating negativity towards the couple. Specifically, my research question is as follows: To what extent does an intersectional feminist reading of the social media conversations about the Duke and Duchess of Sussex highlight the reasoning behind the couple's decision to step down from the Royal Family and the demands of the institution?

Background

Markle in the Media

Meghan Markle is not a stranger to the media, whether it be within the United Kingdom or internationally. Researchers were quick to notice Markle's strong presence within the media, sparking critical analyses into media aspects that led to Markle and her husband, Prince Harry, relinquishing their royal duties (Clancy & Yelin, 2018; Mahfouz, 2018; Rahimli, 2020). Further, there were many reasons for Markle's negative attention from various forms of media. When she married Prince Harry, she was marrying into a White institution that thrives on their high-class English figureheads. Iman Mahfouz (2018) highlights the reasoning for Markle's heavy media attention by writing, "Since the announcement of the wedding, Markle has become a controversial figure in the press and on social media for being an American, biracial, former actress who is also divorced" (para. 1). With this, the media delineated Markle's many qualities that set her apart from the rest of the Royal Family.

However, the press and social media were quick to antagonize Markle due to these very differences, such as her race and status as a divorcee. Among the individuals who participated in encouraging negative media regarding Markle, the British were perhaps at the forefront of these social media posts. Mahfouz (2018) continues, "Unlike in traditional forms of media, such as the press for instance, users of social media have become producers rather than mere consumers of texts, being able to express their opinions and attitudes with a great degree of freedom" (para. 5). Thus, social media fostered easy access and a lack of filtering which allowed for the derogatory media posts to gain such traction – eventually becoming the leading cause for the couple's exit from the Royal Family.

The Creation of "Megxit"

When Prince Harry made the decision for his family to step down from their royal duties, the media went into a frenzy and crafted the term "Megxit" – a parody of the word "Brexit" which refers to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. Despite the Duke and Duchess of Sussex leaving the Royal Family due to negative media, their exit did not halt the hatred geared towards them via antagonistic social media posts. Even with the Duke of Sussex releasing statements that addressed how the media was creating a toxic environment, media outlets saw their departure as an outlet to continue to antagonize the couple. Undeterred, the media would refer to their step back from their duties as senior members of the Royal Family as "Megxit." With this term, the media was able to antagonize Markle, often referring to their departure as "drama," "royal drama," and "exit drama" (Rahimli, 2020).

Through critical research, the language and nature of social media posts surrounding Markle can be noted to engender new terms and impacted social environments. Ainura Rahimli (2020), in studying the semantic development of the term Megxit from the more popular term Brexit, concluded that social media discourse and the way this discourse circulates often leads to the creation of new terms. It is not only new terms that have impact, but the negative tone and comments that are presented, consumed, and then perpetuated by the masses that impact the people involved. On the topic of the couple's departure from the Royal Family, Rahimli (2020)

writes, “This step of them has not been accepted by the people equally. It is noteworthy to mention that their decision had a negative side according to some sources” (para. 2). It is then mentioned that 35% of those surveyed disapproved of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex parting ways with their royal duties. This response from the British was not unexpected as members of the Royal Family are held to strict economic and behavioral expectations, and a higher standard overall (Rahimli, 2020).

However, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’s exit should not have initiated such damaging media coverage – both on social media and within news headlines. Rahimli (2020) continues, “The relative synonymy of drama and tragedy that reflects the subjective gradient of the Megxit process is undoubtedly the result of the divergence of events of different language and cultural personalities” (para. 15). Consequently, it was made clear that the Royal Family and the British in general were not prepared to accept a modern princess inspiring change within an old-fashioned system. With this, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’s departure can be studied using intersectional feminism as an approach to dissecting negative media coverage and its lasting impact on individuals.

Feminism versus the Royal Institution of England

Feminism, by definition, is about equal rights and opportunities for all genders. More specifically, it encompasses “[r]especting diverse women’s experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realise their full rights” (International Women’s Development Agency, 2021). Feminist views are often not represented when it comes to the Royal Family of England. Thus, when Meghan Markle married into the family, her feminist values were not well received. Laura Clancy and Hannah Yelin (2018) write, “...Markle does indeed represent a new feminist order, and is therefore part of the consensus surrounding a supposed moment of radical feminist change” (para. 5). With this, Clancy and Yelin (2018) explored the nature of Markle’s feminism and how society and social media responded to it. Their research outlined that many saw Markle’s modern temperament as a threat to the well-established monarchy. However, this research also highlights the notion that social media gives Markle too much credit when it comes to her being a paragon for feminism. For instance, the media were quick to make judgments when Markle wore trousers to a royal event. While some social media posts criticized her for not wearing a more feminine option such as a dress, others praised her for introducing feminist values to royal events. Yet, other female royals such as the Queen Mother had worn trousers long before Markle had. This consequently supports the fact that negative social media posts about Markle were often unsupported and merely posted as a means to elicit hate towards her because of her race.

These posts markedly represent the need for intersectional feminism, a methodology that branches from feminism and acknowledges the notion that different forms of discrimination intersect along the axes of race, gender, class, dis/ability, and more. Kimberlé Crenshaw writes in support of this notion: “Feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains” (2005, p. 1242).

For instance, various races will not experience the same forms of discrimination based on gender alone, since women of color experience racism and sexism simultaneously. All in all, the plethora of derogatory social media posts targeting Markle were simply due to the very essence of her being “a feminist, post-racial utopia: a bi-racial, divorced, self-proclaimed feminist, American actor ‘modernising’ an ancient patriarchal institution” (Clancy & Yelin, 2018, para. 2).

Method and Methodology

After reading through the research mentioned above, I decided how to effectively approach my research question regarding the role social media played in prompting the departure of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex from the Royal Family. Consequently, here I evaluate social media posts and hashtags relating to Meghan Markle and Prince Harry through the methodology of intersectional feminism. The methodology of intersectional feminism combines ideas from both critical race theory and feminist theory. As defined by Crenshaw, who created this methodology, Crenshaw, “...intersectional feminism is the understanding of how women's overlapping identities — including race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion, age and immigration status — impact the way they experience oppression and discrimination” (Stiefvater, 2020). This embodies the idea that women experience the world differently based on various factors. For the Duchess of Sussex, her race, gender, and nonroyal status were all used against her in the media. With this theory in mind, I collected data using the method of web scraping, which is software designed to extract data from certain websites, such as Twitter, using keywords.

While pursuing my research, I used intersectional feminism to analyze social media posts and tweets through not only a gender bias but a racial lens as well when it comes to how the media treated Meghan Markle based on the color of her skin. In Crenshaw’s work regarding intersectionality, she also “details that race and gender hierarchies don’t have an additive negative effect but rather intersect and interact to produce uniquely discriminatory realities for those multiply marginalized” (Jackson et al., 2020, p. 80). With that being said, this methodology is one that can be used to study how systemic racism affects people in modern day society, including how Meghan Markle was negatively treated by a country that is predominantly White. Further, I used intersectional feminist theory to assess social media posts that criticized Markle due to her gender, focusing on feminism and gender inequality. Essentially, I collected data from a social media platform, Twitter, to analyze how these platforms laced with racism and anti-feminism have affected Meghan Markle and Prince Harry, eventually leading to them stepping back from their duties as working members of the Royal Family.

Results

The Blatant Racism Towards the Duchess of Sussex

Upon the news that Prince Harry was dating Meghan Markle, an actress, American, and divorcee, social media quickly generated opinionated posts with Twitter at the forefront of all platforms. While some users were excited that the young prince had found a potential princess,

a large majority of posts shared disapproval of Meghan as she was of mixed race and did not fit the typical nature of a royal member. With this, posts and tweets began to emerge criticizing her every move and sparking false narratives. This behavior did not soften following their marriage, and instead, it began to accelerate. One of the driving factors of belligerent tweets geared towards Meghan was her race, as one user tweets,

Blacks just want to take over and we see this behavior over Black Meghan Markle who wants to take over the most powerful white family in the world. Meghan could've chose a black family but she didn't. She chose a white family she continues to destroy. #Megxit #PrinceAndrew. (ANGEL, 2019)

This is a telling case of the systemic racism that is present in staunch royalists, and Britons in general, that revealed itself when Prince Harry began his relationship with Meghan. Though Prince Harry expressed concern to the press and the people about Meghan's well-being across the years, social media seems to ignore his pleas each time — labeling Meghan as dramatic or weak instead.

The racism in such tweets was not always flagrant. Racial microaggressions were also apparent in various social media posts. Microaggressions, by definition, are underlying and subtle discriminatory statements against members of a marginalized group, in this case, African Americans. For instance, the following tweet utilizes a microaggression towards Black women by labeling Meghan as a diva in response to conversations about wanting to be recognized as a humanitarian:

Meghan Markle is as FAKE as they come. "Humble Meghan" is a hoax. Diva Meghan is the truth. I can't imagine why. Anyway, here's a peak into the REAL Meghan. #meghanmarkle #megxit #megainmarkle. (azurseasky22, 2019)

Using "diva" to describe Meghan subtly hints at the negative stereotype of "angry Black women," implying that Meghan only wanted to be known as a humanitarian simply for the label and not for the charity work that she has participated in. The blatant, overtly racist tweets and the ones using subtle microaggressions allowed Meghan no relief and proceeded to diminish her. With these two tweets in mind, the use of the #Megxit hashtag over a year before the Duke and Duchess of Sussex formally left the Royal Family shows just how social media contributed to their exit as the formation of this hashtag not only created, but heavily spread, the idea that Meghan should leave the Royal Family.

Kate Middleton versus Meghan Markle

Since the announcement of Meghan's engagement to Prince Harry, social media users and avid Kate Middleton fans began to vigorously compare the two duchesses. While this was inevitable, the treatment and support of the two duchesses was glaringly different. Headlines regarding their relationship and posts analyzing their actions were abundant. In November of 2018, it was claimed by the press that Meghan had made Kate, titled the Duchess of Cambridge upon her own marriage, cry at a dress fitting before Prince Harry and Meghan's wedding. Of course, social media had mixed opinions regarding the claim. However, users were mainly on Kate's

side as Meghan's character had already been and continued to be attacked. Recently, it was revealed that quite the opposite had occurred, and Kate was the one who had made Meghan cry. Still, people were quick to rush to Kate's defense tweeting statements such as,

You know, I wonder if what caused Catherine to cry was Meghan's poor treatment & bullying of Kate's staff? These seem to be two hot topics that won't seem to die...Is it possible they're related? I can see Kate getting that upset by Meghan bullying her staff #MEGXIT #MoonbumpMeghan. (JustMyThots, 2021)

This tweet is a prime example of how individuals would pit these two women against each other, eliciting a theme of anti-feminism.

Furthermore, in another tweet referencing Meghan and Kate, individuals began to insinuate jealousy between the duchesses—further developing their rivalry within social media.

#MeghanMarkle is starting up yet another smear campaign against #duchessofcambridge first in a DM article full of #duchessmeghan old tricks of using friends and American expressions, now Lainey gossip has been paid to do the same thing. Someone is salty Kate is so loved. (Dr. sage14, 2020)

Staunch royalists lean towards the Duchess of Cambridge, while Americans favor the Duchess of Sussex. Polls showed that 46% of Britons did not feel sympathy towards the Duchess of Sussex, despite the treacherous media treatment she had been enduring. This same poll also revealed that only 41% favored Meghan, while 67% favored Kate (Dixon, 2019). Though both women were commoners before marriage, Meghan's mixed race and American roots were negatively paralleled with Kate being White and raised in the United Kingdom, simultaneously highlighting pedigree and prejudice. The creation of friction between the two duchesses further inspired an outlet on social media to place Meghan below Kate due to her race.

The Newest Addition to the Royal Family isn't Exempt

When the Duke and Duchess of Sussex welcomed their first baby, Archie, people across the globe shared their warm wishes for the couple. However, there were also a multitude of individuals who felt the need to share negative opinions regarding the newest member of the Royal Family. Specifically, BBC Radio presenter Danny Baker tweeted a black and white photo of an older couple holding hands with a chimpanzee and captioned the photo, "Royal baby leaves hospital." This tweet, now deleted, received equal parts praise and backlash as many shared negative views about the royal baby because he was part African American due to his mother's lineage. Social media shared concerns regarding the royal baby's complexion as many wondered if the baby would have dark or fair skin. This shines a light on the racism that is often the sole motivator in tweets such as this one.

In addition to concerns regarding the royal baby's complexion, many spewed hatred by questioning whether or not her pregnancy was legitimate as they suspected the use of a surrogate. Upon the birth of Archie, his birth certificate was not immediately released and the new family of three would not appear before media outlets. Social media users mistook these actions and claimed that Meghan was faking her pregnancy and instead had a surrogate. In

reality, the couple was just recovering from the birth of their first child and privately enjoying their first moments as new parents. Similarly, when the Duchess of Cambridge gave birth to her first child, the birth certificate was also not released immediately. Her first son was born on July 22, 2013, and the birth certificate was not released until August 2 (BBC, 2013). The Duke and Duchess of Sussex took the exact same number of days to release their son's birth certificate as well. Still, social media users were not convinced that this was just simple royal protocol as one tweet reads,

Lol! We already knew this! #RoyalBirthScandal #IllegitimateArchie Harry and Meghan will not release Archie's birth certificate to ensure baby's privacy. (TeaLipstickCeleb, 2019)

Though these two women carried out the same actions after giving birth to their children, only one was publicly scrutinized and criticized for it.

Besides regular Twitter users, top-rated journalists also weighed in on the birth of Archie and the hostile attention Meghan was receiving. Infamous British journalist Piers Morgan responded to headlines that argued in favor of Meghan and the vast racism her family was receiving by tweeting,

Oh pur-lease. a) They're not being 'hounded'. b) The criticism of them has got nothing to do with racism and everything to do with hypocrisy. (Morgan, 2019)

With nearly eight million followers, Morgan was able to instigate further hate and speculation about Meghan's pregnancy and baby as he suggested the notion that she was being dramatic rather than experiencing racism. These social media reactions clearly reflect the intersectional feminism that is present within negative posts about Meghan as she was judged for her actions not solely because she was a woman, but because she was a woman of color.

Countdown to #Megxit

In the months leading up to their official announcement of stepping back as working members of the Royal Family in January of 2020, tweets exploiting the use of the #Megxit were abundant. After every public appearance or royal announcement, individuals would flood Twitter with ungrounded negative tweets. The animosity is palpable as a tweet by Jaime Fabulina (2020) shows:

Meghan Markle is beyond rude. #Megxit what's her deal? She can't claim feminism or #wokeness for her childish rude behaviour toward people who are there to help She just doesn't get it.

This tweet was not in response to another, just simply written and posted by the user, claiming Meghan is falsely in favor of feminism. This tweet, supposedly from another woman, is just one of many hypocritical tweets aimed at the duchess. She claims that Meghan is the one who is anti-feminist while simultaneously tearing her down. This exemplifies what intersectional feminism allows us to see, as the user not only exerts anti-feminism but allows racism to interfere with her ungrounded judgment of Meghan.

At this point in time, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex were not the only ones receiving an immense amount of negativity on the platform. Their son, Archie, also had tweets aimed at him. The royal couple kept Archie's public appearances minimal and only posted photos of their family around the holidays. Still, this did not halt users from giving rise to judgments and hatred towards the baby. With this ill intention, one user posted a tweet which included malevolently edited photos of Archie, including a picture of the baby with a brown paper bag over his head and eyeholes cut out (EyupMiDuck, 2019). The tweet was comprised of hashtags such as #spudhead, #stayincanada, and #biffaboy. Biffa is a British derogatory slang word meaning fat, while spud is another word for potato. However, perhaps the most blatant hashtag is one that refers to Archie as a "thuglet." "Thug," a racially charged term, denigrates African American men as being involved in violence, or it denotes the color of their skin. It is a term based in racism and it was used to describe Archie because his mother is half African American. These hurtful and racist tweets regarding Archie, in congruence with the lack of support towards their son from the Royal Family, was perhaps the final straw that led the Duke and Duchess of Sussex to announce their exit on January 8, 2020 — nearly three weeks after Twitter witnessed a pernicious frenzy over their baby.

Conclusion/Implications

Through the research I conducted, I was able to determine that an intersectional feminist reading of the social media conversations about the Duke and Duchess of Sussex effectively highlights the reasoning behind the couple's decision to step down from the Royal Family and the demands of the institution. My research shows that had Prince Harry and Meghan Markle been more supported rather than harassed by social media, their outcome may have been different. One major takeaway from this study was determining that there were women promoting feminism while also tearing down the Duchess of Sussex. It showed how these women could allow racism to motivate them to be anti-feminist when it comes to women of color. Perhaps this was especially hard for the duchess to understand as she has always been known for being a feminist and often worked with the younger generation to promote feminism. Overall, the negativity the royal couple received was uncalled for, racially motivated, and unnecessarily spread across social media platforms such as Twitter.

Though the research I conducted was efficient in the sense that it accurately analyzed the negative treatment of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex on Twitter through supporting tweets, there were some implications regarding limitations. One implication of this research project is that my data was limited to solely one social media platform. This project reflects the negativity and racism Meghan and Prince Harry received only on Twitter. If I were to conduct this study again, I could expand my database to include posts from other popular social media platforms such as TikTok or Instagram. Another implication of this study is the fact that it shows how social media inspired the royal couple's departure, rather than including other forms of media like the news. It is known that mainstream media was also a factor in their exit due to the use of disparaging headlines and negative news coverage. Thus, I could initiate a new study that could potentially be used in conjunction with this one, analyzing how mainstream media encouraged racism and anti-feminism towards Meghan, all leading to the royal departure.

All in all, this study allowed me to gain an understanding of how powerful social media truly is. The harmful comments, disrespectful statements, and blatant racism that was aimed towards not only Meghan, but her entire family, severely altered her mental health. Her admission of having suicidal thoughts and her husband's pleas for the media to stop harassing his family goes to show just how significant of a role social media can play in one's life. All of these users are able to hide behind a screen, while actual lives are substantially damaged as in the case of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Further, this study has advanced my interest in what exactly provoked the departure of the royal couple as working members of the Royal Family. Hence, besides including mainstream media in a new study, I could continue my research in studying how the Royal Family played a role in their departure as well as they left the couple defenseless against social media, and the media in general. There may be more factors that contributed to the life-altering exit of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex; however, it is undeniable that social media had an enormous role in creating the toxic environment that led to such a monumental decision.

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Noreen Khan (she/her) was raised in Miami, Florida. Currently, she studies English and Criminology at the University of Florida. Throughout her undergraduate years, she has grown particularly interested in the power of social media and how critical theory lenses can be applied to analyze the effects social media continues to have on our global societies. Upon graduating, she hopes to attend law school and pursue a career within intellectual property or media law. In addition to reading and writing, she can be found drinking inordinate amounts of iced coffee, watching any kind of rom-com, and baking for those she loves.

The Social Media Movement #PublishingPaidMe

Savannah E. Baggett, University of Florida

Introduction

As someone who works in a public library, I have become familiar with the types of authors that our patrons are interested in. Many customers come into our facility and request authors such as Stephen King, James Patterson, and Nora Roberts. About six months ago, I started noticing a trend in the authors we purchase for our collection. After diving into our collection, I realized that most of our authors have one main thing in common: they are white. After determining this fact, I did some research and discovered that this phenomenon is mostly due to the publishing houses that determine whose work gets published. Many publishing houses receive thousands of manuscripts and are tasked with deciding which ones will make them the most financial gain. To do this, they ask whether or not the topic the author writes about is going to be popular with their target audiences. Also, they may be more inclined to publish a writer's work if they are big name authors. By choosing already popular authors, publishing houses are guaranteeing their profit.

With this in mind, I did a little more digging and uncovered a Twitter movement using the hashtag #PublishingPaidMe. Created by young adult authors L.L McKinney in June of 2020, this hashtag was created to point out the pay disparities that people of color experience in the publishing industry. Many authors, including Jesmyn Ward and N.K. Jemisin, jumped into the conversation and spoke about the money they received for their works and spoke further about the pay discrimination they experienced within the world of publishing.

After unearthing #PublishingPaidMe, I found it intriguing that people of color were using social media platforms, like Twitter, to create these movements in hopes to inform others of the racial discrimination they experience. Because of this, I have decided to follow the conversation while using a Critical Race Theory and Technoculture approach to explain how diverse authors are using Twitter as a cultural conversation in relation to the PublishingPaidMe movement. At the end of this project, I wish to not only reveal this, but to also learn how authors of color are using this hashtag to fight against white normativity in the publishing world.

Discrimination in the Publishing Industry

Race and gender discrimination are a major part of the publishing industry and are the driving forces behind some of the social media movements we see today. Two scholars, Tin Leung and Koleman Strumpf (2021), examine and discuss the racial and gender discrimination seen within the book publishing industry. In the past, it has been known that white women and non-white authors have made significantly less than white male authors (Leung & Strumpf, 2021). Due to

this fact, Leung and Strumpf organized data about author salaries from Census microdata ranging from 1970-2019 and put it in a table. This table shows that “there were large differences in average pay across gender and race in this period and that most of these gaps have increased” (p. 2). This means that not only is this pay discrimination still happening, but it has actually gotten worse over the years. After separating and analyzing their research, Leung and Strumpf discovered that “[B]lack females, [B]lack males, and white females were paid between \$2,500 and \$7,500 less than white males” (p. 2). As you can see from their research, this pay disparity between these groups is a concept that has been happening for years, but I believe it is still imperative to ask whether this situation can change.

In her article, “Hashtag Highlights Anti-Black Bias,” writer Jennifer Baker (2020) points out that although anti-Black bias has been happening for a while, the Black Lives Matter protests during June 2020 have opened people’s eyes to the discrimination marginalized groups experience in the publishing industry. According to Baker, many publishing agencies declared their support for the movement, but they still “continually reflected the dearth of Black people working in book publishing as well as the low numbers of Black authors published and supported in the industry” (p. 1). Young adult author L. L. McKinney pointed out this fact and went on social media to ask authors, both Black and white to disclose advances received for their novels. This request created the hashtag movement #PublishingPaidMe. Like McKinney asked, authors started to share how much money they received for their works. Baker states that the “number of six-figure advances received by white writers eclipsed the number for Black writers, particularly in the case of debuts published by major houses” (p. 1). Authors such as N.K. Jemisin, Kiese Laymon, and Jesmyn Ward even hopped into the conversation to share how they feel they have been cheated by the publishing industry.

By involving these big names into the debate, #PublishingPaidMe shows that even the most popular African American authors are experiencing some kind of pay disparity. Leung & Strumpf’s and Baker’s arguments about the role of discrimination in the book publishing industry is an idea I want to dive deeper into in my research. These articles prove that people of color are being treated differently than their white counterparts. Through my research, I want to not only solidify this fact but determine how authors of color are battling this racism.

The Study of Critical Race Theory

Originally a term used in legal studies, Edward Taylor (1998) defines Critical Race Theory as a movement that “challenges the experiences of whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color” (p. 3). Ever since Critical Race Theory was created, academic scholars have taken its definition and applied it to our current world. For this reason, it is important to look at Critical Race Theory through the lens of the academic scholars who we examined in order to better understand the concept. In her “IssaTrap” dissertation, Temptaous McKoy (2019) uses Critical Race Theory, along with Womanist Theory and African American/ Black Rhetorics to “construct Amplification Rhetorics” (p. 49). In her work, McKoy focuses on how Critical Race Theory can be used as a tool to understand how race affects our everyday life. McKoy explains that Critical Race Theory

“spotlights how a group can be marginalized but not coerced, therefore (re)claiming their agency” (p. 52). In other words, even though whiteness is considered normal in today’s society, marginalized groups have found ways to fight against this by declaring their rightful place within the world. This reclamation of agency is one of the three tenets described in her description of amplification rhetorics, which is defined by McKoy as the communication practices that speak about the experiences of marginalized groups, including African Americans. McKoy brings in the idea of amplification rhetorics and looks at how African Americans use trap music to define their life and their own personal experiences.

Within her work, McKoy consistently highlights how Critical Race Theory is significant in how an individual recognizes their position in society. Similar to McKoy, Andre Brock (2012) uses this idea and describes how people are also reclaiming their identity in the online world as well. For example, Andre Brock’s article, “From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation,” describes how technology allows African Americans to declare their identity in specific social media platforms, like Twitter. Declaring the phenomenon “Black Twitter,” Brock defines the term as Twitter’s ability to be seen “as a cultural communication medium” that allows “users to participate in open-ended community building discourses in near real-time” (p. 19). After discovering that African Americans use Twitter more than other ethnic groups, Brock used a critical technoculture discourse analysis (CTDA) approach to study how exactly they are utilizing the platform. Brock noted in his work how African Americans communicated with one another through their own specific language on Twitter. It is through this language and communication with one another that African Americans form a contemporary community of discussion. These discussions then lead to the possibility of movements on different social media platforms, such as that associated with the social media hashtag #PublishingPaidMe.

Given McKoy’s and Brock’s analysis of Critical Race Theory, this concept can be used to understand marginalized groups in and out of the online world. Critical Race Theory highlights how people of color are “reclaiming their agency” (McKoy 2019, p. 52) within a world filled with racial bias. In McKoy’s dissertation, African Americans use music as an outlet to share their experiences with the world. But offline is not the only place where marginalized groups can bond together and share their collective struggles. As Brock points out in his discussion about Black Twitter, African Americans are taking use of the platforms easy accessibility and transforming it into a cultural conversation. It is through McKoy’s and Brock’s description of Critical Race Theory that I focus my argument about the use of the new Twitter discussion #PublishingPaidMe. While examining the tweets I gathered, I want to determine how the topic of race fits into the hashtag and how it is being used as an argument. By doing so, I hope to see people of color coming together and forming a kind of community that allows them to share their struggles in the publishing industry by using the hashtag. If I do determine that marginalized groups are using Twitter as a cultural conversation, I also would like to establish how people of color are “reclaiming their agency” by utilizing the hashtag #PublishingPaidMe.

The Influence of Technoculture

The interactions between technology and culture can be clearly recognized in topics such as race and feminist studies. As stated in the previous section of this review, Brock describes how technology can be used as a cultural conversation, especially within Twitter. Brock relies on James Carey's definition of communication technologies and states that it is "promoted as value-free information transfer or as an opportunity to transmit culture to those less fortunate" (p. 6). As technology advances, it gains the capability of easily and quickly passing information from person to person. It is because of this ability that Brock believes technology is capable of impacting "racial and cultural identity" (p. 6).

Unfortunately, Brock also brings in the fact that in the United States, technology is mainly used to reinforce the idea of whiteness. Henry Giroux, quoted by Brock, states that "whiteness represents itself as a universal marker for being civilized" (p. 6). This fact still holds true today even in today's society. By holding on to whiteness as the norm, America is not supporting marginalized groups and their needs. On a more positive note, the rise of Black Twitter fights this cultural norm by building a community among African Americans that allow them to bond and communicate with one another. While they can speak with one another, they also have the capability of using technology to reach out to others to further discuss the racial bias they experience in their life. Technology and social media platforms allow for marginalized groups to spread culture quickly and easily to those who were not aware of them before.

As stated previously, even though Brock talks about Twitter as a cultural conversation he still points out the negative aspects of technoculture. In Adrienne Massanari's article, "How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures" (2017), she does the same but instead focuses on how toxic technocultures can affect gender. Massanari states that toxic technocultures are "unique in their leveraging of sociotechnical platforms as both a channel of coordination and harassment and their seemingly leaderless, amorphous quality" (p. 5). To reinforce her argument, Massanari examines the platform Reddit to discuss the Gamergate phenomenon in which women were victimized and anti-feminist ideas were spread. The idea of #Gamergate came to pass after Eron Gjoni, boyfriend of game designer Zoe Quinn, stated that Quinn's success was due to intimate relationships between her and gaming journalists (Massanari, 2017). After this, word spread, and the hashtag Gamergate was created and used to "delegitimize" and harass women (p. 6).

Massanari's article explains that technology's ability to spread information quickly and vastly is not always good. Both Brock and Massanari explain how technology can be used as a cultural conversation, but unlike Brock, Massanari mainly focuses on how these platforms can be dangerous. In her Gamergate example, Massanari explains that these platforms can effortlessly spread hatred just because of how accessible they are. It is due to this that the goal of my research is to determine how people are using the hashtag #PublishingPaidMe and to see how effective it is as a cultural conversation. I can do this by studying the tweets that use the hashtag and determining if and how writers of color are communicating with one another.

Method

In my research, I am using a race and ethnicity viewpoint that combines both the Critical Race Theory and Technoculture Theory as explained by Brock. Through #PublishingPaidMe, members of minority groups are using technology, such as Twitter, to show others their place in the publishing world as underappreciated and underpaid authors. By doing this, authors of color have not only formed their own sense of community within the platform, but they have also created a movement encouraging social change outside of the platform itself, therefore using Twitter as a cultural conversation.

The Racial Divide

In 2020, the Black Lives Matter Movement hit its peak after the deaths of Breonna Taylor (March 13th) and George Floyd (May 25th). After learning about their deaths, hundreds of people took to the streets to speak out about the racial discrimination that minoritized groups experience. To show support for their movement, many publishing agencies stood beside protesters and argued for equality across all races. But as Baker (2020) points out in her article, “Hashtag Highlights Anti-Black Bias,” publishing groups still held on to their own racial prejudices within their industry. After noticing the lack of racial representation in the field of publishing, authors started to question how the publishing houses' racism affected them.

How the Hashtag Was Created

Tochi Onyebuchi (2020), a Nigerian-American science fiction writer, took to Twitter on June 5, 2020, calling out publishing houses (Fig. 1). Onyebuchi's tweet tells publishing agencies that their “BLM statements are cute” but that he needs “the same energy” when they “start talking about Black writers and book advances.” Onyebuchi ends his argument by joking that his tweet is going to cause a conversation that is as long as a CVS receipt. But Onyebuchi doesn't stop there. On the same day, Onyebuchi retweets his original tweet and starts to call out the “white ‘allies’ in publishing” (2020). Onyebuchi tells them that if they are “REALLY about that life” then they need “to get ready to have some real uncomfortable convos” about how much money they have received for their books (Fig. 2).

A day after Onyebuchi released his tweet, McKinney, a Black young adult author, tweeted asking fellow authors if they needed a hashtag. It was then that McKinney (2020) created #PublishingPaidMe. With this hashtag, authors (both people of color and white) could connect with one another on Twitter (see Fig. 3). Ever since #PublishingPaidMe was created, authors have released the amount they have made from their books. Eventually, a spreadsheet was made by Twitter user @recitrachel that asked authors what genre their books were as well as their age, race, disability status, and sexual orientation. Naturally, the spreadsheet also asks authors to share their publishers and the amount they made from their works. The spreadsheet containing this information is located here: [#PUBLISHINGPAIDME - Google Sheets](#). In addition to the spreadsheet, a Twitter page was created on June 6, 2020, titled “Authors release their figures to illustrate pay disparities in the industry.” While you can find Onyebuchi's tweet located here, authors take the opportunity to explain advance payouts and how advances are



Figure 1: Onyebuchi calls out the publishing houses.

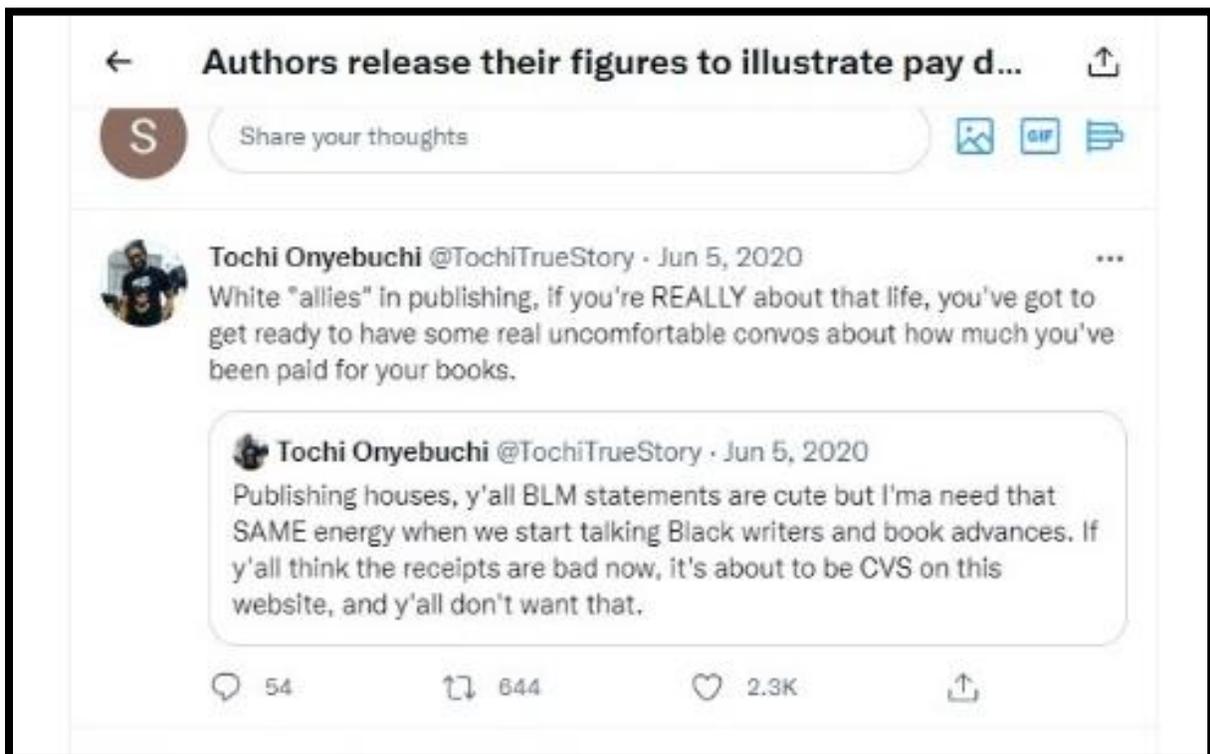


Figure 2: Onyebuchi retweets his original tweet and adds to his argument.



Figure 3: Twitter uses the hashtag to promote a story on publishing disparity.

calculated to the public. Then finally, there is a section specifically dedicated to authors sharing their rates. The Twitter page, along with the spreadsheet that was created, highlights the pay disparity among white authors and authors of color. In doing so, it also shows how white writing is considered the norm among publishing houses.

If we look back at Taylor's definition from earlier, Critical Race Theory challenges whiteness as the cultural norm by grounding its "conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color" (p.3). Beginning with Onyebuchi, thousands of authors have started to share not only their pay rates, but their collective experiences with the publishing industry. By coming together and fighting back against the racism displayed by the industry, authors of color are therefore "reclaiming their agency" (McKoy 2019, p.52).

The Fight against White Normativity

Though it is obvious that pay disparity exists, it is important to recognize how people of color are fighting back. Similar to Brock's example, people of color are using Twitter as a cultural conversation that allows them to bond together and discuss their shared experiences. In this case, the conversation began with Onyebuchi and started to spread after McKinney created



Figure 4: Zink shares her pay information in several tweets.

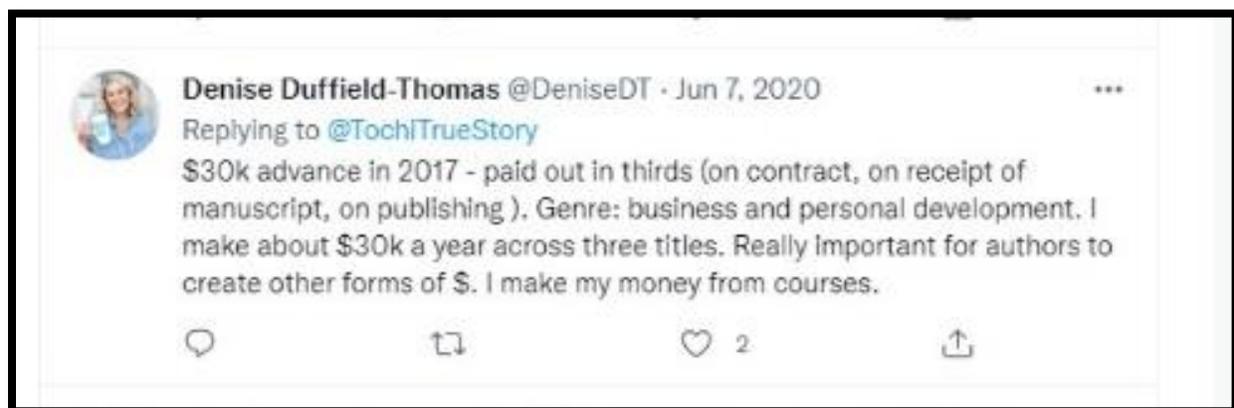


Figure 5: Duffield-Thomas also shares information about her pay.

#PublishingPaidMe. Onyebuchi encourages authors (white and people of color) to share the amounts they received from their book. Within the same day after Onyebuchi's tweet was published, authors like Michelle Zink and Denise Duffield-Thomas began to share the amounts they received for their works (Figs. 4 and 5). After that, hundreds of authors started to share their salary and show their support for authors of color.



Figure 6: McKinney shares what the hashtag reveals.

Some authors shared their book advance information, but others furthered the conversation by using the hashtag to discuss the racial implications on Twitter. In order to better understand the argument, I gathered ten tweets from Twitter from people using the hashtag. Using these tweets, Twitter users are furthering the conversation of race and how the publishing industry's racism impacts others.

While #PublishingPaidMe currently describes the pay disparity between white authors and writers of color, it is important to note that this was not always the case. Originally created to display the disparity between white and Black authors, the conversation grew into something bigger as more authors of color realized how much they were being discriminated against as well. In the words of McKinney (@elleonwords), creator of #PublishingPaidMe, the hashtag was first formed to show the “disparity between Black authors and non-Black authors specifically — born from the context of events during Summer 2020” (2020). Soon enough, McKinney writes, the hashtag expanded, with “the gap between white authors and authors of color being revealed as a result” (Fig. 6). This tweet in itself ties back to Brock’s discussion on the influence of technoculture and how technology can bond marginalized groups together, therefore leading the conversation to be bigger than initially thought.

The second argument I uncovered was from Twitter users stating that publishers do not endorse the books written by authors of color like they do for white authors. Twitter user Haleh Agar (@HalehAgar) believes that low book advances lead to less buzz about a book. With less buzz, the works of diverse authors will not reach bookshops, therefore decreasing the amount of money they make from sales (Fig. 7). Agar writes that “it’s not enough to just publish POC” but that they need to “publish them WELL” (2020). This argument was again brought up in the third tweet I found written by Melanie Conklin (@MLConklin). Melanie Conklin (@MLConklin) states that publishing agents, editors, and houses will “undervalue diverse writers” if they believe that the title will not sell (2020). As a result, the book will get low sales along with “a low advance” and “no marketing support” (Fig. 8). According to @MLConklin, “anything can sell if they invest in it.” Another interesting point that she brings up is that agents/editors/houses



Figure 7: Agar proclaims the importance of the #PublishingPaidMe hashtag.



Figure 8: Conklin states that publishers must invest in diverse authors.

tend to not take responsibility for not supporting the book enough. Instead, they blame the author's writing for the lack of sales. By using the hashtag, Conklin is calling out publishing houses and telling them that their racism and lack of support for a diverse author's work is the real reason that it is not successful.

Another discussion brought up using #PublishingPaidMe was how white authors seem to receive more money after their first book is published (Figs. 9 and 10). A Twitter user, Kerstin Hall (@Kerstin_Hall), tweeted that "authors often only hit the big advances on their fifth book or later" (2020). A second Twitter user, JJ Bola (@JJ_Bola), states that "white writers can still get a bigger advance for their second book, even after the first book has flopped." Whether the biggest advance comes from after the second or fifth book, these users agree that authors of color are receiving less money from their books. @Kerstin_Hall asks Twitter "who has the resources to keep trying...and who is forced to quit." @JJ_Bola points out a similar argument

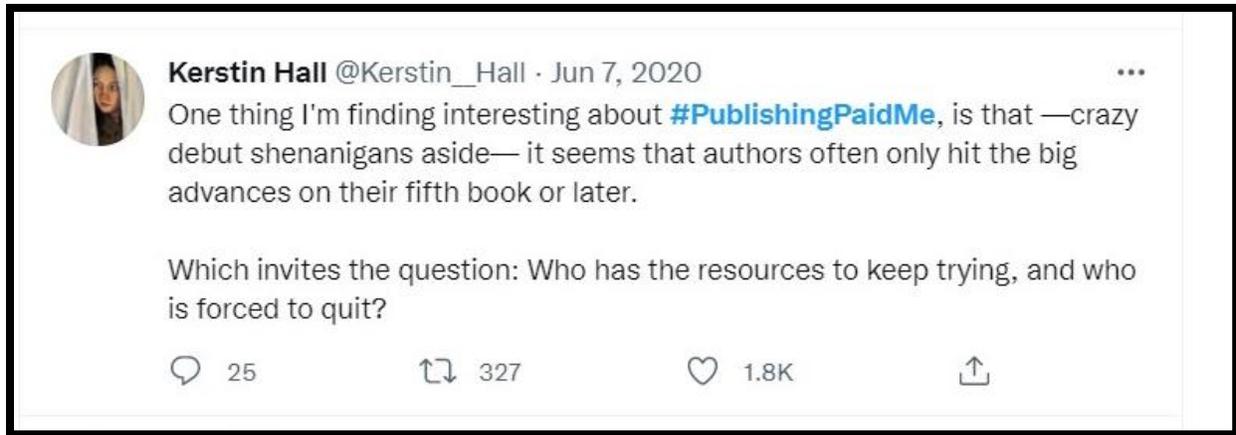


Figure 9: Hall states how long people wait until they receive big advances.

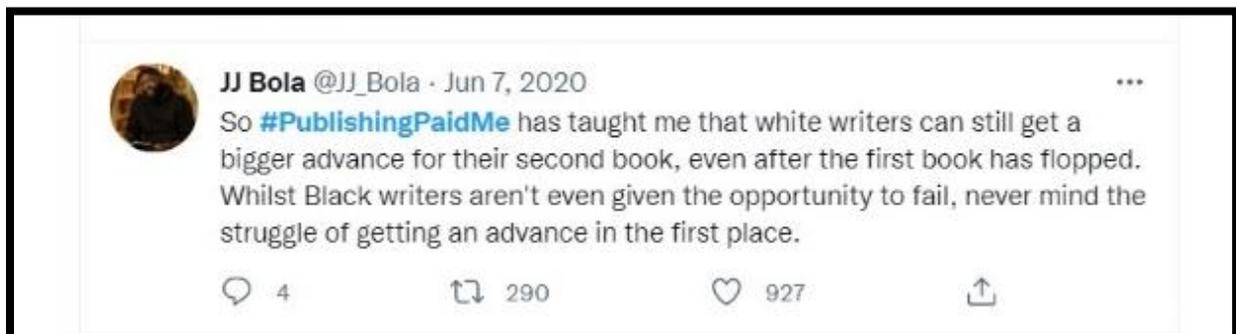


Figure 10: Bola notes white authors are given chances even after their books fail.

and states that “Black writers aren’t given the opportunity to fail.” Even if the work of white writer fails, that author still receives an advance big enough for them to continue their writing. Authors of color, on the other hand, do not have this luxury. The tweets by @HalehAgar and @MLConklin show us that publishing houses do not create enough buzz about a diverse author's work, which in turn lowers the advance received by those authors. The tweets by Hall and Bola then show that with a low advance, a book has a higher chance of failure, and so diverse authors may not have the chance to keep writing.

Another tweet that I looked at is one by Dr. Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, or @ILoveCopyright, who tweeted how the publishing industry’s racism can be recognized by a “negative cycle” (2020). If we look at the chart below (Fig. 11), the cycle starts out by describing how people of color are not represented enough in children’s books. This lack of representation discourages children of color from being an author. The children of color who do grow up to be authors are forced to face challenges in the publishing industry and may not even get their works published. The few authors of color who do succeed in getting their works published still do not get paid enough compared to their white counterparts. By looking at the previous arguments, it can be seen that some authors of color do not make enough to live off of writing. Therefore, the cycle

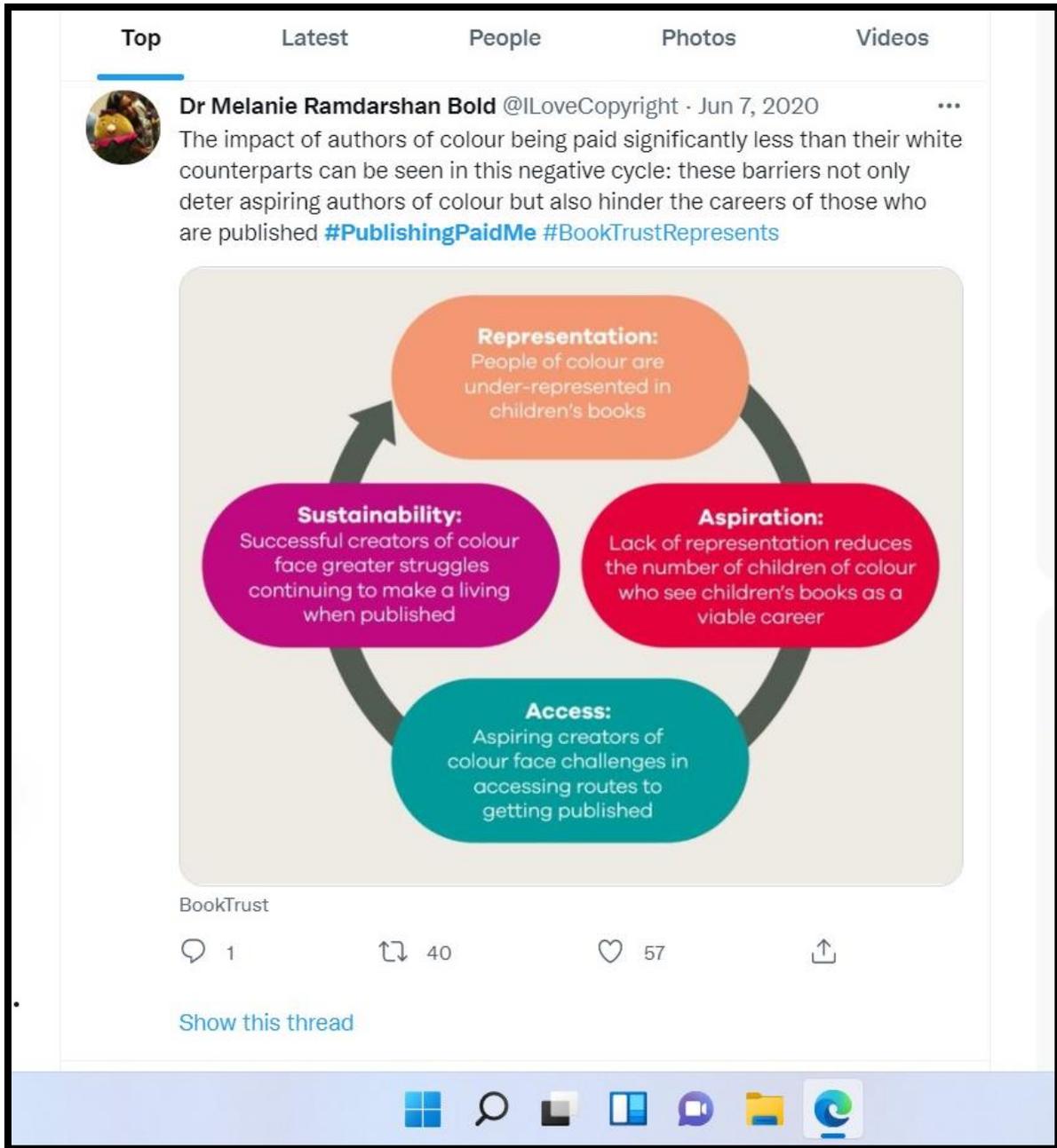


Figure 11: Bold shows how lack of representation leads to lack of access.

continues with the children who see the lack of people of color in the books they read. With this visualization, @ILoveCopyright states that “these barriers not only deter aspiring authors of color, but also hinder the career of those who are published.” Bold’s tweet displays the negative implications stemming from this pay discrimination. Bold dives deep into these effects and shows how the lack of representation of people of color in books directly influences the struggles authors of color endure in the publishing industry. In the third part of the cycle under “Access,” Bold states that “aspiring creators of color face challenges in accessing routes to

getting published.” This negative cycle of racism in the publishing industry further highlights what authors of color undergo while trying to publish their work.

But one aspect that Bold does not cover in her tweet is the emotional impact that they experience. Therefore, two tweets, one by Rebekah Weatherspoon (@RdotSpoon) and the other by Ashley Woodfolk (@AshWrites), are analyzed here to help better understand what they go through as authors of color (Figs. 12 and 13). The first tweet by Weatherspoon reveals that they are having “crippling anxiety about starting [their] next project because of what [they] learned from #PublishingPaidMe” (2020). Aware of the racial discrimination seen in the publishing industry, authors of color are becoming more hesitant to create and publish their works, for fear that they will be underpaid and underappreciated. While Weatherspoon speaks of their own emotional toll as a writer, Woodfolk goes into deeper detail as to what it means to be an author of color fighting to be seen in the publishing world. Woodfolk informs other Twitter users that writers of color have been “told to wait, to be quiet, to be grateful” so that when they did “by some miracle get an opportunity,” they would “be grateful for whatever money [they] got for [their] work, even if it wasn’t fair” (2020). Authors like Witherspoon are already hesitant to start their authorial journey lest they not be paid enough, but when authors of color do get their work published, they are told to take what they can get. With the anxiety and emotional burden it takes being an author of color, it is no wonder why a hashtag like #PublishingPaidMe was needed.



Figure 12: Weatherspoon expresses anxiety after learning about others' experiences.

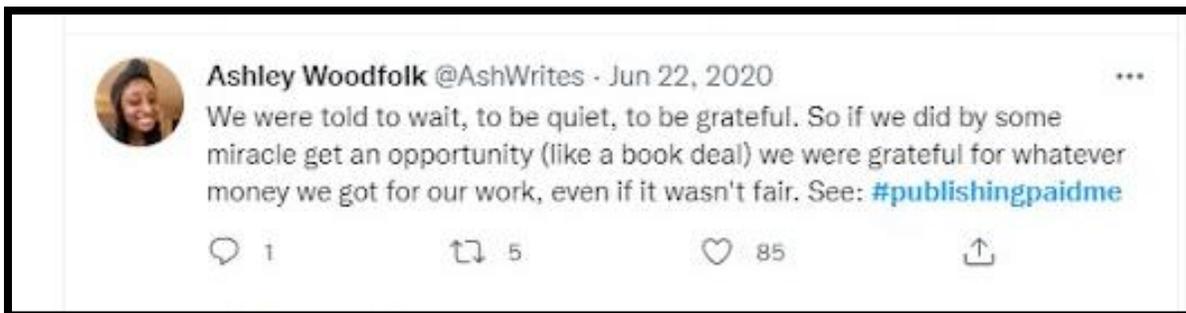


Figure 13: Woodfolk states that Black authors are expected to be grateful even when things are unfair.

Through the racial discrimination and the emotional toll it carries, there is a light to be seen, as #PublishingPaidMe has led to some changes in the field. Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah (@NK_Adjei), author of *Friday Black*, refers back to McKinney (@elleonwords) and her creation of the movement. In doing so, Adjei-Brenyah speaks on the newfound transparency the hashtag has presented and even talks about how “[his] contract has been changed to better reflect the worth of the work” (2020). Ending his tweet, Adjei-Brenyah calls out to the writers who were involved in the movement, for they “were vulnerable and transparent in that moment.” In addition to speaking on how the hashtag affected him, he gives credit to the authors who were brave enough to share their salaries in order to bring to light the pay disparity (Fig. 14).

Like Adjei-Brenyah, John Manuel Arias draws attention “to everyone who pushed despite it potentially damaging [their] careers” (2020). But instead of focusing on just #PublishingPaidMe, Arias speaks about several movements seen on Twitter. According to Arias, Twitter has “proved itself the platform of industry change” (Fig. 15). If we look back to McKinney’s tweet from earlier, it is shown how technoculture allowed the hashtag to move from representing Black authors to authors of color as a whole. Within this transformation, we are able to see the change caused as the result. While not all authors are getting the pay they deserve like Adjei-Brenyah, it shows the possibility of a radical improvement in the publishing industry. With Twitter becoming a platform for social change, authors of color now have a tool against the racial discrimination they experience in the field.

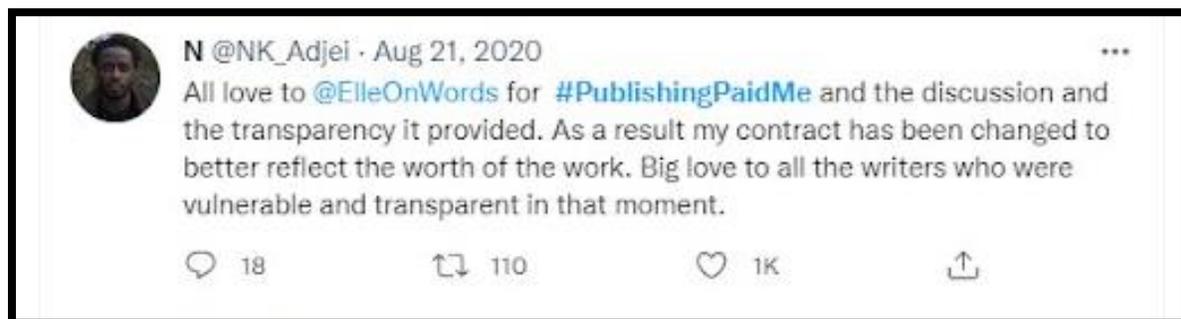


Figure 14: Adjei-Brenyah expresses love for those who were transparent.



Figure 15: Arias brings together several hashtags making a difference.

As stated earlier, Taylor (1998) believes that Critical Race Theory fights against white normativity by discussing the lives and experiences of people of color. By using #PublishingPaidMe, a community has been built on Twitter that focuses on the support of authors of color. But while some authors are sharing their advances and pay rates, some Twitter users are diving deeper into the discussion of how race fits within the publishing world. After analyzing the tweets above, I have realized how users are using Twitter as a cultural conversation. By using Twitter to discuss the racism shown by the publishing industry, users are spreading knowledge to others. It is at this point that Critical Race Theory and Technoculture Theory converge. While authors of color are coming together to reclaim their place in the writerly world, they are also sharing racial and cultural awareness through the use of a simple hashtag.

Conclusion/Implications

I began this project to better understand how authors of color were using #PublishingPaidMe as a cultural conversation and how this conversation describes their experiences working in the publishing industry. Even though white authors are considered the standard, diverse authors have used Twitter to fight back and spread awareness to others. In doing so, Twitter users have further discussed just how differently authors of color are being treated than white authors. In my research, I have discovered that diverse authors are not only getting paid less, but that they are shown less support from publishing houses, editors, and agents. In addition, it is clear that this lack of support and racial discrimination is taking a strong emotional toll on authors of color. It is my hope that this hashtag will cause change within the publishing world, because if not, authors of color will not get the representation they deserve.

If I were to do this project differently, I would have analyzed more tweets to find out what other conversations about race were taking place. While I took a race and ethnicity viewpoint, it is possible to take a feminist study to better understand how and if women of color are being paid less than men. Also, I could have taken a disability standpoint in which I would analyze tweets to determine if authors of color that have a disability are experiencing a pay disparity as well. By taking a feminist and disability methodology, I might be able to see how these conversations are being talked about on Twitter.

By taking a race and ethnicity viewpoint that mixes both Critical Race Theory and Technoculture Theory though, I was able to examine how #PublishingPaidMe began and how it grew. Originally a hashtag created for black authors, it soon became relevant to all authors of color. Through #PublishingPaidMe, these authors were allowed to create a community in which they could discuss and fight back against the publishing industry's pay discrimination. In doing so, other authors and book supporters have jumped in, creating a social movement within Twitter. The success of this movement can be seen in the case of Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, whose pay has been altered because of the movement. Soon enough, it may be possible to see more and more authors of color receiving the pay they deserve for their work.

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Savannah E. Baggett (She/Her) is an undergraduate student at the University of Florida who is working to obtain her bachelor's degree in English with a minor in mass communication. For the past five years, she has been working as a library technician assistant, which not only fuels her love for books but also allows her to connect with her community. In addition to her love for novels, Savannah adores Marvel movies and spends any free time she has watching them. After graduation, she hopes to either become a teacher or work in the book publishing industry.

Greta Thunberg in Social Media: A Representation of the Racial Disparity in Environmentalism

Malori Malone, University of Florida

Introduction

The dramatic rise of social media in the past decade has ushered in one of the largest waves of activism for environmental conservation, and at the forefront of this movement stands an eighteen-year-old girl from Sweden: Greta Thunberg. Thunberg's (then fifteen) iconic story begins on August 20, 2018, when she decided to skip school and protest outside Swedish Parliament. The message on her cardboard sign: School Strike for Climate Change. In the years since, her voice has risen past the borders of her country, and turned into a global uprising. I believe the reasonings for her illustrious fame go deeper than simply her age. I think social media has had a tremendous impact on the rapid spread of Thunberg and her messages.

In addition, when we look at the positive implications climate change movements like Thunberg's have, I think it is significant to analyze the individuals who are excluded from the forefront image. Has white privilege affected Thunberg's rise to fame? Do race and gender play into this recipe for social media success? More importantly, are young men and women of color underrepresented in these movements? By combining Intersectional Feminism and Environmental Justice Theory, the purpose of my research is to analyze the racial and environmental global implications that arise from social media movements like Thunberg's.

Spreading Environmental Activism to Youth Around the World

In just a few years, Thunberg's call for environmental change and the dire need for immediate action has spread to future generations at an increasingly high frequency. For example, groups like "Fridays for Future" were conceived from her message. While Thunberg may have ignited the spark which catapulted thousands of other young people around the world to advocate for climate change, branched-out organizations continue to carry her torch. Girls and boys throughout the world are sacrificing their time in school for the future of the planet; their reasoning: "We strike because we have no choice. We are fighting for our future and for our children's future. We strike because there is still time to change, but time is of the essence. The sooner we act, the better our shared future will be" (Fridays for Future, 2022). With social media as their active transport, this group of young adults is given a megaphone to broadcast their voice throughout the world. More specifically, "Social Media presents an opportunity to voice one's concerns about climate change and the need for action, as well as document the discontent among citizens by posting pictures for protest events" (Boulianne et al., 2020, p.

211). In terms of global collaboration, social media provides a stellar channel for young adults around the world to broadcast their call for legitimate change.

Social Media's Climate Change Star

Since her first school strike in late 2018, Thunberg has become a climate change superstar through the vessel of social media. Her tangible environmental activism has created massive climate change trends throughout the online universe. For instance, "Twitter as a platform, was used by the leader of the School Strike 4 Climate, Greta Thunberg. Her tweets were widely circulated, liked, and commented upon" (Boulianne et al., 2020, p. 216). Thunberg wielded her sword of influence past the steps outside her school. Using social media, she created a virtually global discussion around youth advocating for climate justice. A 2020 study of Thunberg's social media activism, covered by Shelley Boulianne, Mireille Lalancette, and David Ilkiw, dove deeper into the substance of Twitter messages that resulted as a by-product of Thunberg's activism. Among the tweets collected, they found that

[a]side from Greta Thunberg's tweets, every tweet used as an example included a mention of 'students,' 'youth,' 'young,' and 'school girl.' These examples represent the larger database of tweets, which included many mentions of these concepts as well as many @GretaThunberg references. In the larger database of 13,542, the word 'students' appeared 33,000 times and @GretaThunberg appeared 20,000 times. (p. 216)

It wasn't necessarily just Thunberg's tweets that catapulted her fame in the social media spotlight, but rather, it was the results of others using her name as a catalyst for climate change. But why was Thunberg's voice specifically put on social media's loudspeaker?

Racial Disparity in Environmentalism

Racial disparities are key channels to focus on when analyzing the inferences that arise from social media movements like Thunberg's. The ingredients which created an activism star like Thunberg are more complex than just her youthfulness and resilient message. Carolyn Beeler states, "The environmental movement, overall, has been criticized for being too white for a long time" (2019, p. 1). The factor of Thunberg's white privilege is arguably one of the main reasons as to why the media has latched onto her as a focal point of the climate change movement. Joe Curnow (2019) from the University of Manitoba says, "So, I'm like, why Greta? And I think that has a lot to do with questions of race and racism. I think her whiteness is very much an asset for why the media, why governments, why the UN has been willing to feature her" (p. 1). With Thunberg as the face of climate change, many argue that we should be more concerned with giving environmentalism the global profile it so crucially needs, rather than focusing on through who specifically. However, with minority groups normally in the first line of assault within environmental impacts, shouldn't they be given a similar spotlight for activism input?

Yet, the existing racial inequality within environmental activism is not due to a lack of effort from youth of color, but rather the constraints placed on their voices. Therefore, "[w]hile a

great deal of research has examined how the neighborhood environment affects youth, less has focused on how individual young people perceive, engage with, and ‘make meaning’ of neighborhood-level environmental disparities” (Teixeira & Zuberi, 2019, p. 1). A Pittsburgh Research institute showed areas of racial inequality are the first to suffer the consequences of pollution and environmental destruction. Yet, the opinions of the young individuals impacted in these environments are the last to be recognized. In a study of youth perception of environmental impact in African-American Communities, they found that “the youth were attuned to environmental inequities and expressed frustration about the lack of response to litter and dumping by the city and adults in their community” (p. 7). It is evident there is a significant disparity between the representation of white, upper-class voices like Thunberg’s and those of lower-class youths of color, which in reality, face most of climate change’s fallout.

Intersectional Feminism

The need for a conceptualized term to describe the intersection of race, gender, education, class, culture, ethnicity, language, and sexuality arose in the past few decades. Eventually, the terminology of Intersectional Feminism Theory was born. The founder of the term, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw described the objective: “to illustrate that many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women’s lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the women’s race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (Jackson 2019, p. 40). Although its meaning has been visible for centuries, this theory provides a significant interpretation of the idea that gender and race do not exist in bubbles of their own in our society. Unlike White Feminism (the popular theory in circulation), Intersectional Feminism seeks to include the viewpoints of all women, regardless of their background. Intersectional Feminism is a step beyond White Feminism, since “White feminists are often unaware of and unwilling to admit their privilege within the feminist movement, which alienates and ignores women who, for whatever reason, fall outside of the cookie-cutter binary” (Brennan, 2019, p. 22). Simply put, Intersectional Feminism pursues the inclusion of the components White Feminism fails to highlight.

Intersectional Feminism has been applied to research projects across a myriad of social media platforms. For instance, on Twitter, hashtags like #FastTailedGirls and #SayHerName were created with the theme of Intersectional Feminism, the theme that seeks to explain the idea of how various elements outside just race and gender intersect to impact women. These discussions connect marginalized groups and give a voice to the voiceless. Thus, “Black women using the hashtag also expressed catharsis in being able to share their stories, and began a conversation for shifting communal norms. Actress Reagan Gomez-Preston offered, ‘If we don’t stick up for our girls, and stop blaming them for the actions of grown men, who will? SMH. #FastTailedGirls’” (Jackson et al., 2020, p. 40). In other words, in a world where minorities (especially young Black women) still struggle to be heard, digital platforms provide a space in which individuals can connect and share meaningful messages.

These hashtags steeped in Intersectional Feminism Theory are increasingly significant to recognize as visual markers which represent racial disparity in social media. Social media has been a great receptacle for discussions specially geared around Intersectional Feminism, but even in instances where it is not explicitly discussed, we can use it as a lens from which to analyze other situations on social media. For instance, in this research case of Greta Thunberg, who has experienced a magnitude of digital fame, we can use intersectional feminism as a means of analyzing which voices are being excluded and how that exclusion is being discussed on social media.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice theory is centered around the idea that justice and equality in the natural habitats we exist in are also connected to overall social justice. How we treat the environments of individuals in communities of racial or class disparities should not be unequal to how we address the environments of others. Yet, Environmental Justice goes even further than just race: “Environmental Justice draws on a civil rights framework and recognizes the relationship between race, place, space and the distribution of resources and hazards. Increasingly, research using an EJ framework has expanded to go beyond examining race and class to incorporating intersecting identities and multiple dimensions of inequality, including, for example, age and gender” (Teixeira and Zuberi, 2016, p. 3). In other words, EJ is about the meaningful involvement and support of those from all backgrounds and communities, regardless of race, gender, class, etc.

Method

Over a span of five weeks, I plan on combing through the social media platform Instagram for posts related to this discussion on youth environmental activism. Using the specific lenses of Intersectional Feminism and Environmental Justice theory, I plan to cultivate a series of messages, pictures, and content that will better help me understand what the conversation surrounding this topic looks like.

Methodology

After careful consideration, I plan to combine the methodologies of Environmental Justice and Intersectional Feminism theory to provide a more concrete conceptualization of my research. Intersectional Feminism is the accumulation of intersectional principles of gender, ethnicity, race, education, sexuality, language, class, and culture. This methodology seeks to link these related ideas back to women’s equality, and feminism. The theory of Environmental Justice reflects our obligation as a society to pursue the preservation and protection of all our natural communities, especially those surrounding racially marginalized ones.

By interlocking these two theories to create a double-layered lens, I hope to create a more in-depth understanding of this discussion surrounding Thunberg’s presence on social media as an environmental activist. Furthermore, this research will provide some enlightenment to the

following questions: How does intersectional feminism influence the discussion of environmental activism? More importantly, if social media is in fact excluding certain groups from the discussion and pursuit of environmental justice, will these digital platforms in turn make it increasingly harder to maximize efficiency for the climate change cause? My last question I hope to answer is, Is Greta herself an intersectional feminist? Furthermore, does she recognize the segregation of ideas in this movement, and if so, in what ways does she combat the racial disparity?

Section 1: Greta Thunberg's Influence on Social Media

The purpose of this research article is to organize information from social media to form a mental picture of what the digital conversation around environmentalism looks like. More specifically, how environmentalism consists of many different ideas and voices, and which voices are receiving more attention than others. For instance, climate change activism has centered much of its focus around Thunberg in the past few years. Posts such as Exhibit A reveal the large scale of Greta's presence on social media and simultaneously, the world.

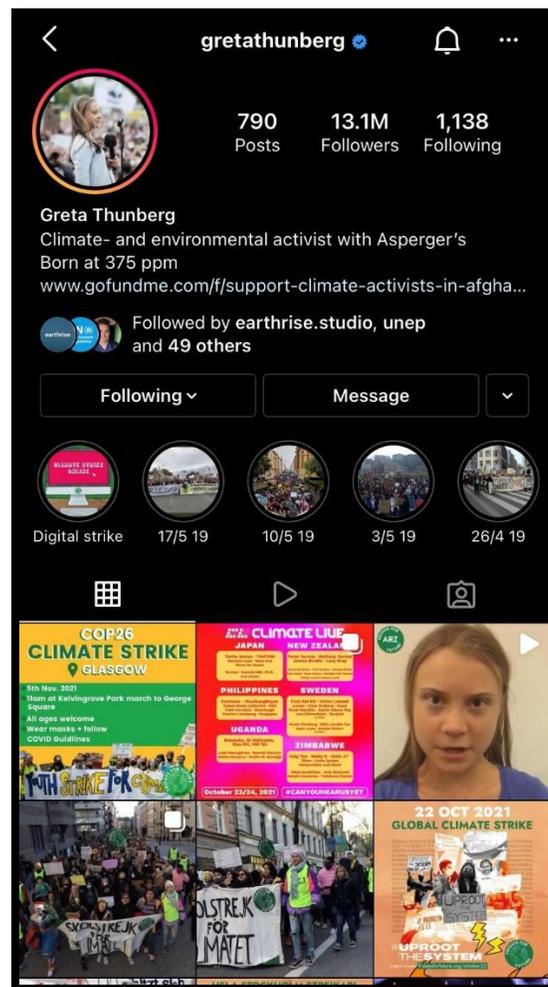


Exhibit A

With over 13 million followers, she has become an internet sensation for climate change. Such an intense following is sure to lead to implications for the reasons behind her fame, besides her age and message. Some could argue that her race and class have given her an advantage in the social media sphere. How many other young climate change adults are trending as increasingly as #GretaThunberg? Not many. With nearly 600k posts including this hashtag, her name is widely more publicized than any climate change activist of color. Yet, even in light of the idea that Thunberg's race and class may have influenced her social media success, I think it's significant to notice that she still recognizes the importance of diversity within the movement she represents. For example, in Exhibit B and Exhibit C (next page), we can see her representation of climate change activism working in hand with individuals from Black and LGBTQ+ communities. However, as a side note, I believe it's important to note that the climate change activist mentioned in Thunberg's reposting of *Time Magazine*, Vanessa Nakate, has only 158k followers on Instagram. This kind of visual inclusion is important to recognize as it shows her awareness of diversity within the movement. It is posts like these that lead me to believe



Exhibit B



Exhibit C

that Thunberg, despite the privilege of her race and class, is still an intersectional feminist herself—due to the heterogenous nature of her social media postings.

Section 2: Intersectional Feminists Advocate for Climate Change

Individuals from a myriad of minority groups have attempted to respond in any way possible to aid the Climate Change movement. Although they may be denied a voice within political spheres, social media supposedly provides a voice for anyone, regardless of their racial background. Individuals who identify as Indigenous, African-American, and Latinx have responded to the climate change scourge using social media as a means of global collaboration for tangible impact. For instance, pages like @intersectionalenvironmentalist work towards instilling a more diverse discourse surrounding climate change. Their Instagram biography page reads: “A climate change justice community and resource hub centering BIPOC and historically excluded voices,” followed by the hashtag: #TheFutureIsIntersectional. Upon clicking this

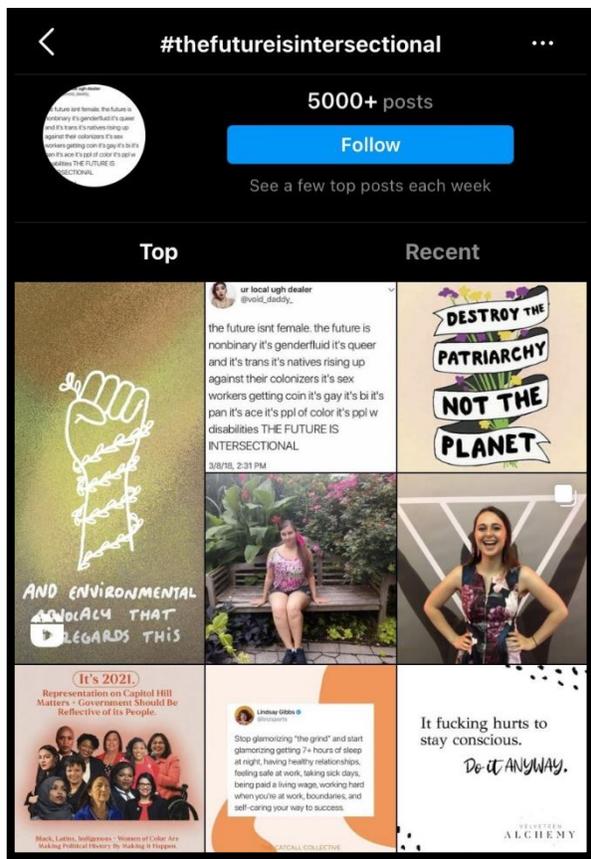


Exhibit D



Exhibit E

hashtag, I found over five thousand posts (Exhibit D). Further research showed me this message linked the common themes of not only intersectionality and climate change but women's rights and feminism as well.

While the majority of postings were not always specifically related to climate change, they did display support for diverse females in positions of influence. Similar to the support social media gave Thunberg, this hashtag reinforces the conversation of empowering women to create tangible, positive change. For instance, posts using this hashtag such as the one shown in Exhibit E represent the overlap between climate change activism and feminist activism. Over colorful flowers, a black and white banner says, "Destroy the Patriarchy Not the Planet." The post description from @activist.ash reads, "We had a day of alright air today. Not good, but alright.... But as the toxic air rolls back in, I'm just going to leave this here...never forget that environmental issues are feminist issues, and women/gender diverse folk will adversely experience the impacts of the climate crisis (just in case we need another reason to revolt)." This shows the significant intersectionality of movements that incorporate messages of feminism, diversity, and environmental justice into a signal posting. Furthermore, this research supports the claim that this discourse for inclusivity within environmental justice is very much alive and breathing.

Section 3: Why Does Intersectionality Matter within Environmental Justice?

An important addendum to this research is the significance of intersectionality in the spheres of environmental justice. While social media pages like @intersectionalenvironmentalist are prevalent on platforms such as Instagram, they are still undercut drastically when compared to the attention that Thunberg receives. As of December 2021, @intersectionalenvironmentalist has over 400,000 followers, yet Thunberg's Instagram weighs in at a staggering 13.9 million followers. This gap between the face of one girl and the countless voices of minorities represents the lack of diversity and intersectionality within the climate change movement. Unfortunately, this means significant ideas and solutions to local and global issues have the potential to be overlooked in light of a more popular image (that of Thunberg). Social media posts such as the one in Exhibit F highlight the distinct issues that arise within the broad



Exhibit F

conversation of Environmental Justice. More specifically, aspects such as investing in African-American and Latinx communities, the accountability of corporations, Indigenous land rights, and affordable green housing signify the intersectional issues that must be addressed in order to prevent the deterioration of environments. Furthermore, examples such as Exhibit G exemplify the necessity for Brazilian Indigenous voices at the CHOOSE EARTH campaign. The post from Alice Aedy reads, “Meet the Real Climate Change Leaders. If biodiversity is nurtured by [I]ndigenous communities, why aren’t they given a seat at the table?”



Exhibit G

Conclusion/Implications

It is apparent Thunberg exists as an icon on and off social media. Her activism for a safer, healthy planet has landed her millions of followers. Yet, her fame brings to light how certain individuals are missing from the vital conversation on how we solve this impending global concern. How we neglect minority groups from this discourse will have a lasting impact on generations to come. Social media does provide a platform for youths of color to advocate change, but based upon the large gap of followers between their ideas and Thunberg's, they are deprived of equal environmental representation and accommodation. Even Thunberg's own awareness of the lack of intersectionality is not enough. We must expect more from the images and messages amplified through social media. Inclusivity is not negotiable a facet when it comes to saving our planet.

While this research shines an introductory light onto the conversation of Environmentalism in social media, it does not fully encapsulate the depth of racial disparity within. It is my hope that my initial research findings can further lead the way into a more in-depth, quantifiable research study into this issue. Due to the fact I was only able to focus on a limited series of postings, there is a certain lack of quantitative research. Through the use of web-scraping, a more detailed analysis could display a substantial number correlating to the environmentalism-diversity gap. If we could place a tangible percentage to the number of posts circulating not only Instagram, but other social media platforms as well (such as Twitter and Facebook), we could further solidify the evidence that intersectional factors such as race, gender, and class affect social media amplification. Furthermore, I believe a deeper investigation into the voices behind the screen could draw out qualitative data which may have been overlooked within this research project. By listening to the individual experiences of those neglected in this global movement, we can achieve a much clearer image of how racial disparity within social media incapacitates the global enterprise for climate change.

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Book Review: *The Sensory Modes of Animal Rhetorics: A Hoot in the Light*

by Alex C. Parrish
Palgrave Macmillan, 2021

In the last decade, the field of rhetoric has undergone an “animal turn,” meaning that scholars are considering the treatment of nonhuman animals in rhetorical scholarship as well as whether they can be said to practice rhetoric. Such deliberations largely result from George Kennedy’s “A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric.” This 1992 article reintroduced rhetoric—a practice predominantly viewed in relation to humans—as a technology also utilized by nonhuman animals. Rhetorical scholars have since responded with a range of scholarship envisioning the field unmarked by anthropocentrism, highlighting its need to embrace a biocultural paradigm, identifying the presence of nonhuman animals in its canonical works, and interrogating its history in regard to human exceptionalism. *The Sensory Modes of Animal Rhetorics: A Hoot in the Light*, by Alex Parrish, continues this work by offering a robust, transdisciplinary exploration of the rhetorical nature of senses as they manifest among humans and nonhumans. Parrish argues that by “seeing that animals communicate differently, we can appreciate the great variety of persuasive techniques found in nature without imposing value or inviting bias” (p. 340). Because of diversity among environments, there is no universal model to which all communication should subscribe.

The Sensory Mode’s introduction (Chapter 1), establishes the book’s primary themes of illuminating environmental impact on sensory abilities and communication, toppling hierarchical understandings of communication, and fostering empathy for nonhuman animals. Parrish finds inspiration in Marshall McLuhan’s statement that “the medium is the message,” which refers to the impact different mediums have on the ways messages are perceived. Parrish merges this insight with Jakob von Uexküll’s theory that animals all occupy a niche in their environment and possess unique bodies, cognitive functions, and sensory abilities. Perspectives formed as a result of such unique trait combinations blind animals to the perspectives of other species—an issue which greatly affects human treatment of nonhuman animals. Thus, this book directs attention to the interrelatedness of environments and senses and how incomplete understandings of abilities and perspectives can prove harmful. Parrish suggests different ways that humans can work to mitigate their hierarchical thinking in these areas.

Structurally, *The Sensory Modes* is divided into four parts, which introduce the study of animal rhetorics, investigate familiar senses as they appear among humans and animals, investigate senses that appear more frequently among animals, and discuss the dangers of and alternatives to human exceptionalism, respectively. Part I introduces the study of animal rhetorics and

establishes concepts essential to later discussions on cross-species rhetorical studies. This section seeks to amend dualism in biology and culture by stating that the need for culture (which humans share with other intelligent and social animals) is biological. Similarly, culture influences biological materials (such as genetics, hormones, and phenotypes) to equip individuals to endure their environments. The text then identifies how such studies could be disrupted. The opposition named includes humanism (which has a tendency for dualisms), scientific traditions (which sometimes demonstrate anxiety over decentering humanity), difficulty understanding animal communication, and difficulty related to transdisciplinary work. Part I closes with a discussion of deceit, information sharing, and manipulation that shows the presence of deceit and its varying degrees of intensity in both human and nonhuman animal cultures.

Part II is dedicated to detailed analyses of the familiar senses, their rhetorical properties, and their potential to blind humans to the other communicative methods in the world. It highlights the degree that humans rely on their sight and hearing (the visual and audio senses). Despite these being humanity's most favored senses, the author explains that they manifest more strongly among other animals. Parrish describes the importance of the often-neglected sense of touch to physical development and tool use among humans and animals. The relationship between touch and intimacy is specifically discussed as being important to humans. Finally, this section discusses the senses of smell and taste (the olfactory and gustatory senses) and the rhetorical signals that they provide in the lives of humans and animals, affecting appetite, sexual activity, and sense of environment.

Part III focuses on three senses that humans are rarely able to detect, but that they might interact with unknowingly. One is the ability to sense heat in surrounding environments and in other living creatures (thermoception). While humans are severely deficient in this skill, they have replicated it in technologies such as infrared. The second is the ability to sense electrical currents through water and, occasionally, on land (electroreception). Despite the rare appearance of this sense among terrestrial animals, owing to the electrical resistance of air, human substitutions for this lack arise through products such as personal oceanic devices. The third sense is the use of strong pulses to communicate, gather information about conspecifics, and map out environments (echolocation). This sense is well-known to humans via radar and sonar technologies. However, the nonhuman world is the locus of natural echolocation.

Part IV, the book's final section, provides a robust history of rhetoric's role in encouraging human exceptionalism and attempts that have been (or are being) made to decenter the human, beginning with Isocrates distinguishing humans by their use of eloquence and reason and ending with Amy Proppen's example of humans interceding for marine mammals ("Technologies of Mediation and the Borders and Boundaries of Human-Nonhuman Animal Relationships in Marine Species Advocacy"). The book suggests ways that humans can work to eliminate animal oppression, noting that attention must be given to mutually beneficial relationships between animals and humans. The book closes with a call to broaden communication-oriented fields to be more inclusive of animals' abilities and agency—and with

a warning about how hierarchical, exclusionary thinking brings harm to both animals and humans.

The greatest strength of this book lies in its transdisciplinary source material and its acknowledgment of alternative perspectives. Parrish uses insights from a host of disciplines, including biosemiotics, communication studies, disability studies, ethology, and others to inform his discussions of animal rhetorics. He makes visible efforts to include other perspectives; for example, he includes a few notable examples of non-Western perspectives despite the book's primary focus on the West. Having noted the book's greatest strength, it is also appropriate to mention a weakness that appears throughout the text. Parrish frequently notes that humans have, and are in the process of, adapting sensory abilities that are predominantly present among nonhuman populations. One might easily reach the conclusion that being able to adopt the rhetorical modes of others serves to confirm human exceptionalism.

The Sensory Modes of Animal Rhetorics: A Hoot in the Light is a valuable transdisciplinary work that illustrates why rhetoric is inseparable from environmental context and how senses function rhetorically. This book shines in its argument that humans often judge their abilities as communicators (or rhetors) without fully considering their environments and the abilities of other animals. Thus, this proves a necessary read for anyone in the fields of communication studies and rhetoric.

— **Dynestee Fields, University of Tennessee-Knoxville**



Dynestee Fields is a Master of Arts student in the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics program. Her research interests center on critical animal studies and human-animal studies. She specializes in identifying and analyzing the myriad of ways that humans communicate about nonhuman animals and the effects of these choices. Her recent work examines linguistic trends found in zoo discourse.



The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics

Submissions Guidelines

Following the lead of other journals like *Kairos* and *Present Tense*, all submissions should follow APA style for in-text citations and references with the sole exception of critics' names that appear in the body of the essay. Full names should be provided the first time they are referenced. All work should be emailed to journalofmultimodalrhetorics@gmail.com.

Because *JOMR* aims to advance scholarly collaboration, community, and respect, we are no longer practicing anonymous review. For alphabetic texts, please send a .doc or .docx file that includes your name and institutional affiliation--no PDFs, please. Similarly, there is no need to remove identifying information on videos, podcasts, and webtexts.

Once your work has been accepted for publication, please provide a short author's biography (no more than 100 words) and a picture of the author(s) as a .jpeg. If you would prefer to not use a picture of yourself, please send a Creative Commons image or a personally-authored one of your choice.

JOMR is usually published twice a year, in Spring and Fall, but occasionally, we also publish a third issue in Summer.

Discussions (Essays)

Essays should range between 3,000-7,000 words excluding references and endnotes. Longer works will be considered, but please keep in mind that online presentation doesn't lend itself well to overly long works. If you would like to submit an essay as a series over several issues, please contact the lead editor. Authors should ensure that hyperlinks are current as of submission. Video essays and podcasts should be between 10-20 minutes and include captions (videos) and transcriptions. Webtexts must be hosted by the author.

Dialogues (Interviews)

Interviews can be submitted as podcasts, videos, or verbal transcripts. They may include one-on-one conversations with scholars, teachers, critics, or artists, or they may be roundtable-style discussions.

Demonstrations (Artistic Displays)

Artistic displays can take any number of forms to showcase original compositions including but are not limited to photography, paintings, songs, and slideshows. Composers use these media to tell stories, compose “arguments,” or draw attention to issues of vital political and cultural significance in ways that standard essays cannot.

Reviews

JOMR welcomes reviews of books or other texts that are no older than two years. If you are interested in reviewing older texts, please see our guidelines for the Re-Views section. Reviews should be between 1,000-1,500 words.

Re-Views

This section is dedicated to revisiting older essays, books, or other media whose influence continues to resonate within current scholarship. These works can focus on multimodal theory specifically, or they may be works that speak to cultural practices that engage multimodality. Submissions should encourage readers to consider the material in a new light or explain its ongoing significance to rhetorical studies. If you are unsure about submitting to this section, please email the editor at journalofmultimodalrhetorics@gmail.com with any questions or concerns, or directly at cvcedillo@gmail.com.

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