Fandom and Neomedia Studies Association

8th Annual Conference

3–5 June 2022

Irving, Texas

Program Book

Friday

10:00am: Doors Open

Block A: Panels

10:30am: Fictive Models of Parenting

Dr. Jack Andersen, Tarrant County College

The core of *The Witcher*'s story is the relationship between three characters: Geralt of Rivia, Yennefer of Vengerberg, and Cirilla Fiona Elen Riannon. Bound together by destiny and love, these three characters form an unlikely adoptive family. In many ways, the dark and often unfair world that they live in is not unlike our own, and their relationship offers valuable insight.

Sean Kennedy, Collin College

In the game *Final Fantasy VII*, many themes and conventions of traditional dystopian narratives are explored. This presentation will focus on the family dynamics of the game's broke and pessimistic world, particularly in the way that the traditional blood-related family is rare and reserved for the upper class, while most families are formed through adoption and tragic circumstance due to an environment in which parents die often and leave their children orphans.

Andrew Tague, TAMU Commerce

What is the role and function of a parent? What makes them a "good" parent? This presentation will examine these questions and more by examining the father-son relationships between Goku and Gohan as well as between Vegeta and Trunks in *Dragon Ball Z.*

12:00pm: Cosplay History

Helen McCarthy, Independent Scholar

World-renowned anime scholar Helen McCarthy presents the results of decades of work and participation in the cosplay community with updated information regarding the origins and current trends in a favorite fandom activity.

1:00pm: Kontraindicated: Conventions and Your Health

Robert Fox, Chief of A-Kon Medical and Army Medic

Convention attendance has always put people at risk of "con crud" and the past several years have exacerbated those dangers. Learn how to keep your health in mind as you prepare for, enjoy, and recover from the experience of a fandom convention.

Conference Committee

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3000 Custer Rd., Ste. 270-337
Plano, TX 75075

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2:00pm: BREAK

3:00pm: Mental Health in Anime, Manga, and Japan
Dr. William Nation, Johns Hopkins University Counseling Center
Jessi Bishop, Indepenent Scholar
This panel examines popular anime and the ways mental health is present in or has influenced them. The discussion will also focus on how Japanese cultural views of mental health may appear in beloved media. The panelists welcome audience participation and questions.

4:00pm: Remembrance in *Homestuck*
Raye Glassford, Trinity College Dublin
As a piece of literature created and set during the early post-internet era, *Homestuck* stands out as a representative juggernaut of online culture, its setting embodying readers' collective memories of the 2000s internet. Genfūkei (originary landscape, a theory created by literary critic Takeo Okumo, proposes a fictive-remembered nostalgia system whereby the personal and collective memories of a work's creators and readership fuse, forming a literary trend that unites portrayals of a particular landscape, underpinned by specific ideas (often misconceptions) about a particular time and place in the past. This conceptual framework emphasizes the high degree of interactivity between a fictional text and the public imagination.
In the context of this framework, *Homestuck*'s epiction of online spaces meets Okumo's criteria for an originary landscape, constructing a cybernostalgia-fueled portrait of the early post-internet era as chaotic, egalitarian, and rhizomatic; or, in Okumo's words, "spontaneous, classless, and interconnected. This presentation explores the ways in which *Homestuck*'s story and format simultaneously draw from and contribute to nostalgic constructions of the early post-internet era as an originary landscape.
Jen Cardenas, University of North Texas
Homestuck, in its original form is lost forever due to Adobe Flash's discontinuation in 2020. In anticipation of losing Flash support, web user Bambosh developed a fan-created, open-access archive called *The Unofficial Homestuck Collection* (TUCH) that supports the original Flash files. TUHC is an amateur attempt to provide a complete, accessible, authentic *Homestuck* experience for fans and potential new audiences that do date far outstrips archival efforts made by *Homestuck*'s parent company. Bambosh's fan archival practices that included, excluded, and enhanced different parts of the original text illustrate fandom's paratextual memory and canonicity.
The *Homestuck* fandom's paratextual memory prioritizes an authentic or "having-been-there" feeling and access(ibility) to *Homestuck* over strict fidelity to the original text. TUHC includes vast amounts of (para)textual content but excludes ongoing and monetized *Homestuck* content, reshaping canon around financial loyalty. Additionally, alteration of deep-structure paratexts—the CSS, HTML, and programming that shape digital texts' appearance and function—to enhance accessibility is an acceptable alteration to having-been-there-ness. Finally deep-structure paratexts—technological support for Flash animations—are a cornerstone of the *Homestuck* fandom's paratextual memory. Thus, technological affordances/deep-structure paratexts are part of *Homestuck*'s canon and having-been-there-ness but malleable in favor of accessibility. Fans must be able to access the canon to "be there."

5:00pm: Hikikomori: Social Isolation in Anime and Manga
       Dr. William Nation, Johns Hopkins University Counseling Center
       Jessi Bishop, Independent Scholar
       Hikikomori, Hiki, and NEET are character types often seen in Japanese media widely known and loved. But where do these characters come from? This panel explores the background and truth behind these characters, the uniquely Japanese cultural factors that created them, and the modern research we can learn from.

6:00pm: Fandom of Color
       Dr. Angela Drummond-Matthews, Dallas College
       Darwin Archie-Pettis, Dallas College
       Juan Sandoval, Dallas College
       Jeremiah Stinnett, Dallas College
       The panelists discuss the lack of intersectionality in fan studies, the benefits of exclusive or safe spaces for fans of color, and the culture and fan-generated content that arise in such spaces.

7:00pm: An Otaku's Guide to Japanese History
       Lianna Gibson, Independent Scholar
       Marianne Bray, Independent Scholar
       The panelists present a crash course in Japanese history as seen through the lens of anime. The audience will be guided through a whirlwind tour of Japanese history from the rise of the samurai to the fall of the shogunate and beyond.

8:00pm: End of Day

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<div align="center">Saturday</div>

10:00am: Doors Open

10:15am: Opening Remarks, Jay Pustĕjovskeý Bennett, FANS Chair

<div align="center">Block B: Fandom Psychology</div>

10:30am: Empirically Testing the Validity of Otaku Stereotypes
       Dr. Stephen Reysen, TAMU Commerce
       Dr. Courtney N. Plante, Bishop's University
       Dr. Sharon E. Roberts, Renison University College, University of Waterloo
       Dr. Kathleen C. Gerbasi, Niagara County Community College
       In the present research we test the veracity of 36 stereotypes of otaku that have appeared in definitions and descriptions of otaku in various academic publications. We surveyed anime fans and examined differences between otaku and non-otaku fans, as well as gauge where fans fell on measures regarding each stereotype. Self-identified otaku tended to be young, male,

single, and heterosexual. However, these were not necessarily distinguishing features of otaku. Otaku identified as nerds/geeks, spread information about their favorite anime by word-of-mouth, showed obsessive tendencies, rated high on immersion when consuming anime, and identified strongly with their favorite character. Contrary to the stereotypes, otaku had a comparable friendship network with non-otaku anime fans, perceived themselves as mature, and did not feel they were socially awkward around non-fans. Taken together, the result tended to paint a portrait of otaku as well-adjusted individuals who happen to have an intense interest in a particular fan object.

11:00am: From Baby Steps to Giant Leaps: Deliberate Practice and *Baby Steps*
        Andrew Tague, TAMU Commerce
        Dr. David Frank, TAMU Commerce
        Fiction is often a reflection of different aspects of life and as such offer a unique opportunity to both educators and academics to explore topics and provide examples that are accessible. A popular debate among educators and academics is nature vs. nurture. This debate is especially popular in the discussion of talent and the development of expertise in a specific profession or hobby, such as sports. One prominent name in the debate of expertise development and the role of talent is K. Anders Ericsson, who is credited with the development of the expertise-performance approach. This approach focusing on training and expert performance but there are discrepancies in regard to effective practice and the role of talent. Using examples found in *Baby Steps*, a sports manga about a young man's journey to becoming a professional tennis player, we discuss some of the problems with Ericsson's approach.

11:30am: COVID-19 Stress Moderates the Mediational Pathway of Fandom Identification on
        Well-Being through Problem-Focused Coping
        Victoria A. Smodis-McCune, Bishop's University
        Dr. Courtney N. Plante, Bishop's University
        Dr. Stephen Reysen, TAMU Commerce
        Dr. Adrianna Mendrek, Bishop's University
        Ongoing research about the pandemic has shown how stress about COVID-19 and its resulting lockdowns have been detrimental to our collective well-being. Studies on how people cope with stressful situations suggests that problem-focused coping strategies are especially effective, while other studies suggest that people often turn to their social support networks—from families to fan groups—for social support. In the present study we synthesize this research to develop and test a model of moderated mediation, one where fans' identification with their fandom is associated with greater well-being as mediated by greater use of problem-focused coping strategies. This mediational pathway is predicted to be especially strong for those experiencing the greatest amount of COVID-19-related stress. We test this model in a cross-sectional study of two different samples of fans ($N = 374$) recruited through online fan websites. Results suggest support for the pathway in the more stigmatized, decentralized of the two fan groups. We discuss the results in the context of research on the COVID-19 pandemic, problem-focused coping, and the association between fandom and well-being, as well as limitations of the present findings and fruitful directions for future research.

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KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

12:00pm: *Miyazaki and the Hero's Journey*
        Dr. Deborah Scally, UT Dallas
        Miyazaki and the Hero's Journey examines the myth of the Heroic Quest Cycle from the perspective of the films of Japanese auteur Hayao Miyazaki. His films disrupt the long-held claim promoted by Joseph Campbell and other mythologists that the Quest is only for boys and men by featuring girls and women as full human beings who can be heroes just the same. The book looks at each of his films and also discusses his influence on other animators who are following in his footsteps

1:00pm: LUNCH

Block C: Language and Literature

2:00pm: *Pet Sematary*: Horror as Social Value
        Gavin Cox, UT Dallas
        The novel *Pet Sematary,* written by Stephen King, is often seen as genre horror with little literary or social value and has received little scholarly attention. To begin to appreciate the value of *Pet Sematary* as something more than a work of genre requires both the willingness to take genre fiction seriously *and* understand how King's novel transcends its genre. This novel is successful today as an effective representation of the horror genre, as it was when first published. There is a wide-ranging consensus that the book is very good at producing the experience of fear that readers seek out in the horror genre. However, despite its success as horror, it historically has not gone beyond that. Given that the novel contains multiple natural and supernatural incidents that occur throughout the book, such as the death of a child, the child's return from the dead and killing others, including his mother, the loss of sanity and grasp of reality, *Pet Sematary* is dismissed because no "actual" literature could ever use these horrific situations as entertainment. But these same elements that make *Pet Sematary* a genre work are also where we can find its ultimate value and importance. So, *Pet Sematary*, labeled as horror, and typically classified as part of the lowbrow genre, has real benefits. It is proof that horror can do more than scare the reader.
        Essential questions and deliberations are asked and addressed that are a part of the social fabric of humanity - the differences between what is love and what is endless devotion, what constitutes violence versus its "accepted" role as part of justice, and the line that exists between acceptance and unwavering self-sacrifice. Above all, it brings forward the challenges of fear and avoidance of death. These questions are necessary to ask and are a part of the non-fictional horrors of modern life. It also brings for the question of whether or not the literary status of Pet Sematary is meaningful in order to ask and answer these vital matters.
        To begin to appreciate the value of *Pet Sematary* and how it transcends the boundaries of the horror genre requires both the willingness to take genre fiction seriously *and* an understanding of how King's novel transcends its genre even as it is a successful example of it. It takes traumatic and horrific events and applies common emotions to each situation, which instills a necessity to view each event and ask what we are willing to do for the ones we love. Whether Pet Sematary is ever considered "highbrow" literature shows the potential of what can be done by and for the reader. Despite its current status, it can ask these crucial questions and

force introspection about the nature of love or justice. This status can make this novel meaningfully different from those that are "restricted" by specific literary rules.

2:30pm: The Vernacular Video Game Language as a Medium of Fandom Storytelling and
Content Creation
Riccardo Retez, IULM University Milan

This paper investigates the alternative applications of vernacular terminology through video game texts and paratexts within fandom communities. The focus is on the use of expressions adopted from the language of video game within online communities that orbit around groups of streamers. The research focuses on their activity within the game live streaming platform Twitch.tv and, in particular, on the cluster of Italian streamers known as *Tomodachi Crew*

Formally established in November 2020, *Tomodachi Crew* proposes a typology of entertainment focused on video games, anime, and manga: The community and the streamers of *Tomodachi Crew* apply terminologies and languages typical of the products of popular culture mentioned above to their activity on Twitch. Specifically, one of the characteristic aspects is the transformation of the English term *lore* into a true creative-narrative tool employed by the community fandom. Derived from *folklore*, the expression indicates the set of knowledge and stories indigenous to a given place, told by those who live in it and handed down from individual to individual. As Majkowski (2016) and Wiik (2019) recall, the vernacular term has become a standard in video game language, indicate the silent narrative, secondary to the explicit diegesis and composed of the set of events and stories told in a non-linear way through objects and artifacts of various kinds scattered and hidden in the virtual world.

Within the community of *Tomodachi Crew*, the expression is configured as a story composed of creative productions of the fandom that, crossing different media, follows the common thread of the content broadcast live by streamers: It is a multifaceted narrative, what Marie-Laure Ryan (2011) calls "layered narrative."

In a transmedia perspective of applying languages across media, from content creators to fans, the research method involves the semiotic framing of Twitch consumption phenomena through contributions from academics and critics (Bittani and Gandolfi, 2018; Antonacci, 2018; Woodcock and Johnson, 2019); followed by the semantic analysis of fan-content created by the *Tomodachi Crew* fandom archived within the subreddit – *r/DarioMocciaTwitch*. The analysis examines various types of content (fanarts, fanfiction, videos, and songs) made by fans with the aim of enriching the *lore* of *Tomodachi Crew*. In order to reconstruct the narrative behind their activity on Twitch, the reference framework restricts the study to content created within a given period of time and filtered according to the platform's own classification indexes.

It is possible to demonstrate that, in the relationship between streamer, fan, and video game, the boundaries between texts and video game paratexts are very blurred and the contextual dimension far exceeds the traditionally textual one. Finally, this study is an integral part of research the purpose of which is to understand and define the new identity of the "spectator-videogamer" developed on Twitch, through the analysis of consumption practices that its characters use.

3:00pm: Collecting Husbands: Fan Discourse of *Mr. Love: Queen's Choice*
    Jasmine Holthaus, University of Kansas
    How do consumers of media become fans, and what do they do as fans? Fan attachments engage people to build lasting friendships with others and create attachments to fictional characters. Discussions of fan attachments like these have found a place in academics, especially with scholars from diverse fields such as Henry Jenkins and Rita Felski. These two scholars have created the space for analyzing fandoms in an academic setting, including how and why humans are attracted to media. Their theories surrounding fan cultures and interpersonal attachment applies to a specific mobile game, *Love & Producer*, released in China in 2017, which was later translated to English and released globally as *Mr. Love: Queen's Choice (Mr. Love)* in 2019. *Mr. Love* is a mobile otome gacha game that has hooked millions of players across the globe, the majority of which identify as female. Otome games are generally catered toward young, heterosexual, female audiences; these games feature one female protagonist and multiple male love interests that players can choose between. Gacha games are popular on mobile platforms, and they feature a type of "gambling" aspect to them. By gambling, gacha games have in-game currency that players can use to purchase in-game content; in *Mr. Love's* case, the in-game content achieved through the gacha element are images and stories of the love interests, often called husbands in the community. Combining these two genres, otome and gacha, *Mr. Love* has produced multiple online fan communities ranging across different social media platforms, including Reddit, Facebook, Twitter, and Discord. These communities actively discuss *Mr. Love*'s gameplay mechanics, characters, and story while also building a community of shared interests. The overall fan discourse surrounding the game and its components indicate that many female gamers are not only consuming this media but have become highly engaged with *Mr. Love*. One of these phenomena is the lasting relationships built between community members, as seen in a small, Discord community dedicated to the game, titled "r/MrLove". This Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research will evaluate the gender dynamics of players as well as how fans are performing--or challenging--gender expectations by applying theories from previously mentioned scholar Henry Jenkins and fan culture scholar Matt Hills. Additional literary scholars' works will also be applied to understand the discourse along gender lines. The goal of this research is to determine what fan culture can teach academics about online communities, especially in female-dominated spaces. Specifically, the research intends to expand, or complicate, what is generally seen as feminine discourse. The guiding questions include: How are fans performing, or challenging, gender expectations and language in this discourse community surrounding *Mr. Love: Queen's Choice*? Do the fans complicate or revise the gender norms? What does fan culture teach society about online communities, especially in female-dominated spaces? Taking these questions into consideration through this research, "r/MrLove" tends to both perform and challenge gender expectations and language practices.

3:30pm: How Participatory Culture Is Shaping the Future of Storytelling and Creative Labor: A
    Dream SMP Case Study
    Raye Glassford, Trinity College Dublin
    Aaron Alexander, Texas State University
    The term New Media describes works of art (visual/textual/musical/etc.) created, distributed, and received wholly or in part via the affordances of digital technologies. Such artworks have, in recent years, become increasingly participatory. The degree to which audiences generate and influence the meaning of a text has long been a point of contention among media

critics—but in the intensely transformative media ecosystem of the early 2020s, the question of engagement and labor is no longer simply concerned with how much work is required to consume a piece of art, but with how much work is required in order for audiences to co-create he art they consume. *Dream SMP* (DSMP), an ongoing fictional work of loosely-scripted improv theater staged with in an invite-only survival multiplayer *Minecraft* server and streamed serially via YouTube and Twitch, is a recent New Media juggernaut. The story is known for its interactive capacity, as well as for the intensity and diversity of the labor required to engage with it as a viewer.

How can highly convergent, decentralized, and rhizomatic New Media stories be wholly and clearly understood by storytelling scholars? Moreover, what can New Media sagas like DSMP teach us about the relationship between creative labor, technology, and storytelling as a social phenomenon and collaborative practice? This paper combines the discourses of sports-theater entertainment, transmodality, and ergodic storytelling, applying each successive lens to a case study of DSMP in order to argue that the affordances of current digital technologies build on a longstanding tradition of presumption (the combined act of simultaneously consuming and producing media) in order to shape the storytelling experience.

4:00pm: Art in Translation: Contextualizing the Instructional Manga Publications of Christopher Hart
      Lindsay Robbins, University of North Texas

In 2001, American cartoonist Christopher Hart released the first of what would eventually be a large collection of instructional manuals on drawing manga. His *Manga Mania* series continues to be published and circulated today and can be found at many book and craft stores. As Hart utilizes a wide variety of source material to pull from, including his own experiences and background, translated manga and anime, as well as current trends--this complicates his texts as being representative of the medium.

This work is part of my master's thesis in art history at the University of North Texas. It examines the figural representations in Hart's *Manga Mania* as a sign system using Roman Jakobson's concept of intersemiotic translation. In doing so, I suggest that his work acts as a translation of manga that reflects cross-cultural implications and complicates the perception and understanding of manga in the context of the United States.

4:30pm: Meeting Your Heroes: The Renaissance Age and the Transformation of Values in *My Hero Academia*
      Dr. Ryan Johnson, Amarillo College

It is hard to avoid superheroes these days. Not only do they continue their long dominance of the comic book industry, they have also saturated film, and with the release of shows like *Hawkeye, The Falcon and the Winter Soldier,* and *Peacemaker*, superheroes seem set to consume the streaming services. In short, things are a lot different than they were in any previous period of comics history.

In both fandom and comics scholarship, these diverse epochs of comics (and particularly superhero) history are parsed based on shared artistic impulses and social/artistic mores, called Ages. Although there is much diversity of opinion regarding just when a how a particular age manifests, there is large agreement on the existence of the Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Dark Ages. Conveniently, these periods roughly match the stages of genre evolution posited separately by Christian Metz and Thomas Schatz. But, as initially stated, things have changed in the past

two decades. Since many scholarly studies of genre end after four stages, where does that leave the superhero genre?

Peter Coogan, in his book *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre* proposes the existence of a fifth stage of genre evolution, which he calls the Renaissance or Reconstruction Stage. According to Coogan, during this period: The conventions of the genre are reestablished in ways that incorporate an understanding of the genre's completed cycle. Readers will be able to experience the reconstructive stories the way they did when first encountering the genre; this includes a sense of wonder or discovery, but one tied to a knowledge of and appreciation for the conventions of the genre.

While the author agrees with Coogan's assertion of the new Age of comics/stage of genre evolution, the author asserts that his understanding of the current period of comics history lacks an important element. In this presentation, I will build on the work of Coogan, Schatz, Metz, and others to argue that a central tenet of the current Renaissance Age of comics is the transmission of moral values to a new generation. The author will examine the students of Class 1-A from *My Hero Academia* as potent examples of the Renaissance Age, demonstrating not only their sense of wonder and the their/the series' acknowledgement of the dark past, but how the anime self-consciously reflects on the transmission of values accomplished through superheroes.

5:00pm: BREAK

Block D: Fandom Engagement

5:30pm: A Brief Report on Sex Differences in Identification and Engagement with Anime
Dr. Stephen Reysen, TAMU Commerce
Dr. Rito Baring, De La Salle University
Dr. Courtney N. Plante, Bishop's University
Dr. Philip Joseph Sarmiento, Holy Angel University
Cristina Samia, Holy Angel University
Dr. Benita Bonus, Holy Angel University
Dr. Nestor Sibug, Don Honorio Ventura State University
Dr. Paolo Lumanlan, University of Ha'il
Prior research, predominantly focusing on Western fans, has found that the anime fandom is comprised of a majority of males. In the present research we assessed whether this tendency held true in a Filipino and U.S. samples. Specifically, Filipino and U.S. college students completed measures of engagement with anime content and identification with the anime fandom. Converging with prior research, the results showed that males were more engaged with anime (i.e., watching anime, reading manga, reading news, talking with others about anime) and showed higher identification with the anime fandom than females in both samples. Mediation analyses showed that identification with the fandom mediated the relationship between participant sex and engagement with anime. Together, the results highlight the importance of fandom identification to predict engagement with fandom content and the expanding evidence of gender disparity within the fandom in both the Philippines and the US.

6:00pm: *Fandomonium*: How Spaces Marked for Fandom Engagement Transformed into Areas
for Political Discourse

Stevesha M. Evans, UT Dallas

In the early 2000s, social media sites emerged as forums for communication and networking. Within those spaces, fandom culture evolved as netizens gushed over their favorite books, television shows, and celebrities. Twitter for example, was the cornerstone for Beliebers, Directioners, Otakus, and K-pop fans in 2009. Fans from around the world flocked to the site to discuss the objects of their affection in 140 characters or less. As Twitter progressed from its humble beginnings as a site for status updates, the turn of the decade brought in more users that sought to make their voices heard. The year 2012 indicates a turning point in how spaces marked for fandom transformed into areas for political and social discourse.

Franchesca Ramsey, also known as Chescaleigh, uploaded her viral hit "Sh*t White Girls Say to Black Girls" to YouTube on 4 January 2012, as a parody to the original "Sh*t Girls Say" video written by Kyle Humphrey and Graydon Sheppard. In the video Ramsey adorns a blonde wig, speaks in a Valley girl accent, and makes several comments that often spark the ire of Black people such as "Not to sound racist, but…" and "Why isn't there a White Entertainment Television?" Ramsey's video ignited conversations of microaggressions that Black women experience across multiple social media platforms including Twitter, Tumblr, and YouTube. It infiltrated fandom spaces that led to debates regarding "reverse racism" and indirect discrimination. White women felt the sting of Ramsey's quips, calling her video racist and insensitive. Black women came to Ramsey's defense by leaving comments on her video and tweeting their own experiences with indirect racism. The success of Ramsey's video led her to pursue a career in activism, where she continued to utilize platforms such as Twitter and YouTube to speak up about racism and other social issues.

In July of 2013, a little more than a year after Franchesca Ramsey posted her video, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter surfaced on Twitter in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. A year after that in 2014, the hashtag #SayHerName launched by the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) brought awareness to the murders of Black women at the hands of police. According to scholar Sherri Williams, she argues that "Nonfiction media, including journalism and documentaries, have not amplified violence against Black women" the way that social media has. Both the #BLM and #SayHerName hashtags led to waves of political consciousness that transcended social media networking sites and fandom spaces. Black women created two movements that highlight the injustices that African Americans experience in relation to police violence. To what extent does online hashtags shape political movements that go beyond social media platforms? In what ways have activists transformed fandom spaces to become more inclusive of social, political, and cultural issues? This paper seeks to address the political strategies Black women used to bring awareness to the violence and discrimination that African Americans continue to face in the twenty-first century.

6:30pm: Judging Responsibility in Reality Television Show Contests: A Case Study of Culinary
Norms and Culinary Deviance on *Top Chef* Season 17
Dr. Ronald Lorenzo, Prairie View A & M University
Top Chef is an American culinary competition and reality television show currently in its 18th season. The show is produced with each episode pitting chefs in sudden-elimination style competitions. Chefs who may otherwise be unmatched in their professions are asked to prepare foods under restrictive guidelines that are not revealed to them until the last moment. Known on the show as challenges, these competitions restrict chefs in what they can do to win, such as not being able to use knives or preparing foods highlighting a specific ingredient such as white truffles. At the end of each episode, the chefs in the competition confront a "judge's table" of food critics and other chefs who pass judgment on their dishes. The three, worse-performing judges are evaluated for their culinary mistakes and shortcomings of their prepared dishes, and the judges decide which competitor is eliminated. Sociologically, the group behavior that makes the show successful is the assessment of responsibility, which is the dramatic climax of each episode. The preparation of dishes on the show are evaluated by the judges as exceeding culinary norms or as examples of culinary deviance. The conversation at the judge's table turns to matters of determining which mistake is worse, such as serving unseasoned meat, combining flavors that do not complement each other, or not preparing a food within an episode's selected theme. This case study interprets a recent season of the reality television show by extending the sociological theory of Paul Fauconnet in his work, *Responsibility* (1920). Fauconnet's work has not been published in English, nor has it been applied widely to neomedia subjects. Fauconnet's work has an ongoing influence in Europe in fields such as sociology, criminology, psychology, and philosophy, but is virtually unknown to American academics. This case study will demonstrate that the assessment of culinary norms and culinary deviance on *Top Chef* is not done by arbitrary standards. Rather, the determination of responsibility by the judges on the television show follows a social structure with a rule system for determining which foods are prepared the best and which foods are prepared the worst. Even when judges confront novel forms of culinary deviance, often as a result of the cooking challenges of the show, there is a structure for assessing which form is the worse among several examples. The study concludes that structures for assessing responsibility have both established patterns for assessing responsibility but also predictable mechanisms for assessing responsibility to unpredictable, novel acts of deviance. The decision-making process for determining punishment on *Top Chef* has important similarities to other processes for assigning responsibility, including job interviews, court cases, and electoral politics.

7:00pm: "Bordering on Excess": Perceptions of Fan Obsession in Anime Fans, Furries, and *Star Wars* Fans
Dr. Stephen Reysen, TAMU Commerce
Dr. Courtney N. Plante, Bishop's University
Grace Packard, Georgia State University
Dr. Sharon E. Roberts, Renison University College, University of Waterloo
Dr. Kathleen C. Gerbasi, Niagara County Community College
In the present research, we examine what it means for fans to take their interests "too far" in a multi-fandom, qualitative study. Specifically, we asked self-identified anime fans, furries, and *Star Wars* fans to describe what, to them, marked the point where a fan could be said to be taking their interest too far. From these responses we extracted five common themes across

fandoms: (1) when one's fan interest negatively impacts their life, (2) when one's fan interest becomes the sole or defining feature of their personality, (3) when one's fan-related opinions are pushed on others, (4) when a fan loses touch with reality, and (5) when there is a connection between one's fan interest and their sexual desire. We also note that anime fans cited a unique, sixth theme, when fans excessively worship Japanese culture. The responses suggest that excessive fan behavior may be ubiquitous across fandoms, although there may be idiosyncratic excesses characteristic of specific fandoms. We discuss these findings in the context of existing fan literature as well as their implications, both practical and for future research.

7:30pm: End of Day

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Sunday

Block E: Neomedia Sciences

11:00am: Doors Open

11:30am: The Social Character of a Neomedia Social Movement: Understanding Citizen Science
        Motivation in Online Scientific Research Platforms
        Dr. Ronald Lorenzo, Prairie View A & M University
        Citizen science is a social movement by which non-professional scientists help collect, analyze, and interpret data alongside professional scientists. Based out of Stanford University, Eterna is the online platform associated with the research lab of Rhiju Das, a computational biochemist studying the properties of RNA molecules for their application in therapeutics. The Eterna site has existed online since 2011, engaging and allowing citizen scientists to help in researching tuberculosis diagnostics and CRISPR based technologies. During the first year of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, citizen scientists participated in real scientific research on an online platform known as Eterna. Through a series of projects, professional scientists learned the characteristics necessary for designing stable RNA molecules that would be effective as COVID-19 vaccines. This case study establishes a framework for understanding who becomes a citizen scientist and why, not just for Eterna but also for similar online research platforms such as Eyewire (which studies how neurons work), Foldit (which studies DNA properties), and Beluga Bits (which recruits members of the public to understand whale behavior by studying photographs of Belugas in the wild). The citizen science social movement is new, and as a way of understanding the motivations of its participants the author will extend the theoretical framework of David Riesman in his book, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950). Riesman explored the various types of social character present in society, their emotional motivations, and their interactions with media of communication. Different from personality, social character refers to the social organization of preferences and goals within individuals, as well as their emotional drives. I elaborate on two different forms of social character found within contemporary society and found within citizen science social movements: inner-directed and other-directed social character types. The Inner-directed type is drawn to activities as temporary withdrawals from the world, where the individual can find solitude. Inner-directed types are motivated by goals based on permanent values, and they are more likely to engage in citizen science solely out of altruistic

motives. Other-directed types are motivated by social cues taken from their peers, and when they retreat into video games, it is as an attempted escape from the pervasive anxiety they experience in contemporary society. Other-directed types do not have goals based on permanent values, and they are less likely to commit to citizen science solely out of altruistic notions. As professional scientists turn to citizen science social movements as important allies in research, this study will offer suggestions for recruiting and retaining participants from the two social character types.

12:00pm: Patch Notes: Just Numbers or Something More?
Rinaldo del Gallo, UT Dallas
Patch Note Documents (PNDs) are a method of communicating to players the changes made to a game. While the feature is not inherently limited to digital games, it has become prominent in the medium, particularly games utilizing the "games as a service" business model. The range of these changes are vast, alternating between mentions of new additions of content, reworkings of older content, removal of unwanted content, bugfixes, balancing, and quality-of-life (QOL) features. However, when reading through any specific PND, it becomes clear that certain changes are celebrated more than others. Determining the hierarchy of these changes reveals troubling innovation-fetishizing viewpoints. These viewpoints are potentially destructive, often leading to negative player experiences while simultaneously erasing certain types of labor. PNDs occupy a contested space of language and labor. Metatextual analysis of the PNDs of *League of Legends* (Riot Games, 2009) reveal how maintenance and archival labor are devalued and erased. PNDs are a contested space for players and developers, and PNDs are also a contested space for players and corporations. The non-inclusion of the proclaimed most important elements of PNDs reveals how Riot Games seemingly releases content for its own sake (or for the sake of profit). This lack of clarity contradicts the proclaimed use of PNDs, revealing the true intention of PNDs, as spaces where Riot Games reasserts their dominance over players in player-developer and player-corporate negotiations. This dominance is then used to generate capital at the expense of player experience.

12:30pm: Eterna-RISE: An Approach to Genomics Instruction Using Science Neomedia
Dr. Ronald Lorenzo, Prairie View A & M University
Dr. Karmen Williams, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health
The COVID-19 pandemic beginning in March 2020 for the United States forced many educational environments to go exclusively online. The transition from in-person, face-to-face instruction to online classes widened an already existing digital divide in education. Minority students and minority serving institutions, especially, were already challenged with access to technology and access to internet connection, but also with opportunities to encourage minority students in STEM fields. During summer of 2020, to bridge the digital divide at Prairie View A&M University, a public Historically Black College/University (HBCU), the authors of this study collaborated in an inter-disciplinary, inter-institutional effort to address educational inequalities in an advanced, genomics class. This program was called Eterna-RISE. Our objective was to determine if a novel approach to teaching genomics, using an online platform called Eterna and addressing underrepresentation in STEM. Eterna, an online research platform that is packaged and promoted as a "video game with a purpose" allows participants to learn about RNA (ribonucleic acids) through challenges presented as video game puzzles. Participants advance in the game and can take part in computational biology and molecular biology experiments by submitting designs. During Fall 2020, students in a Prairie View A&M

Genomics class had lessons with demonstrations presented using Eterna. To address underrepresentation in STEM, researchers in genomics from universities such as Stanford, Yale, Northwestern, University of Texas, Baylor College of Medicine, and CINVESTAV in Mexico gave topic-specific presentations to the students. The guest lecturers were persons of color or women. Students at the end of the semester developed their course projects using Eterna. We surveyed students on how their participation in the Eterna-RISE program affected perceptions on science and science careers. We surveyed students in the genomics class and in a control group to assess the effectiveness of Eterna-RISE.

1:00: LUNCH

Block F: Professional Development

2:00pm: The 3 Cs: A New Way of Discussing Anime Characters
    Dr. William Nation, Johns Hopkins University Counseling Center
    Shon MonDragon, Richland Oaks Counseling Center
    This panel uses psychological case reviewing techniques to put a new spin on discussing favorite characters in both personal and professional contexts. Panelists will demonstrate their methods of thinking about how anime and manga characters act and what those actions may mean.

3:00pm: Pop Culture Pedagogy
    Jay Pustějovskeý Bennett, FANS Chair
    Instructors often struggle to present materials and methods to their students that remain relevant in an ever-shifting world of media signs and signifiers. This panel will present widely applicable methods of using pop culture as an instructional tool in the humanities and then present a specific case study of Muromachi-era farming village life as presented in *Inuyasha* to demonstrate the methodology.

4:00pm: End of Conference