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How Are Hegemonic Masculinities Recreated within "Geek Culture?" Introduction

In the summer of 2014, the hashtag #gamergate gained nationwide attention. At the heart of the conflict was a woman within the game industry and a group of online "geek" men who stalked her, released her personal information to the public, threatened her with sexual violence/death threats, and encouraged followers to do the same. This was all done, not in the name of "ethics in gaming journalism" as has been stated after the fact, but in an attempt to protect the "geek" sub-culture of gaming from those who threatened the status quo: namely women and other minorities.

This is not a new problem for the "geek" community. In 2009, Anita Sarkeesian, a feminist media critic and video games fan, posted a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for Feminist Frequency, a "video webseries that explores the representations of women in pop culture narratives" and was almost immediately met with a deluge of threats from mostly men within the gaming industry (Feminist Frequency 2012).

The larger implications of this backlash for women within technological and computer-related fields are disastrous; however, men within both those fields, as well as within the "geek" subculture, claim their communities to be wholly without bias, with participants accepted or rejected based on merit alone. This obviously does not correspond with the growingly vocal sub-segment of "geek" culture critical of ongoing discrimination.

This culture war is not limited to "geek" culture; however, "geek" culture acts as a viable microcosm through which male dominant gender relations can be studied. The

concepts of multiple masculinities and hegemonic masculinities are central to the study of gender relations, particularly in regards to social systems of male domination. To understand this further, this literature review will address in three sections the following research question: In what ways do hegemonic masculinities recreate themselves within "geek" culture? In the section Hegemonic Masculinities, I detail the specific definition, application, and implications of hegemonic masculinities, the latter of which includes a description about how they relate to the structures created within "geek" culture. Connell (1995) originally defined hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (P. 77). This concept has been both expanded and refined over time, and is generally understood to indicate the societal ideal of masculinity within a given place in time. This ideal sits at the top of a hierarchy of multiple masculinities, the specifics of which change as necessary for the continuation of patriarchy, and in opposition to multiple femininities, particularly emphasized femininity.

In the section Exogenous Actors, I detail the external factors that make recreation of the hegemony possible both within and outside of "geek" culture. While the benefits of patriarchy should not be underestimated, there are numerous external or exogenous actors that afford groups of people the cultural capital required to induce change in the positioning of masculinities and femininities. In this paper, I review two exogenous actors upon the hegemony of masculinities, with emphasis given to the ways in which "geek" men in particular could be provided the cultural capital necessary not only to dictate change to

the local hegemony within the "geek" sub-culture but also to challenge and influence hegemonies at regional or even global levels.

In the section "Geek" Culture, I specifically address the ways in which hegemonic masculinities are or are not recreated within "geek" culture. The definition of "geek" (and by extension "geek" culture) is difficult to state, as it has changed and expanded considerably over time. As with the related term "nerd," what was once considered a pejorative is now used as a form of self-identification. The nebulous collection of interests that underpins geek culture is expanding and a growing part of the mass [mediated] market.

For the purposes of this paper, I define a "geek" as an individual with an overly enthusiastic interest in a subject outside of the mainstream social norm, to such an extent that it becomes an integral part of their identity. "Geek" culture is specifically defined as the often participatory sub-culture surrounding comic books, video games, and certain literary and media genres, particularly those of science-fiction and fantasy. Although the term "nerd" is differentiated from "geek" within the shared subculture, within this section the two terms are used interchangeably, as context within the individual articles indicates that where the term "nerd" is used, it is meant to indicate the individual type defined above.

Hegemonic Masculinities

Connell (2005) defended and clarified their original theory of hegemonic masculinity, providing background information, addressing specific criticisms, and suggesting reformulation of the concept. The author expanded upon the concepts of multiple masculinities (including subordinated masculinities), the relational nature of gender, and the interplay between geographical constructions of masculinity.

Connell's original concept of hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininities was built upon the Gramscian model of hegemony, combined with an emerging understanding of hierarchal masculinities stemming from the gay liberation movement during the 1970s. The difficulties faced by many homosexual men during this time were seen to stem from a problematic ideal masculine role, which developed into Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell, "[h]egemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue," through which a normative ideal of masculinity was constructed to divide men along a power hierarchy, as well as to justify subordination over women through the classification of perceived feminine traits as non-hegemonic (2005:832). This hierarchy was not intended to be static, however, and Connell (2005) asserted that their theory allowed for the evolution of the hegemonic ideal with older hegemonic masculinities being replaced by newer ones as necessary. Out of this original research grew ideas such as multiple masculinities and the transformation of hegemonic masculine ideals that in turn have led to the current understanding of the relational and adaptable nature of hegemonic masculinity.

Connell (2005) also discussed Demetriou's contribution of internal and external hegemony to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, with external hegemony referring to institutional dominance over women and internal hegemony referring to social dominance of men over one another. Demetriou's work stressed the relational and adaptable nature of hegemonic masculinity as well, criticizing Connell's initial concept as ignoring the effect of subordinate and marginalized masculinities on the construction of hegemonic masculinity within the internal hegemony. Although the author disagreed that the hybridization noted

by Demetriou (specifically the appropriation of homosexual masculine traits by heterosexual men) was hegemonic on a greater level, the elevation of hybridized masculinities to hegemonic status on a localized level was deemed possible.

Connell (2005) found that applications of their concept relying on static gender models were flawed and a more flexible model of hegemonic masculinity should be used in the future, focusing on masculinities at different levels (local, regional, global) as well as the interplay not only between masculinities but also between hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Ambiguities in usage of the term "hegemonic masculinity," as well as the terms and concepts that go with it, should be clarified to define a masculine ideal, shaped by cultural and historical context, as opposed to a collection of traits possessed by real men.

Arxer (2011) examined the ways hegemonic masculinity was re-conceptualized and re-negotiated by social groups of men. Specifically, Arxer focused on the appropriation of non-hegemonic practices into the local-(and-at-times-temporary-) level ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

When discussing marginalized masculinities and gender relations, Arxer (2011) noted the work published in 2006 by of Yeung, Stombler, and Wharton on gay fraternities explaining the ways in which "marginalized masculinities employ gender strategies (albeit different ones) to compensate for their devalued status among men" (P. 396). Using organizational power afforded them over women and other subordinated males, they recreated their own hybrid version of the hegemonic model.

Arxer (2011) spent much of their literature review section expanding upon the 2011 works of Demetriou and Connell (2005) in particular, showing the progression from

Connell's revisited concept of hegemonic masculinity to Demetriou's concept of a hybrid understanding of masculinities. Arxer noted that "because non-hegemonic masculinities have been regularly understood as 'contradictions' to hegemonic masculinity, how hegemony incorporates subordinated and marginalized elements for the maintenance of patriarch is downplayed" (2011:398). Demetriou's concept of hybrid hegemonic masculinities better accounted for the interplay between hegemonic and non-hegemonic practices, according to Arxer, and specifically the concept of internal appropriation between groups of men for the purposes of continued domination over (and distinction from) women was dependent on a hybrid hegemonic masculinity.

It was this theory of a hybrid hegemonic masculinity (with non-hegemonic elements appropriated when necessary) as a means to maintain hegemonic masculine dominance and power that Arxer (2011) sought to test. To do this, the author focused on small homo social groups of men and observed the ways in which the men within these groups related to hegemonic masculinity, in search of evidence of its localized hybridization. Although previous research suggested hybrid hegemonic masculinity less likely to be found in homo social settings, for example, due to homophobia among the men present, Arxer (2011) looked at interactions within these environments, perhaps for that very reason, as negotiation between hegemonic and non-hegemonic would be more likely to be at its most constant.

Through empirical observation conducted at a university bar, Arxer (2011) discovered that although many of the ways in which hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms are separated in homo social settings (as observed in previous research) did occur, it was just as common for non-hegemonic forms to be appropriated for the purpose of continued

domination over women and subordinated men. Indeed, it was by way of distancing themselves from women in particular that men in homo social settings were able to safely display and eventually incorporate feminine (or non-hegemonic) traits into the local hybrid hegemonic masculine ideal.

In relation to "geek" culture, the negotiation and hybridization of hegemonic masculinity discussed by Arxer (2011), particularly through the appropriation of non-hegemonic traits, is important as it allows "geek" men to rise above their subordinated status through the reclamation of non-hegemonic or feminine traits into the localized hegemony, as well as through the subjugation of women. This shifts the focus of comparison away from other men and directs it toward women instead, both defining "geek" men as more hegemonic and positioning them in opposition to women in the process.

Connell's (2005) work is used here as a foundational basis, for the concept of hegemonic masculinities as well as the criticisms leveled against it; however, Connell's addition of the geography of masculinities is particularly relevant to the evaluation of masculinities within "geek" culture as the reconstructing of hegemony researched within this paper would occur at the local level. The interplay between levels of analysis is also significant in regards to the body of research, as the ability of "geek" men to exploit the cultural capital afforded in the following Exogenous Actors section in order to influence the greater conceptualization of masculinity is only possible through the interplay between the local, regional, and global levels.

Exogenous Actors

Light (1999) covered the history of computer science, the number women responsible for its early innovations, and the omission of those women from the popular history and the current definition of computer science. The author explored how the popular perception of the job of programmer, a staple of the computer science field and integral to the identity formation of early "nerds," was re-constructed. Specifically, Light discussed the ways in which the field was re-defined as being masculine over time, as the importance and prestige of the profession increased.

After reviewing the history of computer science and women's participation in the "feminine" field of programming, Light (1999) illustrated how the exclusion of women from scientific publications and the downplaying of women's technical abilities led to the erasure of women from the history of computer science. The author also showed how this, combined with the increasing importance of computer science, had led to the conception of the field as masculine.

According to Light (1999), the work of women was instrumental in the early formation of the computer technology field; however, even though such work was viewed as clerical (and therefore feminine) in nature at the time, women themselves were commonly left out of scientific documentation, such as lab photographs. This was not a result of purposeful erasure, but instead came from the assumption that women technicians were parts of their machines, just as under the control of supervising male scientists as any other tool.

Historically, however, the erasure did serve the purpose of drawing attention away from women within less traditionally feminine fields after the conclusion of World War II. It

also made it possible for the field to be reconstructed as masculine, a necessity given its increasing importance. The result, Light stated, was a "distorted history of technological development that has rendered women's contributions invisible and promoted a diminished view of women's capabilities in this field" (1999:483).

This re-definition of the field of technology as inherently masculine allows for the continued gendered perception of technological expertise, cultural cachet integral to the construction of the "geek" hegemonic ideal.

Kusz (2001) analyzed white youth cultures, portrayed within a Sports Illustrated article and literature on white adolescent boys written during the rash of school shootings in the late 90s, in order to examine these cultures in relation to self-identification with minority status. Specifically, Kusz examined the representational (and backlash) politics surrounding the re-construction of white males as victims within the works analyzed, which the author theorized was not to subvert the masculine hegemony, but instead to re-enforce it, as well as to enable young white males to deny their own privilege while simultaneously continuing to benefit from it.

Building on Savran's 1998 work, Kusz (2001) contends that "these representations of disadvantaged and victimized youthful White masculinities signify a new representational strategy of White male backlash politics – the youthification of the 'White male as victim' trope" (P. 391). This conservative backlash ideology was propagated among sites of popular culture, such as Sports Illustrated and various works published in the late 1990s in response to widespread media coverage of school shootings perpetrated by young white males. This ideology succeeded in allowing young white males to retain the benefits of White masculinity while at the same time denying the existence of those

benefits. There are multiple forms of whiteness in a local setting at any given time, explained Kusz (2001), just as there may be multiple masculinities interacting with one another on the local level.

Kusz (2001) noted the conservative backlash following the progress of the 1960s, defining it as "those images, representations, and discourses that are currently being deployed in American culture in a symbolic (and material) struggle over the meanings articulated with White masculinity in the United States" (McCarthy 1998, qtd. on P. 396). The construction of modern technological and "geek" cultures has occurred alongside this struggle, further cementing backlash against progress and the self-identification of victim status as integral parts of hegemonic "geek" masculinity.

The re-construction and re-gendering of technical and computer expertise as outlined by Light (1999) illustrates one of the methods by which "geek" men gain the cultural capital desired to overcome their subordinated status within the greater (regional and global) masculine hegemony. The growing importance of the technological and computer-related fields allows subordinated males the ability re-negotiate or hybridize higher level hegemonies to their benefit.

I use Kusz's (2001) work to examine the white male as victim trope popularized in the late 1990s, which plays an important role in the re-construction of masculinities within geek communities. Specifically, self-identification with non-traditionally-hegemonic aspects of "geek" identity among young men within the "geek" community mimics the need for identification as "victim" among the young men described.

The construction of the white male as victim trope is important to the concept of a hybrid "geek" masculinity, as it allows localized pursuit of the hybrid hegemonic masculine

ideal while also shielding participants from accusations of oppression due to the white "geek" male's self-claimed marginalized status.

"Geek" Culture

Anderson and Buzzanell (2007) addressed the formation of identities within an already marginalized group (in this case, Mac users) as relates to group members with further marginalized status (in this case, female Mac users). Specifically, the authors addressed the formation of identities within a marginalized group similar to and related to "geek" culture.

According to Anderson and Buzzanell (2007), the ways in which identities are constructed within technology communities are important as they relate to women's inclusion into these communities, particularly their involvement in leadership positions. It is through the construction of identity that males may reconstruct a masculine hegemony within localized communities.

Anderson and Buzzanell found that, in addition to the exclusionary practices and cultures that commonly contribute to lower female participation and leadership within technologically-based groups, the complicated ways in which "women in a particular context [were] positioned and position[ed] themselves in leadership, gendered, and technological expertise identities and identifications in microlinguistic practices through organizational structures and culture" played a large part in women's continued exclusion from these groups, particularly from leadership positions (2007:40).

Anderson and Buzzanell (2007) focused on the negotiation between the (at times conflicting) Mac user identity and gender identity, in addition to the tension between

gendered images and micropractices. These two concepts interacted within the Mac users group, the authors observed, with the election of a female leader of the group creating tension by calling into question the gendered nature of the marginalized Mac user identity. In order to counter the perceived re-negotiation of the local Mac user ideal as feminine, group members used a combination of gendered images and micropractices to emphasize the gender identity of female group members over their Mac user identity.

Anderson and Buzzanell stated that "there were a number of micropractices enacted by others and the women themselves that served to both enhance and constrain women's construction of leadership identities in the Mac group" and that "these gendered interactions, talk, and values escalated to some members' awareness over time of sexual harassment of the female leader, Betsy" (2007:40).

A gendered perception of technological expertise was also re-enforced on the local level, according to Anderson and Buzzanell (2007), displaying the adaptability of masculinities. Due to the prevalence of technology in modern society, women must be assimilated into the basic concept of a computer user, and so careful distinctions within the field are made along gender lines. Expertise related to logic, hard science, and programming are designated as masculine and expertise related to creativity, soft sciences, and the arts are designated as feminine, and therefore less important in the technology field.

Kendall (1999) observed the ways in which identities were performed in an online "nerd" community known as BlueSky, which was a popular multi-user real time chat room (aka a MUD, or multi-user dungeon), over a duration of two years.

In terms of Connell's (1995) theory of masculinities, Kendall defined the "nerd" as a subordinated masculinity that was nonetheless complicit with hegemonic masculinity; however, it would be more apt to describe Kendall's "nerd" as a hybrid masculinity. As the Kendall noted, ""the nerd stereotype includes aspects of both hypermasculinity (intellect, rejection of sartorial display, lack of 'feminine' social and relational skills) and perceived feminization (lack of sports ability, small body size, lack of sexual relationships with women)" (1999:356).

This hybrid masculinity served two purposes: it is used a local ideal (or "ideal type") within "nerd" communities while at the same time the re-defining of certain technology-related traits as masculine allows those non-hegemonic traits to be more acceptable as technology-use increases in mainstream culture.

The "nerd" label also carried with it assumptions in regards to race as well, according to Kendall (1999), and it is the assumption of whiteness that allowed "nerd" males to uniquely position themselves as oppressor and oppressed, subjugated in mainstream culture, but still white and still male and still able to claim the privileges of both designations. Particularly within "nerd" communities themselves, where the subordinated "nerd" masculinity was re-constructed as the local hegemonic ideal, this resulted in the duplication of outside power structures and the subordination of others along racial and gender lines. At the same time, the "nerd" male was able to distance himself from this oppression by nature of his subjugated status in the larger world.

Specifically in regards to race, the more classically hegemonic masculine traits associated with black males could be negated in this assumption of whiteness. When the local hegemonic masculine ideal was defined as white, subjugated masculinities ("nerd"

men) were able to claim the benefits of dominant masculinity while at the same time black men, who stereotypically possess more hegemonic masculine traits than "nerd" men, were denied these benefits.

The "nerd" local ideal did not completely eschew hegemonic masculine traits, however; instead, certain hegemonic masculine traits were emphasized – particularly those involving objectification of or domination over women – in an attempt to distance "nerd" men from their subordinated status in the greater hegemony. This further complicated gender relations within "nerd" communities as, according to Kendall, "nerdism in both men and women [was] held to decrease sexual attractiveness, but in men this [was] compensated by the relatively masculine values attached to intelligence and computer skills" while attractiveness in women was considered far more important (1999:361). Because of this as well as the gendered construction of the local ideal, women within "nerd" communities were judged both for innately failing to achieve the masculine "nerd" ideal as well as judged for failing to meet a feminine physical ideal worthy of objectification. This resulted in the assumption of "nerd" women as both not "nerd" enough for group inclusion as well as too "nerdy" to be deemed attractive.

Kendall (2000) also observed the ways in which identities were performed in the online "nerd" community known as BlueSky. The author examined the relationship between offline and online hegemonies, as well as the ways in which participants navigate the two arenas and the impact one expectation has on another.

More so than in Kendall (1999), Kendall (2000) covered the limitations as well as the advantages of studying identity in an online environment circa the late 1990s. Limited to only text-based communication, group users had to adapt to the loss of visual and audio

cues in relaying information. Kendall stated that users "developed an elaborate subculture, using repeated patterns of speech and specialized features of the mud program to add the nuance and depth that attributes as tone of voice and gesture provide in face-to-face communication" in order to overcome these limitations (2000:259). Users were also "more conscious of both their own identity performances and their evaluation of others' identity performances" because of the unique visual-less social environment of the MUD chats, making this ethnography invaluable in the understanding of identity construction and negotiation within "geek" communities (Kendall 2000:259).

Kendall (2000) noted the formation of identities as they are created with a degree of consciousness on the part of the participant, both in how they are perceived in regards to attributes such as gender or race, as well as in how they perceive others.

The text-based nature of online communities did not allow users to transcend gender or race limitations, Kendall (2000) claimed, but it did allow users in positions of privilege more power to ignore the limitations of gender or race placed upon others. To demonstrate the importance of the minority status in identity formation both off-and-online, Kendall (2000) relied upon the research of Omi and Winant, whose description of race (and gender) as concepts that "signif[y] and symboliz[e] social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies, applied to the visual-less environment of online communities, illustrated the ways in which identities were formed in relation to societal ideas about perceived physical attributes even when those attributes are not visible" (Omi and Winant 1994, qtd. on P. 260). As with Kendall's (1999) work, there was an assumption of whiteness and maleness among participants, with societal ideas about minority status able to remain separate from the identities in the online community, but still

ready to be used against minority participants who should reveal themselves, particularly as a silencing tactic.

Building upon Connell's (1995) work on hegemonic masculinities, as well as the works of Messerschmidt in 1993 and Segal's in 1990 (in regards to the relational nature of masculinity, Kendall described how BlueSky users "enact[ed] a form of masculinity congruent with computer culture" in which technological knowledge and expertise act as cultural cachet that was considered inherently masculine in nature (2000:261). This attempted to reclaim the otherwise subjugated "geek" masculinity by reframing technology as a masculine field as well as by emphasizing the importance of technology to the label of "geek."

This negotiation was possible in part due to the increased importance of technology, as well as those who can expertly use it, in modern society. The mainstream conception of a "nerd" could be claimed as a subjugated status and then co-opted as a hybrid form of hegemonic masculinity, defined particularly in relation to women.

It was heteronormativity, particularly the sexualization and objectification of women, that underscored performance of masculinity with the BlueSky community, Kendall (2000) noted, regardless of the orientation or sexual practice of the participant. Likewise, both men and women "…distance[d] themselves from femininity and, to some extent, from women in general", further cementing the localized ideal as opposed to and dominant over women (P. 263). This sexism was hidden under the guise of self-deprecation, as much of this commentary was done through jokes that refer to the non-hegemonic masculinity of participants in regards to the sexual possession of women.

Busse (2013) explored the ways in which the "geek" label were gendered within the geek community, with the re-negotiation of what constitutes a "real geek" as a stand-in for the local hegemonic ideal. Specifically, Busse provided information on the feminization of local non-hegemonic ideals, which continues to define local hegemonic masculinity by its opposition to femininity, as opposed to its relationship with other masculinities.

According to Busse (2013), the conception of what a "real geek" is and is not as it relates to gender discourse was exemplified in the case of fan tension at 2009's ComicCon in San Diego, CA. At the center of the conflict was the inclusion of fans of the book and movie franchise, Twilight, which drew vocal protest from a majority of other conference attendees. Twilights fans were attacked on two fronts: as they were seen to have few, if any, other "geek-y" past times that would have otherwise brought them to ComicCon, they were deemed not "geek" enough, while the more obsessive and fanatical parts of the fan base were emphasized in order to represent the whole as being too invested in their fannish interests. To all of this Busse observed that "at every level of dismissal gender plays a central part", with the Twilights series (as with all fannish activities deemed more feminine in nature) being viewed more critically than those seen as male-oriented, while the particular insults used to dismiss those who pursue interests outside the accepted definition of "real geek" are gendered in nature, relying upon the assumption that certain negative fannish behaviors are inherently feminine (2013:74).

Busse (2013) noted the etymology of the word hysterical, a term commonly used to describe overinvested (female) fans, and its history as a gendered term used to dismiss women on the grounds of being too emotional, too irrational, and simply too feminine. Busse discussed the 2002 work of Hills on inter-fandom stereotyping and dismissal,

specifically through the use of both gender and age, and relates it to works within the music fandom such as those by Wald in 2002 and the 1992 work of Ehrenreich et al., which explore the particular methods used to dismiss women and their interests.

Both within "geek" communities and without, fan activity was policed along gender lines, according to Busse (2013), with fan enthusiasm in perceived masculine interests (such as sports or music) being more acceptable to the outside world than enthusiasm in perceived feminine interests, while within "geek" communities themselves fannish behavior associated with male fans was seen as more acceptable than the behaviors associated with female fans.

The way mainstream culture constructs the label of "geek" had an important impact on the "real geek" hegemonic ideal within "geek" communities as well, Busse (2013) noted. Not only did the gendered nature of the label become internalized within the communities, but many of the negative stereotypes regarding the label that are portrayed by mainstream culture are also internalized as being feminine, which leads to boundary policing often along gender lines in an attempt to distance the label from this negative image.

Similar to the Mac user group members detailed by Anderson and Buzzanell (2007), men within the "geek" community enact a paradox in relation to their self-claimed marginal status: while they identify with being a "geek" aware of its status, they also seek to emphasize the masculinity of their interests in an attempt to escape or at least defend this status. In positioning themselves in opposition to women and femininities in particular, they raise the esteem of their own status by comparing it to something understood as inherently negative.

This process is explored in more depth by Kendall (1999), which details specific ways "geek" or "nerd" men re-negotiate their identities within the sub-culture as opposed to women and femininities. As a compliment to this, Kendall (2000) focuses on this identity management and re-negotiation within the confines of online communities, which is notable in that much of the growth experienced by "geek" culture in the recent past – as well as much of the conflict, as mentioned in the Introduction – has been as a result of the internet. In particular, it is the newfound sociability afforded by online community that has allowed "geek" culture to expand, and its participants to become more varied, resulting in backlash of men within the sub-culture to restrict and maintain the hegemonically-defined identity of "geek".

Busse (2013) noted that "…gender discrimination occurs on the level of the fan, the fan activity, and the fannish investment", which emphasizes the importance of gender discrimination when it comes to the maintenance of this newly formed localized hegemony (P. 75). The localized hegemony is influenced by this inter-group policing as well as by the gendering of the "geek" label by outside mainstream culture. This allows the appropriation of non-hegemonic traits into a subordinated masculinity ("geek" male) while at the same time maintaining patriarchal domination over women by defining this masculinity not by comparison to other masculinities but by its distance from femininity. In short, non-hegemonic traits are redefined as being inherently masculine, though in mainstream culture still indicative of a subjugated form of masculinity, which continues the dominance of even subjugated masculinities over all femininities.

Conclusion

The re-negotiation of the marginal status bestowed upon participants of the "geek" sub-culture within the greater mainstream culture parallels the re-negotiation happening on the deeper level of the subordinated masculine status of "geek" men within the internal regional and global masculine hegemonies.

Although able to challenge for a hybridized hegemonic masculinity on all levels, due to the cultural capital afforded by the raised importance of the technological and computer-related fields, "geek" men define themselves by a self-identified outsider or marginalized "geek" status. This allows "geek" men to reap the benefits of privilege while simultaneously shielding them from criticism. The patriarchy remains unquestioned, unchallenged, and upheld. "Geek" men use the power afforded to them by the technology boom to re-negotiate themselves from subordinated to complicit masculinity, while traditionally non-hegemonic "geek" traits are allowed to hybridize and eventually assimilate into regional and global hegemonic masculinities.

While characterizing the sub-culture as innately inclusive, due to their own self-identified marginal status and especially to the visual-less nature of the online communities which have spurred the sub-culture's growth, "geek" culture and the men within it do not challenge the normal order. Indeed, they uphold it and the patriarchy from which they have come to benefit through a multitude of tactics, including boundary policing, exclusionary practices, microaggressions, and the appropriation of non-hegemonic or feminine traits into the local masculine ideal.

Regarding the costs and consequences, research in criminology showed how particular patterns of aggression were linked with hegemonic masculinity, not as a

mechanical effect for which hegemonic masculinity was a cause, but through the pursuit of hegemony (Bufkin 1999 and Messerschmidt 1997, qtd. in Connell 2005:834).

The conflicts occurring within the "geek" sub-culture, particularly those surrounding gender and inclusion, are relevant to the greater society in that these conflicts showcase the issues affecting gender relations on higher levels, contained within an easily- and well-documented microcosm.

While some research has been conducted regarding the relationship between hegemonic masculinities and "geek" culture, more is suggested in the future, focused specifically on the interplay between hegemonic and other masculinities, and emphasized and other femininities, on the local level of "geek" culture. Also, there is a disappointing lack of research into the effects of emphasized femininity on the identity formation of "geek" women, as well as the other general effects of patriarchy on marginalized participants within the sub-culture.

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