GAMING TO ENTERTAINING: AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER AND RACE

INEQUALITIES IN ONLINE VIDEO GAME STREAMING

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GAMING TO ENTERTAINING: AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER AND RACE
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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

　　Erving Goffman's (1956) work on the presentation of self is incredibly influential in our theoretical understanding of social interaction. Today, many interactions occur online. This brings up the question: How do we present ourselves in virtual spaces? One virtual space that is gaining in popularity is online video game streaming, where streamers broadcast themselves playing video games and can interact with views in the chat. While some work has looked at how people use the presentation of self while playing online video games, little work has focused on how streamers present themselves while live-streaming. Aspects of video gaming are especially important to look at when considering that inequalities, especially along race and gender lines, have been common within gaming. With this in mind, I focused on three main questions within this research: How do video game streamers use the presentation of self while they are streaming? How is their presentation of self connected to emotions and emotional labor through this digital platform? And does their presentation reinforce, perpetuate, and/or challenge existing social inequalities?

　　I found that the streamers fall onto what I refer to as the Gamer-Entertainer continuum, with some streamers focusing more on the game and their skills, while others focused on being entertaining and interacting with the audience. This continuum was gendered, with men being more likely to be Gamers and women more likely to be

Entertainers. Further, this continuum connected to the amount and types of emotion

management and emotional labor the streamers engaged in. Gamers were more likely to

have their emotions tied to how well they were doing in the game, including expressing

anger, while Entertainers managed their emotions to be positive overall and attended to

the emotions of the audience through interactions. Race also impacted emotion

management, with white men being more likely to express anger while men of color

suppressed it. Finally, the words and actions of the streamers were connected to generic

processes of inequality reproduction. While the presentation of self in some streamers

contributed to the reproduction of inequalities, others fought against inequalities on this

platform.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Miriam Myers. Your friendship was greatly appreciated, and you are missed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Erving Goffman's (1956) work on the presentation of self is incredibly influential in our theoretical understanding of social interaction. In the age of the internet, friends are made and interactions occur all over the world through a variety of mediums, including text messages, video chatting, and gameplay. This brings up the question: How do we present ourselves in these virtual spaces? Is his work still relevant when exploring online interactions? In this dissertation, I explore the presentation of self in online video game streaming. Video game streaming, also known as "let's plays" allows people from all over the world to watch as streamers play video games in real time. This is unique in that streamers are often visible to their viewers, bringing in a new layer of the presentation of self to the world of gaming. I specifically examine the ways in which the presentation of self in these virtual spaces differs based on race and gender, as well as how this connects to emotions and emotional labor and the recreation of and resistance to social inequalities that exist in gaming.

While there has been research on the ways that gamers present themselves through their video game characters (Baerg 2007; Brickell 2012; Dunn and Guadagno 2012; Gottschalk 2010; Martey and Consalvo 2011; Messinger et al. 2019; Williams et al. 2011), and some work on their self-presentation when interacting with others in online video games (Adams 2009; Grant 2009; Johnson et al. 2010; Williams et al. 2014) little

has been done on the ways in which live-streamers present themselves while playing. Pietruszka (2016) looked at three of the most popular video game video blogs (vlogs) on YouTube to focus on some aspects of the presentation of self in video game streaming and how they are used strategically to gain popularity. This included how the streamers titled their videos, the thumbnail images used to promote the videos, and catchphrases that the streamers said. However, to my knowledge no work has delved deeper into how streamers present themselves while live streaming.

Live streaming has become a huge industry, with millions of people watching live-streams and the top steamers receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars a month in ad revenue and sponsorships (Kelly 2019). This medium is unique in that it mixes aspects of face-to-face interactions, such as viewers being able to see and hear streamers as they are playing, as well as text-based communication through comment threads that streamers often reply to. Being able to see the streamers allows for observation of how they present themselves over the internet through physical movements and facial expressions, similar to face-to-face interactions. This includes the use of physical cues and ways of presenting oneself that are absent in many forms of online interactions. Gaining more knowledge of how streamers present themselves in these digital spaces is valuable in the expansion of Goffmanian theory and understanding evolving social interactions in the age of the internet. This dissertation builds on prior literature on the social nature of the virtual world. By applying Goffmanian theory to these emerging social spaces it is possible to further understand how interactions occur in our increasingly digital lives.

Goffman (1959) noted that the front we portray to the world differs based on aspects of our identity, including race and gender. Not only do we see this in face-to-face

interactions, but in how individuals present themselves in virtual spaces (Darwin 2017; Fox and Vendemia 2016; Kapidzic and Herring 2015; Rui and Stefanone 2013; Triberti et al. 2017). Research suggests that the presentation of self is impacted by gender (Martey et al. 2012) and race (Guadagno and Dunn 2019; Martey and Consalvo 2011) in the world of online video gaming. Online video game streaming blurs the lines between online and face-to-face interactions, which brings up important research questions. This research focused on three main questions:

1) How do video game streamers use the presentation of self while they are streaming?

2) How is their presentation of self connected to emotions and emotional labor through this digital platform?

3) Does their presentation reinforce, perpetuate, and/or challenge existing social inequalities?

In this chapter, I review the literature connected to the presentation of self in online spaces and how this is related to emotional labor and the recreation of inequalities. In the second chapter, I address the question of how video game streamers use the presentation of self while they are live streaming. Chapter 3 focuses on how these presentations of self are connected to the emotions that streamers display and how they use emotional labor to manage their emotions and attend to the emotions of the audience. In Chapter 4, I discuss how the streamers' presentations of self is connected to social inequalities, including the recreation of and resistance to inequalities. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the implications of this work to the existing literature, limitations of the study, and opportunities for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Applicability of The Presentation of Self on The Internet

In The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), Goffman sought to understand how face-to-face interactions occur in everyday life. He was interested in how we present ourselves through a variety of means, including one-on-one and group interactions. Goffman differentiates between the performer who presents themselves in a certain way, and the audience taking in their performance. He also differentiates between the front stage in which the performance is taking place and the backstage where a performer can drop the act and mentally or physically prepare for future performances (Goffman 1959). Today, more of our interactions are taking place online. This physical distance between actor and audience as well as the blurring of front and back stage areas brings up an important question: Is the presentation of self in social interactions applicable to online social interactions?

To answer this, researchers have looked at the applicability of Goffman's work on the internet. While the anonymity that is granted through the internet allows anyone to present themselves as whomever they wish to be, findings suggest that individuals' online and offline selves tend to be similar, even if this is unintentional (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2012; Hogan 2010; Walker 2000). Individuals may slightly alter their performances to portray themselves in the best light, which suggests that impression management is an active part of online personas. Thus, not only is a dramaturgical approach relevant in understanding online interactions, but it can also be an incredibly valuable tool in doing so. Further, evidence suggests that looking at the presentation of self is valuable in understanding mediated social interactions, such as those that take

place over the phone, or through the internet (Rettie 2009; Robinson and Schultz 2009; Walther 2007). Others have suggested that Goffman's theory can be used to critically examine social media spaces, such as Twitter and to develop theoretical innovations (Murthy 2012).

There are some limitations to applying Goffman's work to online interactions. One is that many online interactions lack visual and facial cues that contribute to the presentation of self. However, it has been argued that those who interact with others on the internet adopt unique ways of self-presentation that can be understood as comparable to face-to-face interactions. These forms of self-presentation can include the use of emoticons and semantic techniques (Golder and Macy 2014; Menchik and Tian 2008). This suggests that, despite the lack of physical cues that occur in face-to-face interactions, utilizing Goffman's work on the presentation of self is still valuable in online interactions. This also highlights the importance of studying the presentation of self in streaming, since it allows for an examination of visual and facial cues that are often missing from online interactions.

The Presentation of Self in Virtual Spaces

Studies have applied Goffman's presentation of self to virtual spaces, including blogs, social media, and personal home pages. Many of these sites, while also including video and photos, are primarily text based. Text-based communication does not allow for the same level of physical performance as face-to-face interactions, yet there are ways to present oneself through language and elements such as emojis (Golder and Macy 2014; Menchik and Tian 2008; Walther 2007). Research suggests that, as in face-to-face interactions, individuals on the internet actively attempt to give a certain impression.

Within text-based online communication, such as online forums and social media, individuals can manipulate and manage their impressions in ways similar to face-to-face interactions. This can include selectively giving information within certain contexts and choosing what to keep offline or in the backstage (Lee 2006; Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis 2008). Additionally, individuals on the internet actively engage in impression management by carefully choosing what to post and who to "like" on social media (Marder et al. 2016). By preemptively working to regulate how others see them, individuals are engaging in what Goffman refers to as "preventative practices" to avoid the embarrassment that comes when the impression one attempts to give does not match how the audience views them (1959). Despite the lack of physical audience, it has been suggested that those on the internet consider how they will be perceived by others within virtual spaces (Malaby 2009; Zhao 2005). This works to shape not only their online behavior but also how they come to view their digital selves. The way that people work to manage the impressions they give online is an important aspect of how individuals construct and present identities in digital spaces (Williams and Copes 2005).

In addition to the ways that individuals engage in forms of self-presentation and impression management through text-based postings they also present themselves visually, including through photographs. Photographs posted on social media sites serve as a form of impression management, allowing individuals to selectively present information about themselves and those they surround themselves with to portray a chosen identity (Walker 2000; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008). Individuals on the internet, as with in-person interactions, work to present themselves in the best light, keeping certain aspects of themselves in the backstage, while highlighting others in the

front stage (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2012; Hogan 2010). Those who post

photographs online will engage in the preservation of their image by actively editing

photographs to highlight key features, as well as monitoring photos of themselves that

others have posted online (Rui and Stefanone 2013). Findings have pointed to a gendered

component in the ways individuals present themselves online through photographs.

Women are more likely to edit photos of themselves, as well as remove unwanted "tags"

that link them to photos others have posted (Fox and Vendemia 2016; Kapidzic and

Herring 2015; Rui and Stefanone 2013). Non-binary and transgender individuals also

engage in "doing gender" through online photographs. Some embrace their androgyny

while others attempt to present themselves as more traditionally masculine or feminine

(Darwin 2017). This demonstrates that photographs are an important aspect of self-

presentation for all genders. Gender differences have also been found to intersect with

race, with white teenage boys being far more likely to wear more revealing clothing, such

as shorts that revealed their upper thighs and having bare chests, compared to Black

teenage boys (Kapidzic and Herring 2015).

People also use avatars to present themselves in virtual contexts. Avatars are

digital figures used to represent individuals in a variety of online spaces, including blogs

and dating sites. While it is possible to make an avatar appear in any way the creator

wishes, research suggests that individuals retain their race and gender in their avatars

(Gottschalk 2010; Lin and Wang 2014; Messinger et al. 2019). It has been argued that the

internet allows people to be more strategic in the way they present themselves to control

the impressions they give (Jurgenson and Ritzer 2012). Thus, individuals can create

avatars that represent themselves while slightly augmenting aspects to attain their

idealized selves. This is especially true in a context where individuals are more motivated

to present themselves in a positive light, such as in dating profiles (Vasalou and Joinson

2009). Similar to how individuals present themselves visually in photographs, there is a

gendered difference in how actors present themselves using avatars. Women are

significantly more likely to change the bodies of their avatars when moving from a work

to friend gathering compared to men (Triberti et al. 2017). This suggests that, as is the

case with photographs on social media, women more actively engage in impression

management in their digital representations of self.

The Presentation of Self in Online Video Games

Video games have been a popular form of entertainment for decades. In recent

years, video games and the ability to play them on the internet has allowed for what was

once seen as a solitary activity into one that allows interactions to occur all over the

world. While players typically do not see one another, avatars that are controlled by

players allow individuals to present themselves visually to others. Many games allow

players to customize their avatar to match their likeness. Much of the research on in-

game avatar creation and use find that, like those in other virtual spaces, game avatars

often represent an idealized version of their creator (Gottschalk 2010; Messinger et al.

2019; Williams, Kennedy, and Moore 2011). Players will often design their characters to

match societal norms and accepted forms of appearances, despite their freedom to create

any avatar they wish (Brickell 2012; Martey and Consalvo 2011). This suggests that

players use their digital appearances to create impressions in similar ways to how

individuals use their physical appearances in face-to-face interactions (Goffman 1959).

Like the gendered nature of visual representation in other forms of online interactions

(Darwin 2017), it has been found that women were particularly likely to create avatars that fit with societal beauty standards (Brickell 2012; Dunn and Guadagno 2012). In addition to upholding beauty standards for women, men often present themselves in hegemonically masculine ways in contexts such as fighting games (Baerg 2007). This demonstrates that avatars are used to present idealized versions of themselves and are thus actively managing their impressions, highlighting the importance of impression management in online spaces. In terms of race, research has found that non-white players will also select and create avatars that fit with Eurocentric beauty standards (Guadagno and Dunn 2019; Martey and Consalvo 2011), which may also reflect racial biases in game design and one's ability to express racial identity through avatar creation and selection.

Along with how individuals present themselves visually through avatars in the virtual game world, they also present themselves during voice and text interactions with other players in this digital space. Interactions occurring during gameplay are complex and have to be managed in similar ways to face-to-face interactions to establish acceptance within virtual groups (Grant 2009). These interactions allow for the mutual creation of meanings and relationships in the virtual world. For instance, players may use textual identifiers to signify membership with a certain in-game group (Johnson, Hyysalo, and Tamminen 2010). When a group is formed, interactions take on a similar characteristic to Goffman's (1959) discussion of teams, in which one person adopts the role of the director and others follow in the hopes of attaining a mutual goal (Adams 2009; Williams, Kirshner, and Suhami-Broder 2014). This is especially true in larger multi-player games where teams must use strategies to beat opposing players. The

complex and layered nature of interactions that take place in digital play spaces reflects those that occur in face-to-face situations and necessitate active impression management to be accepted within groups. The way individuals present themselves within gameplay interactions also has a gendered component. Research (Martey et al. 2014) has shown that when male players play as female characters they alter their in-game movements which suggests they are attempting to put on a performance that presents themselves, or at least their characters, as more feminine. This suggests that the gender of both the player and the avatar impact how individuals do gender in online gameplay.

Gendered Bodies in Online Spaces

As previously found, the ways in which we present ourselves digitally take on characteristics similar to our offline selves (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2012; Hogan 2010; Walker 2000). This is reflected in the ways that bodies take on gendered meanings in online spaces. It has been argued that sociologists don't focus enough on the body when discussing gender (Fonow and Cook 2005) and that, while gender is not biologically determined, the body is implicit in our understandings of gender (Connell 1987). Further, Frye (2007) suggests that socialization shapes bodies in ways that uphold systems of subordination and domination. In this way, the presentation of self through gendered bodies works to create meanings around gender that uphold inequalities. It is possible to see the ways the virtual presentation of bodies in video games takes on a gendered nature and creates gendered meanings. Through avatars, photos, and videos, the body has an important place in virtual spaces. Studies have shown that digital environments serve as spaces to replicate the gendered body and perform gender displays (Butkowski, Dixon, and Weeks 2019; van Doorn, Wyatt, and van Zoonen 2011). Rather

than abandoning preconceived notions of gender ideals, many use the body in these spaces to recreate and embody them (Baerg 2007; Brickell 2012; Daniels 2009; Dunn and Guadagno 2012; Martey and Consalvo 2011). Others have been shown to present their body in a way that satirizes gendered expectations, allowing women to control the narrative surrounding their bodies on the internet (Phelps 2019). The body then is a powerful tool in representing gender in digital spaces that can be used both to reinforce gender hierarchies, as well as to challenge them.

In the world of online gaming, the embodiment of gender is visible in how the presentation of self and virtual bodies reflects hegemonic masculinity and femininity through avatar creation (Baerg 2007; Brickell 2012; Dunn and Guadagno 2012). Even when players have no control over the creation of avatars, virtual bodies are often augmented in ways that present women as hypersexualized (Burgess, Stermer, and Burgess 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Lynch et al. 2016). It has been argued that many female protagonists in games are sexualized much in the same way as movies, but their bodies are also able to be manipulated as an extension of the male gaze (Anderson 2017; Kirkland 2012). Male bodies are also often presented in ways that reinforce hegemonic masculinity, including being unrealistically muscular (Burgess, Stermer, and Burgess 2007). The presentation of bodies in ways that are highly gendered and contribute to social expectations of women as sexual objects and men as strong and violent impact the ways viewers see and think about gender (Dill and Thill 2007; Fox and Bailenson 2009; Fox and Tang 2014). While the gendered body in video games can serve as a way to reproduce gender inequalities, some women have also used the ability to manipulate and modify women's bodies in video games as a site of resistance and creative gender

expression (Anderson 2017). This dissertation adds to the literature by looking at the ways in which bodies create gendered meanings in virtual spaces, especially within online video game communities.

Gender, Race, And Emotions

Along with the ways that individuals present themselves visually and through text, there are differences in the ways that people express themselves through emotions and emotional displays. The ways that these emotions manifest in social interactions are attached to feeling rules (Goffman 1967; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983). Feeling rules are social expectations around how we will feel and express emotion in certain situations (Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983). These feelings rules differ based on social location, including race and gender. White men, for instance, are more able to express emotions such as anger and be seen as legitimate compared to BIPOC individuals and women (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016; Wingfield 2010). Similarly, women are expected to present in positive and friendly ways, especially in workplace settings (Hochschild 1983; Lively 2008; Miller and Lewis 2020; Kundro et al. 2021). This is true even while dealing with challenges like sexual harassment (Good and Cooper 2016).

The differences in feelings rules as they relate to workplace settings also connects to expectations of emotional labor. Emotional labor is the work that individuals do to manage their own emotions and attend to the emotions of others as part of their paid labor. Research has focused on the expectations of emotional labor in multiple industries, including the customer service industry (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Hochschild 1983), the restaurant industry (Good and Cooper 2016), as well as in care work (Erickson

and Stacey 2013; Henderson 2001; Lopez 2006). There are different expectations for emotional labor in terms of gender. While skills of emotional labor are vital to the operation of organizations, they are often overlooked and undervalued in masculinized institutions (Meier, Mastracci, and Wilson 2006). Race and gender also frequently intersect in terms of emotional labor, with Black women often feeling that they have to do additional emotional labor to be welcomed and accepted in the workplace (Durr and Wingfield 2011).

Fairly little work has been done connecting emotional labor to entertainment industries. Smith (2008) found that emotional labor was an important aspect in professional wrestling. Wrestlers use emotional labor to portray pain and aggression and elicit strong emotions from an audience. However, to my knowledge no research has focused on the ways in which streamers engage in emotional labor. This is an important area of study as streaming combines both performative aspects, such as playing the game and being good at it, as well as the interactive aspect of having an audience that talks to the streamer and each other. This research adds to the literature on emotional labor by expanding it to this increasingly popular medium.

Inequalities in Gaming

There have been widely reported cases of inequalities within video gaming, including those of gender and race. As previously noted, part of this inequality stems from the sexualized ways that women's bodies are represented in the games themselves (Burgess, Stermer, and Burgess 2007; Dill and Thill 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Fox and Bailenson 2009; Fox and Tang 2014; Lynch et al. 2016). These representations are important, as research suggests that the way that people are portrayed in gaming impacts

the players. For instance, playing games that feature sexualized women characters has been linked to higher rates of rape myth acceptance and sexual harassment tolerance (Beck et al. 2012; Dill, Brown, and Collins 2008; Driesmans, Vandenbosch, and Eggermont 2015; Fox and Potocki 2016). The misogyny present within video games has transcended to real life interactions, with women being the victims of frequent sexual harassment within gaming (Neiborg and Foxman 2018).

Similarly, there is inequality in the ways that race is represented within games. BIPOC characters are often represented in stereotypical ways, if they are represented at all (Burgess et al. 2011; Everett and Watkins 2008; Glaubke et al. 2001; Leonard 2003; Peck, Ketchum, and Embrick 2011). Some games have historically defaulted to characters with Eurocentric features in terms of avatar creation and changing features to represent a BIPOC character requires extra time and effort (Dietrich 2012; Martey and Consalvo 2011). Racism also transcends the way that characters are represented in gaming to social interactions that take place in gaming spaces. Racist rhetoric is a frequent tactic to "troll" or harass people while they are playing video games online (Cote 2017; Gray 2011; Gray 2012; Ortiz 2019). These frequent racist attacks have led to BIPOC people, including Black women, withdrawing from mainstream gaming and creating their own online gaming spaces (Gray 2012). Racial biases also factor into how video game streamers are received by the audience, with some white audience members claiming to not enjoy Black streamers because they are "too urban" (Gray 2016).

While work has been done on inequalities that exist within gaming, to my knowledge no work has been done looking at the ways video game streamers contribute to the recreation of social inequalities. Schwalbe et al. (2000) discussed four main generic

processes that lead to the recreation of inequalities within society. One of the generic

processes that Schwalbe et al. (2000) discussed is othering, which occurs when "a

dominant group defines into existence an inferior group" (422). In the case of gaming, the

use of things like racist (Cote 2017; Gray 2011; Gray 2012; Ortiz 2019) and misogynistic

(Sobieraj 2017) rhetoric servers as a way of other women and BIPOC individuals within

these spaces and recreate larger systems of inequality within gaming. Schwalbe at al.

(2000) also discuss subordinate adaptation, or how the coping strategies used by

oppressed groups can recreate inequalities. An example of this that has been seen in

gaming is when oppressed groups withdraw from mainstream gaming (Gray 2012),

which is a protective strategy that also contributes to a lack of representation of different

groups within gaming spaces. Boundary maintenance is a powerful tactic that is used in

gaming that recreates inequalities as well. This occurs when dominant groups use

different strategies, including threats of or actual violence, to keep subordinate groups

outside of certain spaces (Schwalbe et al. 2000). Women and other minorities have

frequently been attacked in gaming spaces. This includes sexual harassment, as well as

threats of violence (Cress and Shaw 2015; Neiborg and Foxman 2018). Lastly, Schwalbe

et al. (2000) discuss emotional maintenance as a generic process for inequality recreation.

As discussed previously, feeling rules vary by a person's social location, including

gender and race (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016;

Wingfield 2010). These rules about who is and is not allowed to feel and express

emotions contributes to further inequalities, including women often being expected to

place the importance of others' emotions above their own (Schwalbe et al. 2000). To my

knowledge, there is no work that looks at how feelings rules and emotional management

operates within gaming. This current research adds to the literature by addressing how all four generic processes are connected to gaming, specifically how they manifest through streamers' actions and presentations of self during live streams. I also examine the ways streamers might resist these systems of inequalities throughout their streams.

Online video game streamers are understudied and give valuable insight into the presentation of self in online spaces, as well as how this connects to emotional labor and social inequalities present in gaming. Based on the previously stated research questions, this dissertation contributes to the existing literature. My research addressing the first question adds to the literature by further expanding dramaturgical analysis to interactions that take place online. I also add to the literature focusing on emotional labor. I do this by discussing how emotional labor differs by race and gender and how we see emotional labor taking place digitally within the entertainment industry. Lastly, this research contributes to the literature on the reproductions of inequality by looking at how generic processes of inequality reproduction (Schwalbe et al. 2000) are present within online video game streaming, as well as how streamers use their platform to fight against social inequalities.

METHODS

Sample

The sample for this research included 18 Twitch streamers, ten men and eight women. Sampling was based on the number of followers that streamers had on this platform. This sample consisted of the top ten English-speaking men and the top eight English-speaking women based on their number of followers on Twitch. Initially, I planned to focus on the top ten men and the top ten women, however two women were

excluded from this study. The first was excluded because she has Tourette's syndrome, which is a condition that would impact her presentation of self. The second woman was excluded because she never appeared on camera and my focus in this research included how streamers present themselves verbally and physically. It should be noted that those who occupy the top popularity positions for streamers fluctuates often as streamers gain or lose followers. For this study, the sample included the top streamers on April 20th, 2021. Table 1-1 shows the number of followers they had at this time, as well as their overall rank by follower count.

Given the focus on popularity, this sample is not representative of the larger population of streamers. This is common in qualitative research and researchers must be careful not to generalize to a larger population (Cresswell 2014; Gibbs 2007). In fact, it has been argued that the value of qualitative research is in its ability to study the particular rather than the general (Cresswell 2014; Maxwell 2013). This research was focused on the most popular streamers who reach a wide audience. This is an important sample to look at, as they have significant influence within streaming, and while the sample is not generalizable to the larger population of video game streamers, it does illuminate who is popular and powerful in this genre of streaming. Sampling those who have the most followers and influence in a given medium fits with past research looking at videos found on the internet, including Morris and Anderson's (2015) work looking at the four most popular British men on YouTube. Similarly, Pietruszka (2016) examined three of the most popular men video game streamers on YouTube to look at their presentation styles and popularity.

This research expands on previous research by having a larger sample of video game streamers that includes women, as well as focusing on another popular streaming site, Twitch. I gathered the sample for this research using the website TwitchMetrics.com, which tracks and ranks Twitch streamers, including by the number of followers they have. With this information, a reliable sample of the most popular streamers on Twitch was gathered.

As seen in Table 1-1, the sample for men streamers is overwhelmingly white, with only two out of the ten men being men of color, Myth who is Black and SypherPK who is Middle Eastern. The racial and ethnic makeup of the women is more diverse, as four of them are white, two are Latinx, one is Asian, and one is Middle Eastern/North African. Research suggests that race can impact how viewers perceive streamers, particularly with Black streamers being seen as less desirable to watch (Gray 2017). It is not surprising then that a sample of the most popular streamers would reflect racial biases. I know far less about the sexuality of my sample. Two of the women I observed, Chica and Justaminx, are openly queer, with Chica identifying as gay and Justaminx identifying as pansexual. However, I am unable to determine the sexual orientations of the rest of my sample as they do not openly state what their sexualities are, and sources vary widely. Several of the streamers I observed are in relationships that appear to be heterosexual. For instance, a number of the men talked about their wives during their streams. However, I cannot say for certain what their sexual orientation is.

Unfortunately, there is not reliable information on streamers' incomes or net worth. To best address this, I calculated the approximate amount of money that most of the sample would have earned from Twitch subscriptions for the month of April 2021

(see Table 1-1). Streamers on Twitch initially earn 50% of the cost of a subscription to their channel, but more popular streamers can earn higher percentages, even up to 100% (Geyser 2021). There are four main tiers of monthly subscriptions available, including Prime subscription, Tier 1 ($4.99), Tier 2 ($9.99), and Tier 3 ($24.99). Because Twitch is owned by Amazon, everyone with an Amazon Prime membership receives one free Twitch subscription a month. While it is free to the subscribers, streamers still earn the same as they would for a Tier 1 subscription. Depending on the subscription tier, subscribers may receive different exclusive content and offers from streamers.

I used data from the website TwitchTracker.com to calculate the income from subscriptions that each streamer received. This website is dedicated to tracking everything related to Twitch streamers, including the number and types of subscriptions they have in a given month. Due to the fact that exact percentage each streamer makes on subscriptions is unknown, a range between 50% and 100% of the estimated revenue is listed. For three of the streamers, Myth, Loserfruit, and Justaminx, there was no available data for the month of April 2021. Data for these streamers was taken from the closest available month, which was November 2021 for all three. Two of the streamers, Demisux and Alinity, had no data available. These data are important in understanding the differences between streamers in terms of subscriptions. However, this is not an accurate representation of the total amount of income that the streamers received, as it does not account for other revenue sources, such as advertisements, donations, sponsorship deals, or tournament winnings. It does, however, show a disparity based on gender, with many of the men earning far more than the women.

Table 1-1: Streamer Demographics and Followers (Source: TwitchMetrics; TwitchTracker)

Streamer Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Twitch Followers and Ranking (April 20th, 2021)	Approximate Monthly Income from Subscriptions *(April 2021)
Ninja	Man	White	16,733,782 (1)	$17,950-$35,899
Tfue	Man	White	10,209,349 (2)	$43,317-$86,634
Shroud	Man	White	9,182,290 (3)	$23,653-$47,307
Pokimane	Woman	North African/Middle Eastern	7,632,546 (6)	$28,735-$57,470
Myth	Man	Black	7,225,372 (7)	$2,153-$4,306**
TimTheTatMan	Man	White	6,436,133 (9)	$105,227-$210,453
Summit1G	Man	White	5,884,675 (10)	$113,209-$226,418
xQc	Man	White	5,501,536 (12)	$183,039-$366,078
NickMercs	Man	White	5,488,792 (13)	$185,047-$370,094
Dakotaz	Man	White	4,718,742 (16)	$13,660-$27,321
SypherPK	Man	Middle Eastern	4,643,310 (19)	$15,143-$30,286
LoserFruit	Woman	White	2,538,026 (62)	$2,677-$5,355**
Chica	Woman	Latina	1,869,794 (94)	$11,712-$23,424
Demisux	Woman	White	1,427,267 (118)	Unknown
Loeya	Woman	White	1,417,148 (158)	$10,135-$20,271
Alinity	Woman	Latina	1,300,458 (182)	Unknown
Justaminx	Woman	White	1,299,943 (183)	$5,222-$10,444**
Hafu	Woman	Asian	1,294,759 (184)	$17,667-$35,335

*Does not include income from sponsors, ads, donors, or other revenue sources
**No information for April 2021, taken from November 2021

Data Collection

Content analysis of videos found on the website Twitch.tv was the methodology I chose to address the research questions. According to the website, "Twitch is where millions of people come together live every day to chat, interact, and make their own entertainment together" (n.d.). In this space, people are able to create a variety of live-streaming videos, popular among them are video game streaming or "let's plays." This environment creates a virtual world of social interaction where the presentation of self is

on display. Videos were collected from 18 streamers. Two videos a week were collected for each streamer for four weeks between April 11th and May 9th of 2021. Videos were downloaded and stored on external hard drives. Fifty-five of the videos collected were examined for this research, at least two videos per streamer. Video lengths ranged from two to 13 hours. Due to the extended length of some of the videos, two hours from each video were coded during the initial sampling to get a better understanding of the most followed streamers on Twitch. Given the volume of data possible with all 18 streamers over a period of a month and with a better understanding of the top streamers, I narrowed the selection of streamers. Video streams were watched in their entirety after the sample was narrowed to focus on theoretically relevant cases. In total, approximately 140 hours of streaming content was observed and analyzed, from 18 of streamers. Table 1-2 shows the number of hours observed for each streamer.

Table 1-2: Number of Hours Observed

Streamer Name	Number of Hours Observed
Ninja	12
Tfue	6
Shroud	4
Pokimane	19
Myth	14
TimTheTatMan	4
Summit1G	4
xQc	6
NickMercs	4
Dakotaz	14
SypherPK	4
LoserFruit	6
Chica	13.5
Demisux	4
Loeya	4
Alinity	4
Justaminx	4
Hafu	14
Total	**140.5**

I used theoretical sampling to gather data for this research. Theoretical sampling is a strategy that expands, elaborates, and refines categories that emerge from previous data (Charmaz 2006). In theoretical sampling, it is necessary to have "tentative analytic categories to pursue" (Charmaz 2006: 205) to serve as a starting point. From there, researchers sample to elaborate on emergent themes from the data until a point of saturation has been reached. For this research, I started with the most popular streamers, looking both at popular men and women. I focused on the popularity of streamers because streamers with more followers have the most influence in the gaming community. I then identified significant categories (Draucker et al. 2007) that emerged from the initial sample and continued to strategically collect data to further explore these categories until saturation had been reached. In theoretical sampling, a point of saturation is reached when theoretically relevant categories no longer present new properties and patterns that have not already been identified in the data (Breckenridge and Jones 2009; Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967).

During analysis of the 18 top streamers, I identified a pattern that I refer to as the Gamer-Entertainer continuum. "Gamers" are those whose streams focus more on the game being played and less on the social interactions with the audience. "Entertainers" are those who are not only invested in the game being played, but also had frequent interactions with the audience. These streamers seemed to try to be more entertaining through things like jokes and gimmicks. Gamers and Entertainers were not a dichotomy, however, but instead streamers were more or less Gamers and Entertainers along a continuum. Further, this continuum was gendered, with women more likely to be toward the Entertainer side compared to men who were more towards the Gamer side.

I began sampling a larger group of streamers and then narrowed to focus on streamers that gave theoretical insight into this continuum. Six streamers of the original 18 were selected to look at further and were selected in pairs. Figure 1-1 shows the original sample and the three pairs that were examined further. These pairs included Pokimane and Ninja, who in addition to being the top man and top woman streamer in terms of followers, also were on opposite sides of the continuum with Ninja being a Gamer and Pokimane being an Entertainer. I also examined Chica and Myth further to look at the ways in which they navigated race in this space and how that connected to their presentation of self, their emotional displays, and the Gamer-Entertainer continuum. Finally, I observed additional videos for Dakotaz and Hafu, as they were two streamers who transcended the gendered expectations, with Hafu, a woman, being closer to the Gamer side of the continuum and Dakotaz, a man, being more on the Entertainer side of the continuum.

Ninja	Summit1G	Chica
Tfue	xQc	Demisux
Shroud	NickMercs	Loeya
Pokimane	Dakotaz	Alinity
Myth	SypherPK	Justaminx
TimTheTatMan	LoserFruit	Hafu

Ninja and Pokimane
- Top man and woman
- Opposite ends of Gamer-Entertainer Continuum

Myth and Chica
- Different expressions of emotions
- Connect race/ethnicity to continuum

Dakataz and Hafu
- Exceptions to gendered continuum
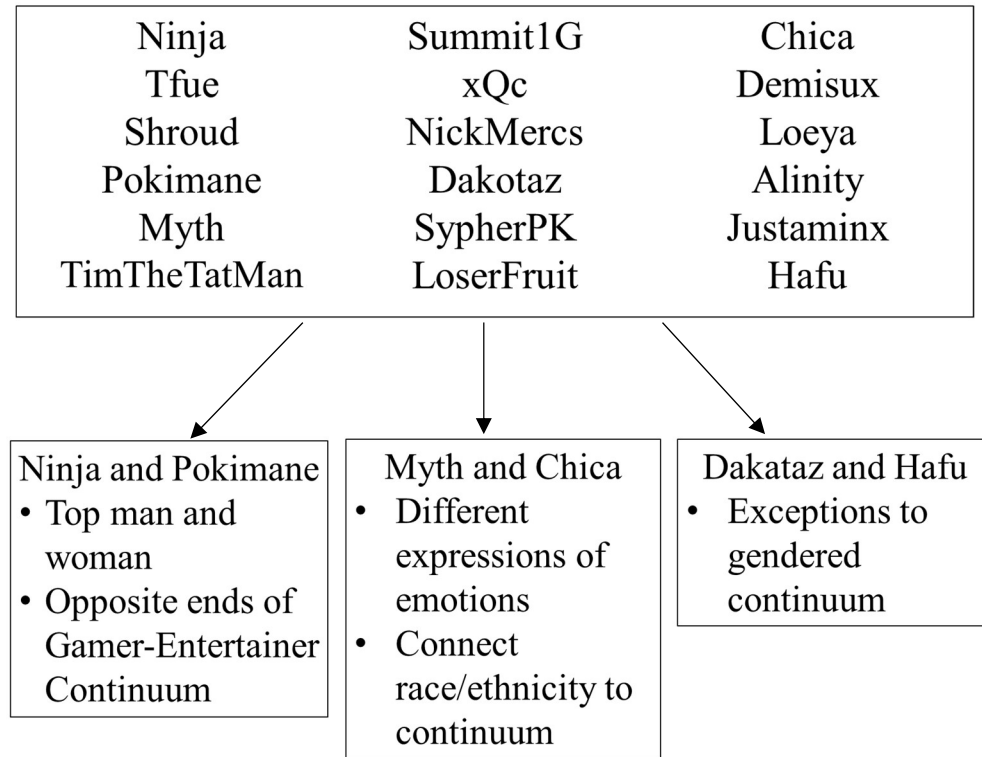
Figure 1-1: Theoretical Sampling

Data Analysis

Visual images were important to the study, so I was guided by visual sociology in conducting this data. Visual sociology has become a prominent subsection of qualitative research focusing on visual data, including photographs and film (Banks 2018; Grady 1996). Specifically, I conducted a content analysis of the visual data. Content analysis can be described as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns," (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1278). While it was originally used to analyze text data, content analysis has been expanded to analyze visual data such as photography and film (Banks 2018; Sutherland and Feltey 2016). Visual content analysis has been used widely in media studies, including a study of the gendered presentation of bodies in

advertisement (Bell 2001). Similarly, Pietruszka (2016) looked at the presentation of self in video game streaming by looking at a variety of elements, such as the players' behaviors and use of language within videos. This lends to the credibility of content analysis for examining the presentation of self in let's play videos.

In addition to the visual elements of these videos, I also focused on what the streamer was saying during these streams. This focus of the analysis was influenced by critical discourse analysis. This type of analysis looks at the ways in which "dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (Van Dijk 2015: 352). Van Dijk (2015) argues that critical dialogue analysis is not a specific method of doing discourse analysis, rather it is a critical perspective that places dialogue in the context of power and the reproduction of inequalities. Recent work by Darwin (2017) used discourse analysis of Reddit threads to understand how non-binary individuals "do gender" in virtual spaces, showing that it is a valuable tool in understanding gender in online environments.

Critical discourse analysis focuses on how language used in certain contexts works to contribute to inequalities and social problems (Van Dijk 2015). For instance, these interactions often reinforce gender boundaries, with women facing harassment that is frequently sexual in nature (Heeter 2016). Critical discourse analysis also focuses on who has control of social dialogues (Van Dijk 2015). This is especially relevant when considering many of the most popular video game streamers are white men. Recent news stories in which popular men streamers have made sexist remarks (e.g. Murray 2018) demonstrate how streamers can reproduce inequalities through dialogue. Arguably, the discourse that is used by streamers works to reinforce inequalities within gaming. With

critical discourse analysis in mind, a focus was placed one what the streamers said during their streams and how streamers' language choices were related to social inequalities, including connecting them to what Schwalbe et al. (2000) describe as generic processes of inequality reproduction.

All streaming videos were downloaded into a qualitative analysis software program. As I observed the visual and audio aspects of the streams, I coded segments of the videos using Atlas.ti 9. Coding helps to sort data into "various categories that organize it and render it meaningful from the vantage point of one or more frameworks or sets of ideas" (Lofland et al. 2006: 200). For the purposes of this study, codes were derived inductively through the data. I began by using initial or open coding of the data (Emerson et al. 2011; Charmez 2006). I coded segments of the videos to reflect what I was seeing in them. In the beginning, I coded for everything I saw, including how players positioned their body, how they started their streams, their emotional states, their verbal and nonverbal expressions, how they interacted with the audience, and how they interacted with others. I began using focused coding (Emerson et al. 2011; Charmaz 2006) as themes began to emerge through the initial coding. With focused coding, I concentrated on these major themes, which centered around the amount of emotion management and emotional labor they were engaging in, as well as how the language the streamers used was connected to the recreation or resistance of social inequalities.

Along with analyzing the videos themselves, I took detailed notes while viewing the videos. In these observation notes, I focused on aspects such as body language and differences in how gamers play or interact with the audience based on gender and race. The approach of using detailed notes to analyze video content is similar Morris and

Anderson's (2015) work, where they examined how vloggers on YouTube presented themselves in ways that defied hegemonic masculinity. This process was also similar to Phelps' (2019) examination of how girls use their bodies to resist and reject traditional expectations of femininity in YouTube videos. Even more, this method is similar to ethnographic fieldnotes in that I observed social interactions in individuals' everyday lives, despite being separated from the subjects by a digital divide (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011; Morris and Anderson 2015). These notes were taken by hand as the observations were occurring, and described what was happening, why segments were coded the way that they were, as well as where in the video the codes occurred.

Observation notes were then used to inform the memos that I wrote throughout the duration of this research. Memo-writing is important in analyzing codes and thoughts about the data that is observed in qualitative research (Charmaz 2006; Glaser 1998). Memos are used to capture thoughts that researchers have in the moment connected to observations being made about the data. In this research, I wrote memos after viewing each video. These memos ranged in length typically from 1-3 single-spaced pages and were used to explore the major themes found in each video. I began these memos by describing in detail what the streamer looked like that day, such as the way they dressed, if they wore make-up, if they were facing towards the camera or not. Additionally, these memos were used to describe what was happening in the background of the streams, including the settings that the streamers were in.

After describing the streamer and scene, I used these memos to further my analysis to discuss and reflect on the major themes that I saw in each video. These often included their emotions during the stream, how and when they interacted with the

audience, and ways that they expressed things like misogyny or if they were the victims of harassment. It was through these memos that themes explored in this dissertation were fully developed, including what I refer to as the Gamer-Entertainer continuum. In addition to the broader memos for each observation, memos were written for the major themes that emerged, including the presentation of self, emotion and emotional labor, and the reproduction of inequalities, which are presented in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Personal Standpoint

It has been argued that it is important to disclose personal standpoints when conducting social research (Sprague 2016). This is to acknowledge any personal biases that may impact the research being conducted. I am a nonbinary person who was assigned female at birth and am often perceived as a woman. I have been playing and a fan of video games since I was a child. In connection to my perceived gender, I have experienced inequalities within gaming, including being sexually harassed while playing video games online. This may have biased what I looked for in terms of harassment and made me more sensitive to and aware of it.

Additionally, while I have always had an interest in gaming, prior to conducting research I had watched very few streamers, none of whom were included in this sample. As such, I had no previous fan loyalty to any of the streamers, but I was also looking at streaming from an outsider's perspective. That being said, prior to going into this research I did have some negative feelings towards the streamer Ninja because of previous knowledge of a controversy surrounding his refusal to stream with women (Frank 2018). His argument for this is he fears that if he streamed with a woman he would be accused of flirting or having an affair with said woman. He chooses to exclude

women from his streams entirely to avoid these accusations. In my view, this arguably reinforces the notion that the only reason women are interested in gaming is to gain attention from men. This distaste for Ninja prior to the research may have biased me when observing him and made me more critical of him compared to other streamers.

OUTLINE OF DISSERTATION

In the following chapters, I discuss the results of my analysis. In Chapter 2, I examine the ways that streamers actively use the presentation of self in their streams. This includes the way that they use animated videos to introduce their streams, the way that they position their bodies, as well as how they use costumes, props, and background settings. Chapter 3 discusses emotions and emotional labor seen in streaming. This includes the ways that streamers express or suppress emotions during streams and how they attend to the emotions of their audiences, as well as how these expressions vary by race and gender. In Chapter 4, I discuss inequality in gaming and how streamers contribute to the reproduction of inequalities through generic processes (Schwalbe et al. 2000) and how they use their platforms to combat these inequalities. Finally, in Chapter 5 I give an overview of the findings and how they contribute to the existing literature. I also discuss limitations to the current research and avenues for future studies.

CHAPTER II

FROM GAMING TO ENTERTAINING: GENDER, IDENTITY, AND HOW THE

GAME IS PLAYED

When audiences want to watch video game streaming, there are a variety of

platforms for them to choose from, one of the biggest being Twitch.tv. By entering this

URL, audience members are directed to a website with a purple theme that features live

streams on a variety of topics, including sports, crafts, or having a space where people

can just talk to the creators and each other. The most popular, however, are video game

streams, where streamers play a wide variety of video games while audience members are

able to chat with them and one another. As seen in Figure 2-1, upon entering the website

on a computer, the audience member can see an assortment of live streams that are in

progress in the center of the screen. On the left side of the screen, viewers can see a list of

recommended channels based on viewing history and popularity. Below the assortment of

live streams that the viewer can click through are more channels that are recommend to

the viewer that are currently live. Below these windows are video categories that viewers

can search to find current live streams, videos, and clips from creators who have made

content under those categories. Most of the categories that are shown to the audience are

specific video games that are popular among streamers. These include "Fortnite,"

"Minecraft," "Valorant," "Apex Legends," and "Grand Theft Auto V." In addition to the

video game categories, there is also a very popular category called "Just Chatting," which

includes live streams where the streamers are simply talking to the audience. This category also serves as a place for miscellaneous content and games, and is common among streamers who are playing games that don't fit into one of the trending categories. If viewers continue to scroll down the page, they will see more recommended current live streams based on categories, including the gaming categories as well as a "What's Hot" category, showing the audience is popular at that point in time.
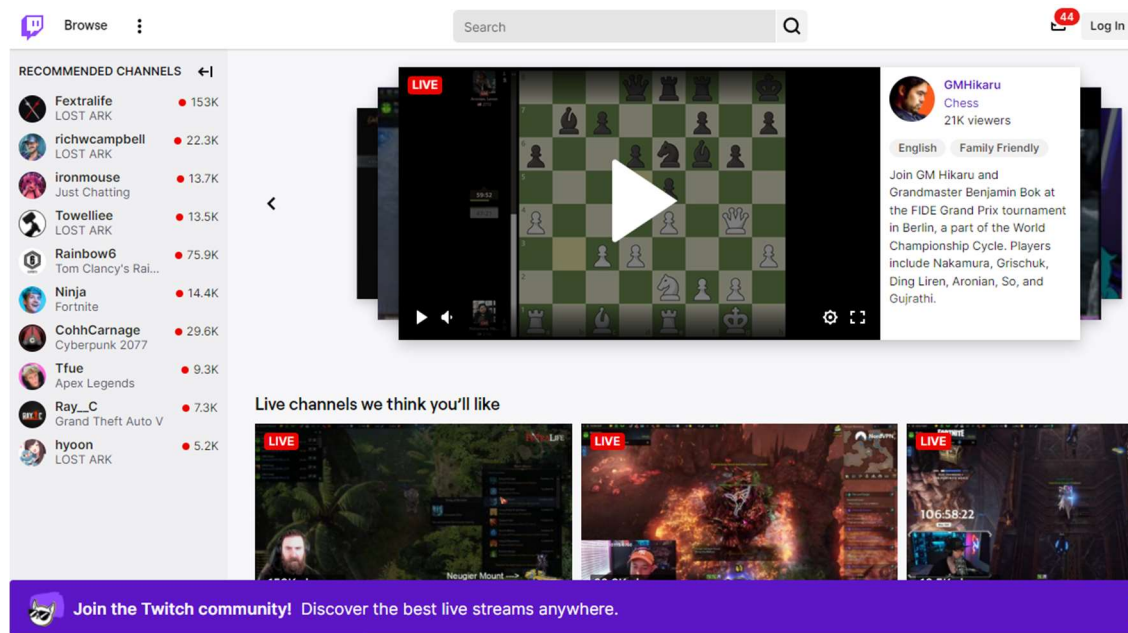
Figure 2-1: Twitch.tv Home Screen

Among these popular live-streams, viewers may find streamers like Shroud, also known as Michael Grzesiek. Shroud is a 27-year-old streamer from Canada. He is one of the most followed streamers on Twitch, ranking number 3 by number of followers when this data was collected in April of 2021. Shroud is a 27-year-old Canadian streamer who is a former professional video game player, specifically for the game Counter Strike: Global Offensive (Frometa 2021). Shroud has consistently drawn in followers and viewers on both Twitch and YouTube, and has been nominated for many video game

awards, including winning Content Creator of the Year at the Game Awards in 2019

(Goslin 2019). Shroud is best known for first-person shooter games, more recently the

game "Valorant." As the name implies, games in this genre have camera angles that

allow the player to take on the perspective of their character as they shoot and kill their

enemies. In the game Valorant, two teams compete against each other to dominate a map.

One team has the goal of setting and detonating a bomb, while the other team attempts to

prevent the bomb from being placed, or successfully defuse it before it goes off. Like

most first-person shooters, Shroud is incredibly skilled at this game in terms of his ability

to shoot and kill his opponents. He is highly regarded among streamers as one of the best

"aimers" in the gaming world, allowing him to frequently help his team to victory over

the other players.

Valorant was the main focus of Shroud's live stream that took place on April 11th,

2021. As seen in Figure 2-2, viewers entering mid-stream as Shroud was playing the

game would see him in a small window in the center of the left side of the screen, with

the image of the game taking up the main screen. The audience can see that Shroud is

sitting in what appears to be an office or gaming/computer room. Behind him, it is

possible to see shelves containing gaming or possibly other fanbase memorabilia. He is

wearing a black t-shirt with a purple hoodie with the Twitch logo on his left side. Shroud

sits at his desk, facing a computer monitor towards the left of the screen. He rarely faces

towards the camera and never looks directly into it. At the beginning of the stream,

Shroud spends a few hours watching and showing a Valorant tournament that is taking

place. During this time, he is visible in a window in the upper-right side of the screen,

and he gives commentary on what is happening in the tournament and gives his own

thoughts on the teams' performances. He does not greet the audience directly and very rarely interacts with comments that come through in the chat function of the stream. After watching the tournament, Shroud then begins to play Valorant himself. At this time, his main interactions occur with his team. He will occasionally answer questions or respond to comments in the chat, but not often. When he does answer questions, they are never personal and tend to be game or technology related. His interactions with his teammates are also largely focused on the game. While he does laugh and make jokes occasionally during this time, his main focus and communication with his team is on strategy and how they can take down their opponents. For instance, he would take charge and direct the team on where to go. In Valorant, the maps are divided into sections labeled with letters. Prior to the beginning of the round, the team would communicate which section they wanted to go to, and Shroud would often direct his team on where to go. Shroud would also communicate with his team about where opponents were located and where he was going to go on the map.

Figure 2-2: Shroud Playing Valorant (April 11th, 2021)

Other visitors to Twitch.tv may find themselves watching a live stream by the creator Pokimane, also known as Imane Anys. Pokimane is a 25-year-old streamer who was born in Morocco and grew up in and currently lives in Canada. Like Shroud, she is consistently in the top ten most followed streamers on Twitch and is the highest-ranking woman streamer by followers. She got her start in streaming playing the game League of Legends (D'Anastasio 2021) and has since created content playing a variety of games, including Fortnite, Among Us, and Valorant. As part of a campaign to get-out-the-vote for the 2020 election, Pokimane along with other top streamers joined US representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar in a live-stream session of the game Among Us. This stream was one of the most popular streams to ever occur on Twitch, peaking at over 435,000 viewers at one time (Crook 2020). In addition to her involvement with this campaign, Pokimane's popularity has also been reflected in her cameo appearance in the movie "Free Guy," which came out in 2021. Like Shroud, her popularity within the streaming world has also led to her being nominated for many awards, including winning the Twitch Streamer of the Year award at the Shorty Awards in 2018 (Shorty Awards 2018).

Viewers tuning into Pokimane's stream on April 15th, 2021, would see Pokimane playing the game Among Us. Pokimane typically streams in what appears to be an office or gaming space, which includes references to gaming and anime, such as an anime-style poster of her and a PlayStation 5 visible in the background. There are also noticeable personal touches, such as a cat tree where her cat, Mimi, can occasionally be seen throughout her streams, as well as shelves with flowers to the right of the screen. Pokimane sits with her body and face pointed towards the camera, which is positioned

slightly above her looking down. On this particular day, audience members would see Pokimane wearing a light purple outfit with a NASA patch on her right arm. Along with this outfit, she also occasionally wore a large helmet that allowed her to appear as her Among Us character. Pokimane frequently interacts with the audience, including wishing people happy birthdays when they say it is their birthday in the chat, as well as giving people advice and emotional support when they tell her they are having a bad time. She is consistently positive with these interactions, often smiling and expressing excitement to be spending time with the audience.

In addition to communicating with her audience, she also frequently interacts with the people she is playing with. Among Us is a game where players are given different roles, one being the imposter whose job it is to kill as many people as possible to win. The other players try to figure out who the imposter(s) is/are and eject them from their spaceship to save the rest of the crew. The game works in rounds, which end either when someone calls an emergency meeting or when a body is reported. At the end of the round, there is a period where the players come to discuss where they were, what they saw, and who they think it is, and then decide if they will vote who to eject or skip ejecting someone that round. As such, her interactions with the other players revolve around putting together clues, or when she is the imposter, misleading them. To add to the entertainment for the viewers, the first time she is the imposter she plays while wearing the helmet to represent her Among Us character, as seen in Figure 2-3.

Figure 2-3: Pokimane Showing Off "Among Us" Costume (April 15th, 2021)

Both Shroud and Pokimane are incredibly popular streamers who have made a name and living for themselves in the world of video game competitions and streaming. They represent two different styles of streaming that operate on what I refer to as the Gamer-Entertainer continuum. All of the streamers observed for this dissertation can be considered gamers. They are highly known and often well-regarded in the gaming world and industry. They are also all in the business of entertaining an audience. However, where one lands on the Gamer-Entertainer continuum depends on what the gamer emphasizes in the stream. On the Gamer end is Shroud. Shroud, an extremely talented gamer, does not typically use gimmicks to draw an audience in and very rarely interacts with the chat. When he does interact with the audience it almost always has to do with the game or aspects of gaming, such as types of equipment he is using. Pokimane, on the other hand, is much more of an entertainer. Dressing up as her character to play the game, having her pet on screen, and her frequent positive interactions with the audience on topics not related to gaming all contribute to her Entertainer status on the continuum.

The key factors in locating gamers on the Gamer-Entertainer continuum include: 1) how they present themselves, which I will discuss in this chapter, and 2) the amount of emotional labor they invest in their interactions with the audience, which I will discuss in the following chapter. Table 2-1 lists the main characteristics more common of those who fall on the Gamer and Entertainer side of the continuum. Location on the continuum also appeared to be related to gender, with women being more likely to fall on the Entertainer side, while more of the men fell on the Gamer side. There were only two main exceptions to this gender divide. Hafu is a woman who often falls closer to the gamer side of the continuum in the ways that she interacts with the audience and Dakotaz is a man who falls closer to the Entertainer side, both of whom will be discussed in the following chapters.

Table 2-1: Gamer-Entertainer Continuum Characteristics and Codes

Gamer	Entertainer
More focus on the game than on the audience (Long silences, ignoring donations, ignoring subscribers)	**Engages with the audience often** (Thanking subscribers, greet audience, greet chat members, personal stories/details, answer audience questions, ask audience advice, ask audience questions, emotional labor)
Body positioned away from audience (Body position facing away from camera)	**Body positioned towards the audience** (Body position facing the camera, eye contact with camera)
Negative emotions tied to how well the game is going (Frustration, voice raised_stress, voice raised_anger)	**Consistently positive, even when not doing well in game** (Calm after losing, laughing off losing)
More serious when playing the game (Leadership, strategizing with other players)	**Entertaining while playing the game** (Singing, dancing, funny voice, teasing other players)

THE PRESENTATION OF SELF AND THE GAMER-ENTERTAINER CONTINUUM

One aspect that is present in almost all video game streaming is the image of the streamer themselves. While a few streamers elect to not be seen on the screen, rather allowing the focus to be more on the game and their voice and commentary, by far the most popular streamers on Twitch are those who show themselves to the audience. This allows for a deeper look into how people present themselves in these virtual spaces. Research shows that individuals engage in impression management on the internet similar to face-to-face interactions (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2012; Golder and Macy 2014; Hogan 2010; Jurgenson and Ritzer 2012; Lee 2006; Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis 2008; Malaby 2009; Marder et al. 2016; Menchik and Tian 2008; Rui and Stefanone 2013; Triberti et al. 2017; Vasalou and Joinson 2009; Walker 2000; Walther 2007; Williams and Copes 2005; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008; Zhao 2005). One way they do this is by controlling what information does and does not get out to the virtual audience (Lee 2006; Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis 2008; Marder et al. 2016).

Streamers engage in impression management while they were streaming in a variety of ways. This included through their attire, actions in the backstage before going live, and by controlling the setting around them. The ways that streamers present themselves, including things like their appearances, their backgrounds, and even the introductions that are played prior to the start of the stream all work to show the audience who the streamer is and how they want the world to view them. What they choose to emphasize varies, including by gender, and influences where I placed them on the Gamer-Entertainer continuum. In the following, I will discuss the ways in which the streamers used tools of impression management, including introduction videos that would

play prior to the start of their stream, how they positioned their bodies in regard to the camera, the props they used, as well as the settings that they chose to display to the audience.

Introduction Screens

One interesting aspect of streaming that adds not only to the entertainment of the videos, but also to the way that streamers present themselves are their introductions that play prior to them appearing on screen. The introductions are animated, often switching between different images or featuring clips from the streamer's prior videos. These introductions show the audience a bit about the streamer, but also serve as a way for streamers to have a backstage moment, as the introductions occur while streamers are getting ready and setting up for the stream. The streamers are not visible during this time, but the audience can sometimes hear what the streamer is doing, including typing on the computer and moving around. Depending on the streamer, they may include things like count-down clocks that tell the audience when they should expect the stream to officially begin. Like many parts of the stream, these screens are highly customized to each individual streamer. These screens are used to show various aspects of the streamer's personality and can include things like motifs indicating where they are from, images from the games that they play, and even videos of the streamers playing on loop to get the audience excited about what is to come. There is typically music playing during the introductions. For some streamers, this music was the same every time and often dramatic, with a lot of drums and heavy bass which gave the feeling of anticipation. Other streamers changed what music was playing during the introduction and would continue playing music when they started the stream. Either way, the music was typically

upbeat and served to get the audience ready and excited for the upcoming stream. Most of the streamers I observed included a pre-game introduction screen. The exceptions to this were Tfue, xQc, and Demisux, who would begin their streams without an opening sequence.

The introduction screens give streamers control over the first thing that people see at the beginning of their streams, meaning that this is an important aspect of the streamers' impression management. They are able to choose what elements of themselves are being put forward during this time. Like other aspects of their presentation of self, the introductions indicated whether streamers were Gamers or Entertainers. Introductions were also very gendered in nature. For the men, who again were more likely to be on the Gamer end of the continuum, there was most often an emphasis on the games and the types of games that they would play rather than a demonstration of nongaming aspects of their personalities.

One common motif for the men streamers in these screens, and thus one of the first things the audience can see of them, is violence. Many of the most popular games being streamed are violent in nature, such as Valorant, Apex Legends, and Call of Duty. As such, it is these aspects of the game that are made more prevalent in the introductions of many of the men. An example of this is the screen the appeared prior to Shroud's streams. As seen in Figure 2-4, his screen featured close-ups of guns and gun parts being assembled. At certain points, the guns are aimed towards the audience, allowing them to see down the barrel of the gun. As previously noted, Shroud is a streamer best known for playing games in the first-person shooter genre. In this way, the imagery of the guns prior to his stream highlights the types of games that are part of his reputation. Shroud is

highly regarded in the gaming world for his skills in these games and the focus on guns in

this screen emphasizes the gun (and where it is pointed) as in his control. Similarly,

TimTheTatMan's introduction screen alternates between many images, including his own

logo, as well as images of weapons such as guns and grenades as seen in Figure 2-5. This

is also a reflection of the types of games that he plays, which often include Call of Duty

games, in this case Call of Duty: Warzone. Call of Duty is a popular first-person shooter

series based on various wartime scenarios, including actual historical wars such as World

War II and more contemporary military conflicts. The violence in this game series has

been controversial, including a scene in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2, which had

players carry out a terrorist attack in a Russian airport (Shea 2019). Arguably,

TimTheTatMan's portrayal of guns and grenades in his introduction serves to further

emphasize the violence in the games he plays and importance of weapons in achieving

and winning.
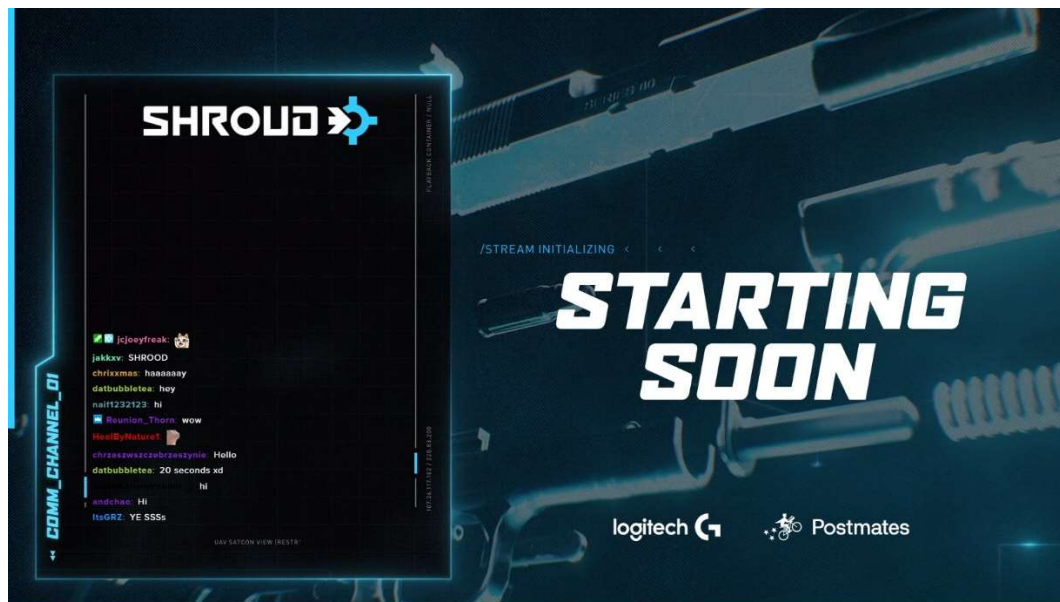
Figure 2-4: Shroud Introduction Screen

Figure 2-5: TimTheTatMan Introduction Screen

Along with the use of violent motifs that reflect the types of games that were being played, the men also often highlighted gaming in other ways. An example of this is Summit1G's opening sequence. It is fairly simple and largely features a countdown clock to when the stream will begin. However, in the background, the audience is able to see clips from his previous streams that included scenes from the games that he was most known for playing, such as Grand Theft Auto V, as well as scenes of him playing the games. Both Summit1G and TimTheTatMan's use of these clips not only portrayed the games that they were well known for playing, but they also served to highlight and promote their previous streams. This served as a highlight reel that shows the audience what they can expect from the streamers.

For the men, the introduction screens were also often used as a way to promote their brand and their gaming far more than to show the audience aspects of their personality or other interests outside of gaming. Many of the introduction screens for men included things like their logos, which are often used to sell merchandise. An example of

this is SypherPK, whose introduction screen included his logo as well as a countdown clock telling the audience when he would begin the stream, as can be seen below in Figure 2-6.

Figure 2-6: SypherPK Introduction Screen

While the Gamer-Entertainer continuum reflects gendered differences for the most part, there were outliers. The main example is the streamer Dakotaz. Dakotaz is a streamer who heavily emphasizes positivity in his streams and places more emphasis on having a good time rather than being good at the game that he is playing. Like many of the women, he has very positive and frequent interactions with the audience, and while he obviously cares about gaming and what he is playing, his identity does not seem to be wrapped up in how good he is at the game. This is something that is reflected in his introduction screen, which makes no reference to gaming and the games that he plays. Rather, his introduction includes images of a wolf and his logo. Dakotaz has the words "Lone Wolf" tattooed across his knuckles, which suggests that this wolf motif is an

important part in how he identifies and expresses himself. While the image in Figure 2-7 shows a wolf in an intimidating/attacking pose, this was still different from the other men who emphasized actual weapons and aspects tied to violence in the games themselves within their introductions. As such, his introduction is different from other men who emphasized the games and performance.
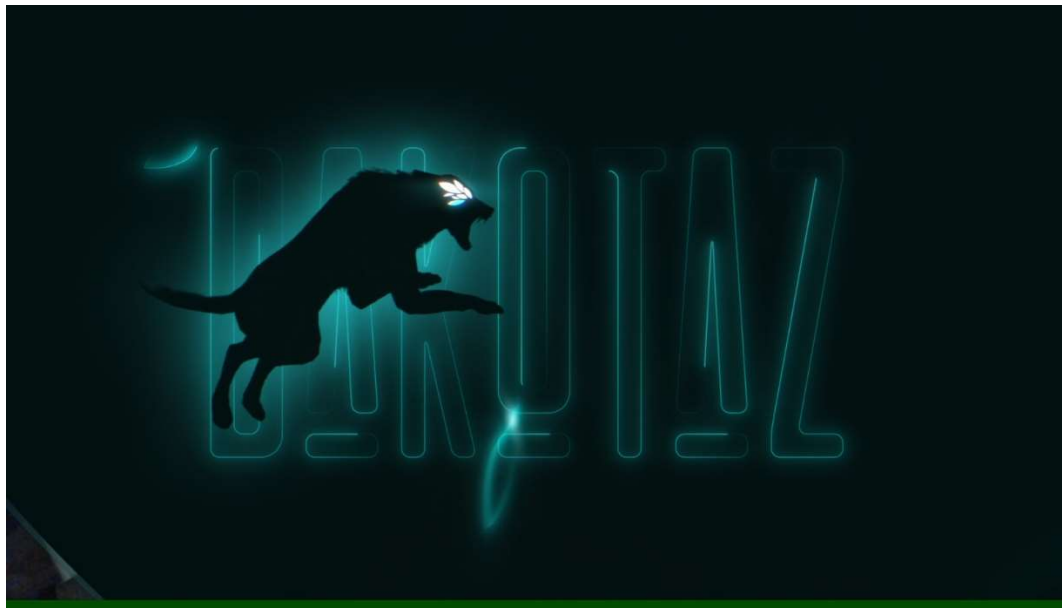
Figure 2-7: Dakotaz Introduction Screen

One of the key differences that was noticeable between men and women in their introduction screens was the lack of violent imagery in the women's introductions. This is not a reflection of the differences in the types of games being played between streamers, as both men and women frequently played violent shooting games, such as Valorant. However, this was not an aspect that was highlighted in any of the women's introductions. For the most part, the games themselves were not the focal point for the women in these introductions. Rather, they frequently showed parts of their personalities outside of gaming, contributing to the idea that they are not only gamers, but also

entertainers. An example of this is the introduction that Justaminx uses in her videos, as seen in Figure 2-8. Rather than referencing games or gaming, the introduction includes what appears to be fanart of Justaminx herself. Some of the images include her with devil horns and a tail. How Justaminx presents herself often fits with goth aesthetic, including heavy eyeliner and black clothing. The devil horns and tail seem to fit with this dark, gothic image she has of herself. Using these images works to center herself rather than the games, which was common among women.
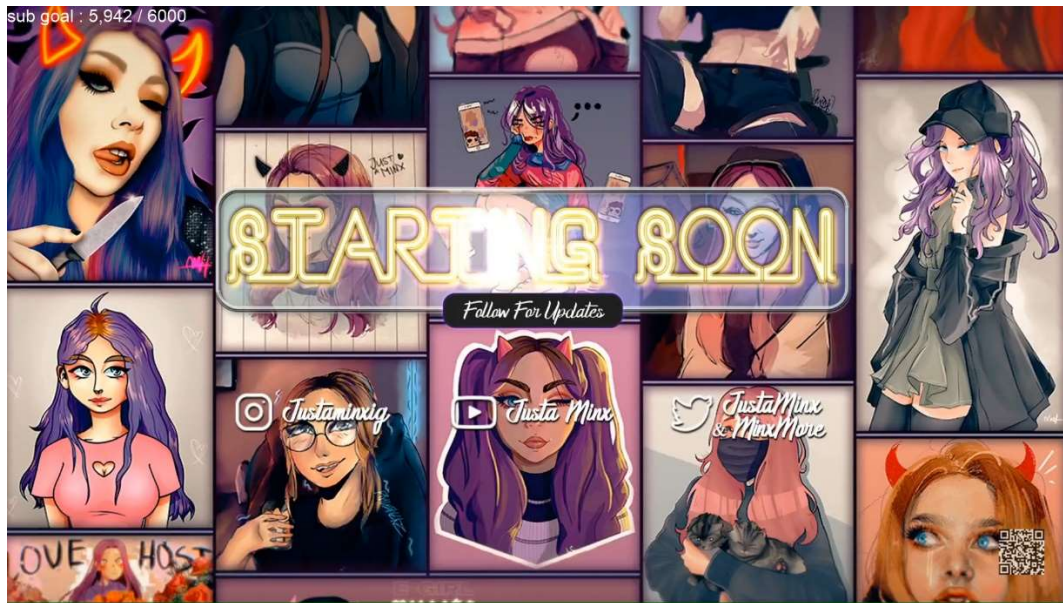
Figure 2-8: Justaminx Introduction Screen

A slight exception to this was the introduction for Hafu, which included characters from the game Among Us appearing on the screen. In Figure 2-9, the small yellow character floating in the background is an Among Us character. As previously noted, of all of the women Hafu falls closest to the Gamer side of the continuum. She focuses a bit more on the game compared to other women, including being quieter and interacting with the audience less, especially while she is actively playing the game. Her

emphasis on the games appears to be reflected in her introduction screen that includes elements of the game she is known for playing. Even with this slight nod to gaming, Hafu's introduction is still far brighter than any of the men's and does not reflect the somewhat violent nature of the game at all.
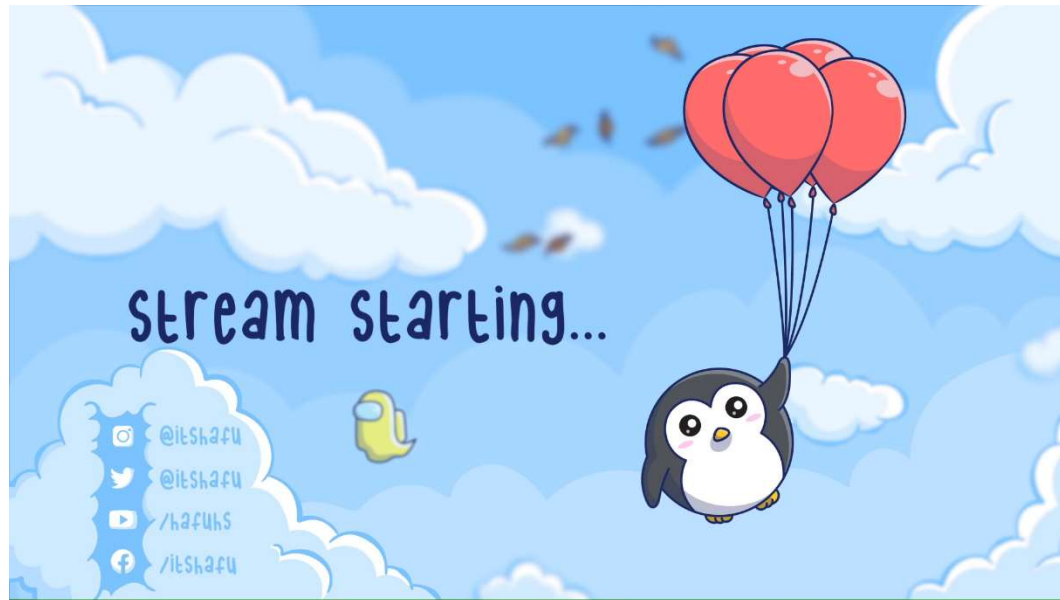
Figure 2-9. Hafu Introduction Screen

While many of the men had introduction screens that highlighted the games and violence, many of the women's introductions highlighted non-gaming aspects of their lives, for example, including their pets. Three out of the eight women that I observed had introduction screens that in some way featured their pets. Pokimane had two different introduction screens during the time I collected this data. The first, which can be seen in Figure 2-10, was more static and showed her sitting at her desk and looking at her computer while eating what appears to be sushi. In this scene, it is possible to see an image of Pokimane's real-life cat, Mimi, sitting on the shelf behind her. In the second introduction screen that Pokimane used, the screen flipped through multiple images that

include her moving around her room, going from her bed to her desk, to a chair in the room, and back to her desk. All of these images featured her cat in some way, including the image shown in Figure 2-11.

Figure 2-10: Pokimane Introduction Screen 1
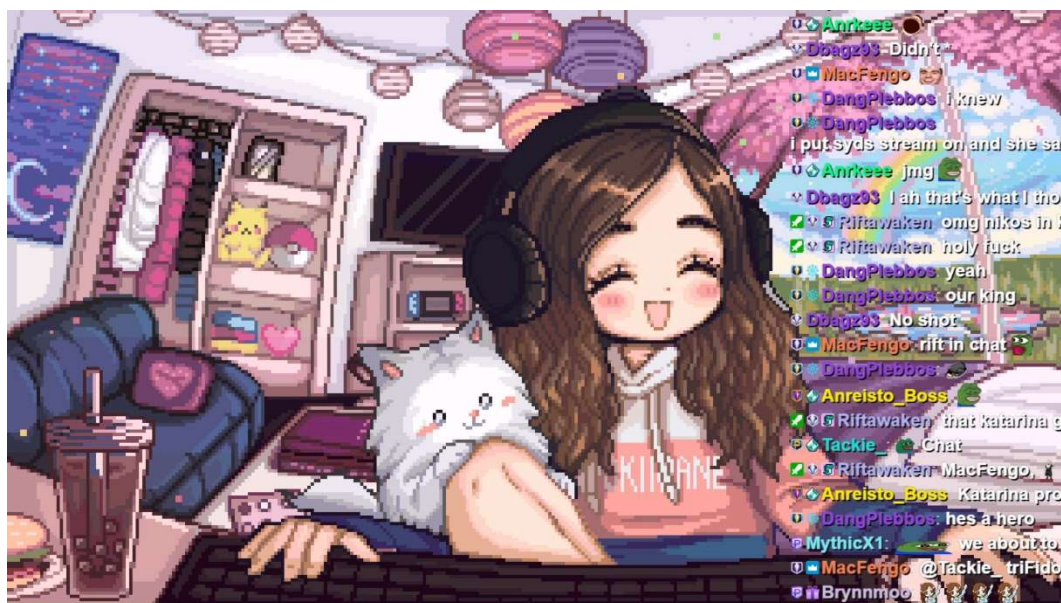
Figure 2-11: Pokimane Introduction Screen 2

Alinity also used her introduction screen to highlight her pets, which often appeared in the stream with her. This included cartoon depictions of her three cats and two dogs. Figure 2-12 shows the cartoon depiction of her dog, Luna. Interestingly, there are no images of Alinity during the introduction; her pets were the focus. Similarly, Loeya's introduction screen, which can be seen in Figure 2-13, includes a winter scene with what appears to be a long-eared fox. This scene may reflect the fact that she is Swedish, giving us one aspect of herself that is not connected to gaming. Her introduction also includes a "cat cam" that shows a live stream of a cat bed where the audience can often see one or both of her cats. This cat cam stays up throughout her stream, and she jokingly claimed that it was the most important part of her content. Again, this shows that the women are focusing more attention to other aspects of themselves to show to the audience than focusing solely on their gaming.

Figure 2-12: Alinity Introduction Screen

Figure 2-13: Loeya Introduction Screen and Cat Cam

Body and Camera Positioning

Body language has often been considered in terms of impression management and how individuals convey certain identities (Goffman 1959; Goffman 1979). How people present themselves through their bodies is gendered, with men and women holding themselves differently in social spaces (Goffman 1979; Henley 1977; Henley 2002). These differences in nonverbal communication are often a reflection of larger patterns of social power dynamics, and how people present themselves through nonverbal communication can uphold stereotypes and reinforce positions of power. For instance, men are often seen as having more liberty to take up space as opposed to women who often make themselves as small as possible in social spaces (Henley 1977). The gendered differences in the presentation of self extends to virtual spaces, with people of different genders using different techniques to present themselves in a positive light (Fox and Vendemia 2016; Kapidzic and Herring 2014; Rui and Stefanone 2013). In a similar fashion, the way that men and women hold their bodies while streaming differs

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significantly. This creates differences in the connections that are made between the audience and the streamers and the types of personas that the streamers portray in these spaces.

When looking at the body positioning of the streamers and how and where they sat relative to the camera, I identified clear differences along gender lines. The women that I observed often positioned themselves in a way that was aimed towards the camera, with both their face and body pointed forward. For instance, in Figure 2-14, Pokimane is actively playing the game Valorant, while facing the audience. For many women, including Pokimane, they faced the audience both while they were interacting with the audience before the game and during breaks, and while they were playing the game. There were a few exceptions to this, including Loserfruit and Demisux (Figures 2-15 and 2-16), who faced slightly towards the side of the screen. In Figure 2-15, Loserfruit is getting ready to play the game Fortnite, and is taking a moment to talk to the audience. In this case, her face is pointed more towards the camera, while her body is pointed slightly away from the camera. When she plays the game, her face is pointed in the same direction as her body. In Figure 2-16, Demisux is actively playing the game Enlisted with both her body and face pointed slightly to the side of the screen. While these two women face away from the camera a bit more compared to other women, their body positions were still angled in a way that was closer to facing the camera compared to most of the men.

Figure 2-14: Pokimane Playing Valorant (March 7th, 2021)
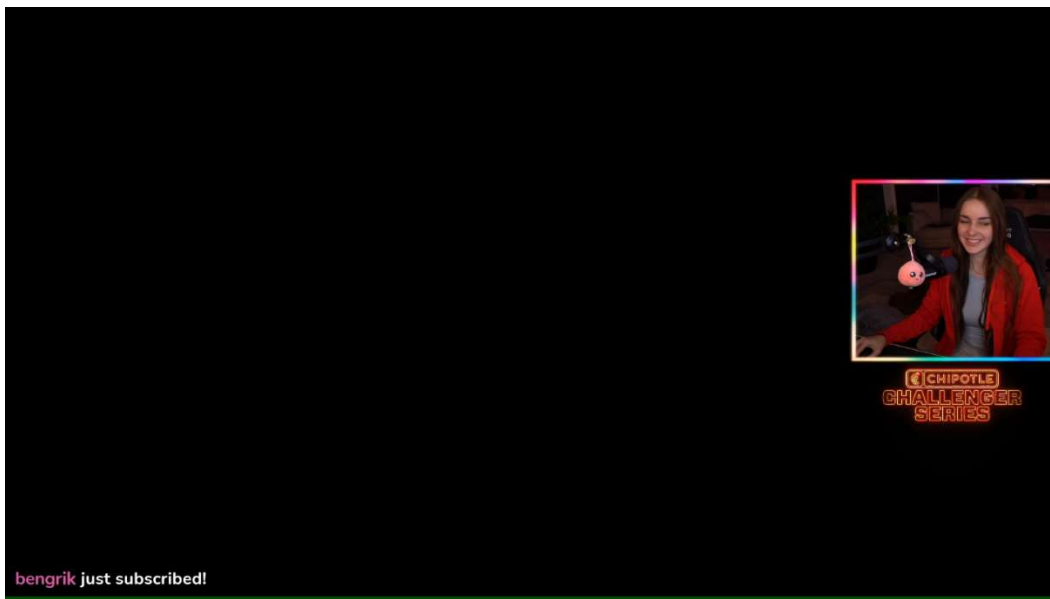
Figure 2-15: Loserfruit Before Game (March 30th, 2021)
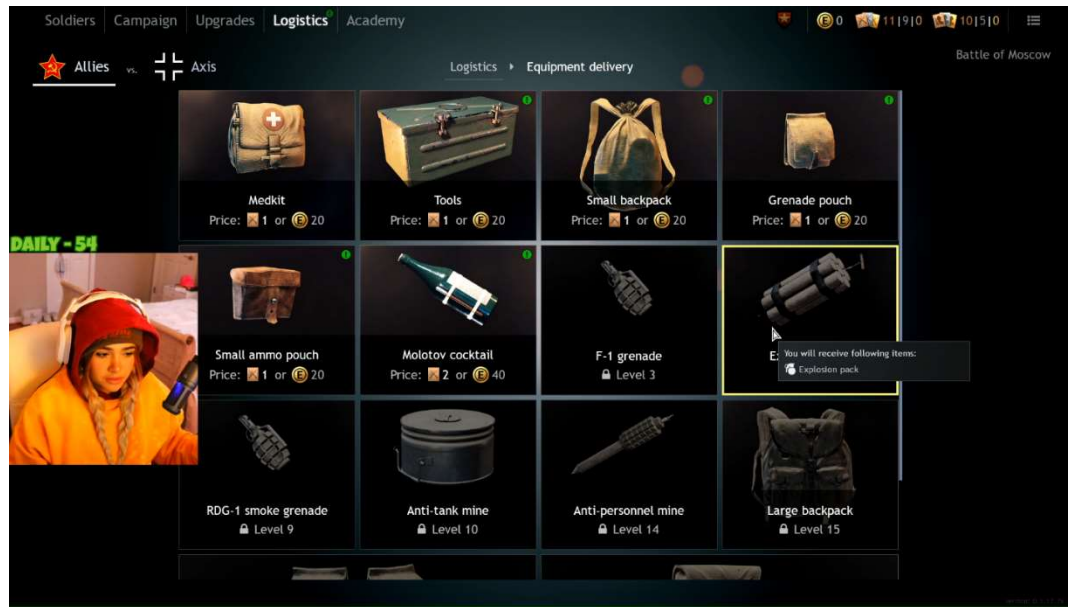
Figure 2-16: Demisux Playing Enlisted (April 16th, 2021)

For many of the women, the camera was also positioned slightly above them, so the audience got the perspective of looking down at the streamers. Women were also far more likely to look directly into the camera, giving the audience member the sense that they were making eye contact with them. Arguably, the body positioning of the women can serve two purposes. On the one hand, this could be a strategic move to show more of the audience their chest, which given the assumption that the audience is largely made up of straight men, may increase their popularity. An example of this is the streamer known as Alinity, who often wears low-cut shirts and short shorts that are visible in the stream. This can be seen in Figure 2-17, where Alinity switches screens between playing a game and talking to the audience. It is possible to see that, compared to many of the other streamers, especially the men, we see more of her body, including her thighs with the way she is sitting. Additionally, facing the camera as well as looking into the camera gave a sense of closeness with the audience. When the women looked at the camera it gives the feeling that they are looking at you and there is a connection that is not as

present with the men to the same extent. For the women, the way that they presented themselves fit with an identity that emphasized the connections between streamer and audience member. For the women, the streams were not just about the game, but also about their connection with the audience.

Figure 2-17: Alinity During Stream (April 17th, 2021)

Men, on the other hand, consistently faced away from the camera during their stream. They would often look at a computer screen that was off to one side. As such, we got more of a profile view of many of the men. An example of this is Ninja, as seen in Figure 2-18, who typically does not face the camera at all, and consistently looks at a screen to the left of the window he appears in. The only time Ninja did face the camera was during a monthly segment he would do called "Inside Ninja's Head," which was a question-and-answer session prior to playing the game for the day. Ninja did not often speak to the audience prior to playing the game like other streamers did, and as such did not face or address the audience in the same way as other streamers. Similarly, as seen in

Figure 2-19, Tfue not only faced away from the audience, but his camera was also positioned in a way where he was significantly smaller on the screen compared to all of the other streamers. While the degree to which the men looked away from the camera varied, this was a consistent feature when watching the men streamers.

Figure 2-18: Ninja Playing League of Legends (March 14th, 2021)

Figure 2-19: Tfue Playing Minecraft (March 25th, 2021)

However, compared to the other men, Dakotaz is a streamer who positions his body more towards the camera, as seen in Figure 2-20. Compared to someone like Ninja, who sits almost perpendicular to the camera, giving the audience more of a profile view of his face, the audience does see more of the front of Dakotaz's face and body. This coincides with the way that he streams and interacts with the audience that puts him closer to the Entertainer end of the continuum compared to most of the men that I observed. That being said, he still consistently looks to the side of the screen, both while interacting with the audience and while playing the game.

Additionally, while some of the men would look into the camera occasionally, this was still more characteristic of the women. The overall feeling that this brought out was a disconnect, especially when compared to the women. The men were not as connected to the audience and in many ways they didn't need to be. The men's popularity did not ride on the connection they made to the audience, it depended on their ability to play the game. This gave the impression of someone whose focus was the game and thus more of a Gamer compared to the women who not only played and showcased games but served as Entertainers who made emotional connections with the audience.
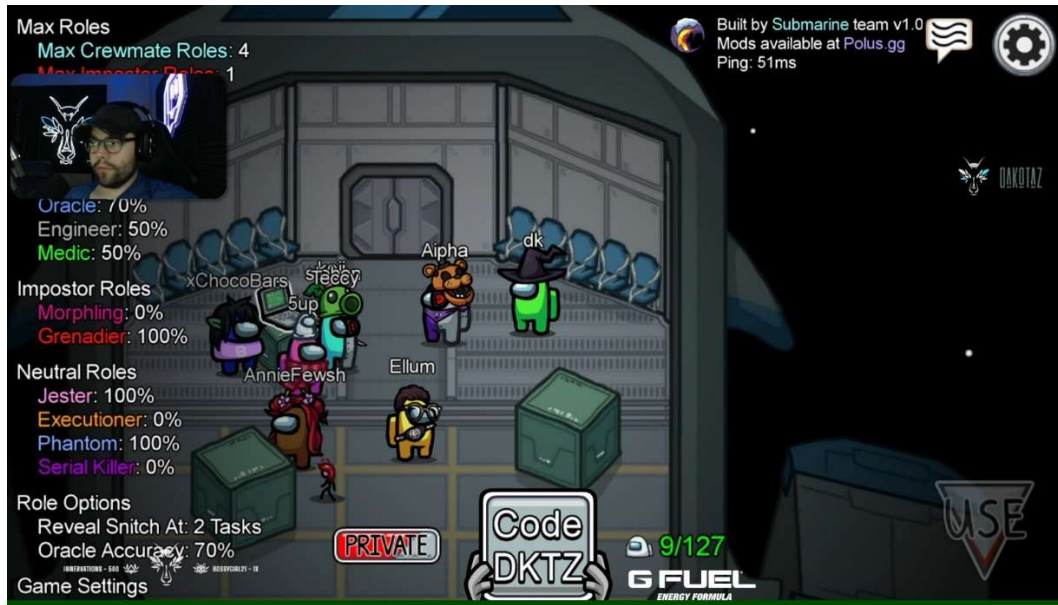
Figure 2-20: Dakotaz Playing Among Us (April 14th, 2021)

Connected to their positioning relative to the camera, there were also some notable differences between men and women in terms of how they presented on screen while playing the game. All of the streamers I observed appeared on screen while they were playing, usually in a small box to one side of the screen. The positioning of this box often depended on things like the game the streamers were playing, allowing the audience to see the important aspects of the game. However, there were clear gendered differences in the shape and size of the boxes that the streamers appeared in, and as such, what the audience sees of each streamer. All of the men, except xQc, streamed in boxes that were wider and shorter in shape, which drew less attention to their body and often focused more on just their faces. As shown in Figure 2-21, xQc was the only man who appeared in a relatively large, square-shaped box. This allows him to be more clearly visible within the frame and more present within the stream. For some of the men, the wide angle of their display screen allows the audience to see more of the room around them and draws less attention to themselves. As previously mentioned, this was something that was most

noticeable with Tfue (see Figure 2-19), whose camera angle made it so much more of the room was visible compared to other streamers, making him smaller by comparison as well.

The women, on the other hand, appeared in more square boxes. This was something that was consistent with all 8 of the women streamers. These boxes were taller compared to the men's, and as such, often allowed the audience to see more of their bodies than just their faces and drew less attention to their surroundings. In this way, the women's bodies were in focus more than the men's. For the men, we could mostly see their faces and part of their chest, while we could see more of the women's bodies, often down to their waist. The clearest example of this again is Alinity (see Figure 2-17) who was visible in the largest box out of any of the streamers. This coupled with the fact that she faced the camera, and that the camera was positioned above her, allowed more of her body to be shown. Among all of the women, Alinity was also the person who consistently wore revealing clothing, which is highlighted by the way that her camera and screen are positioned. This may reflect the fact that many women and girls feel pressure to wear sexually revealing clothing when presenting themselves online (Kapidzic and Herring 2014; Manago et al. 2008). It has been argued that this is an often unconscious reproduction of gender expectations with women being expected to be more sexualized (Kapidzic and Herring 2014). This fits with gaming culture, which has so often sexualized women within games themselves (Burgess, Stermer, and Burgess 2007).

Figure 2-21: xQc Playing Grand Theft Auto 5 Online (April 15th, 2021)

Physical Appearances

One noticeable aspect of the presentation of self was the amount of effort that was put into physical appearances on screen.. Most, if not all, of the women wore some amount of makeup, while none of the men visibly did. This of course reflects gendered expectations of men and women in society, but also highlights the differences in expectations for men and women in terms of appearances in these virtual spaces. Research has shown that women's use of makeup and adhering to gendered appearance norms positively impacts assumptions about their credibility within the workplace (Dellinger and Williams 1997; Kwan and Trautner 2009; Wong and Penner 2016). Streaming is a form of work, one where women may also find more success if they conform to gendered appearance norms. Men, on the other hand, present themselves as more casual, including having messier hair, while the women again were more likely to wear makeup and have neat looking hair. This also fits with research that shows that women are more likely to edit or highly control their physical images in online spaces

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(Fox and Vendemia 2016; Kapidzic and Herring 2014; Rui and Stefanone 2013). In online streaming, women also edit themselves through things like makeup to successfully manage their impressions.

Overall, there was less variety with what the men wore, with all of them wearing more casual of comfortable clothing. This included wearing plain t-shirts or hoodies and sweatpants. Again, this reflects general gendered expectations in society as a whole. Men presented more as casual gamers in appearance compared to women. There was more variety in the clothing that women wore. Some of the women wore blouses or other styles of tops that were not as casual as t-shirts. However, other women wore casual clothing like t-shirts or hoodies. Women were also more likely to specifically discuss what they were wearing with the audience and coordinate their attire with things happening during the stream. For instance, LoserFruit matched her clothing and her video game character's clothing to resemble a chipotle pepper when competing in a Fortnite tournament that was sponsored by Chipotle. Similarly, Pokimane wore a Valorant shirt when competing in a Valorant tournament and dressed up as her Among Us character when playing that game.

Men interestingly were also more likely to dress in a way that promoted themselves and the brands that they have developed through their streaming. This included wearing their own merchandise as a way to advertise it. An example of this is NickMercs, who wore a hat and shirt that he was selling for a limited time as a means to promote those sales. This can be seen in Figure 2-22, where NickMercs turns around to show the audience the back of his t-shirt, which includes the MFam logo. MFam is the name given for NickMerc's brand and fanbase. In addition to the shirt that he is showing off, he is wearing a backwards baseball cap, which is also a piece of his merchandise.

During this particular stream, NickMercs spoke at length about the clothing and encouraged people to buy it. In this way, he used his presentation of self and his costume as a form of self-promotion.

Summit1G also frequently wore a flat-brim baseball hat with his logo, which further promoted him and his brand. In this way, the clothing they wore, if they were not just casual clothes, were not intended to make them look professional necessarily, but more intended to promote themselves and their brand. The focus was not on them expressing themselves as individuals so much as on the merchandise and promoting their brand. The only instance of this among the women was when Chica wore a jersey that included her esports team (see Figure 2-23). However, in this case she was not so much promoting her own merchandise and herself, as she was identifying the larger organization that she is a part of.
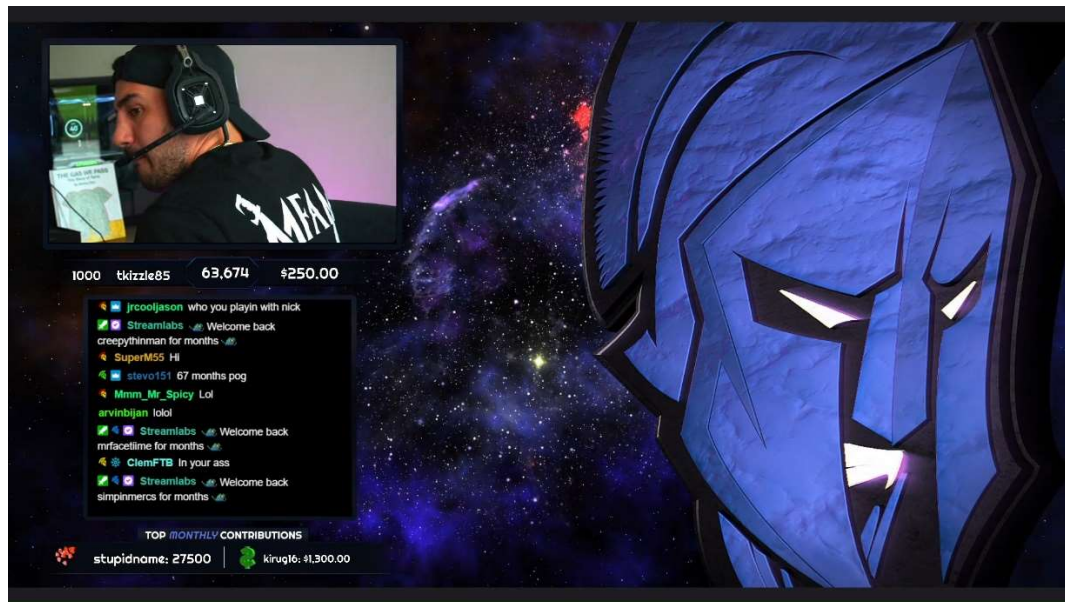
Figure 2-22: NickMercs Promoting T-shirt (April 11th, 2021)

Props and Settings

One of the fascinating aspects of video game streaming is that streamers have the ability to manipulate their settings in ways that they might not be able to in face-to-face interactions. Research suggests that a key element of the presentation of self in virtual spaces is the control of what is and is not seen by the audience (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2012; Hogan 2010). This can include what pictures are or are not shared, or how pictures are cropped and filtered to show more or less to the audience. In a similar fashion, streamers have the ability to manipulate their surroundings in a way that conveys certain identities. This includes the use of background props, such as gaming memorabilia, that conveys certain gamer or nerd identities. Similar to other aspects of the presentation of self, there were some noticeable gendered differences between the streamers and how they used their settings and props to present themselves

Women were less likely to have gaming or other fanbase memorabilia in the background. While there were some subtle nods to gaming, such as a shelving unit that Alinity had in the background of her streams that was made out of components resembling Tetris pieces, this was not a major part of their background displays. Backgrounds were more likely to be reflective of non-gaming aspects of their personality, including highlighting where they are from, such as flags. An example of this is the streamer Chica, who always has a Puerto Rican flag visible in her background, as seen in Figure 2-23. Not only does she have the flag behind her, but she has it framed with lights, which further draws the viewers' attention to it, suggesting that this is an important part of her identity that she wants to share with the audience. The women I observed were also more likely to stream in bedroom settings, compared with the men who were more

likely to stream in studio or office settings. This was noticeable particularly in Demisux's streams, whose bed (occasionally unmade) was always visible in the background (see Figure 2-16).
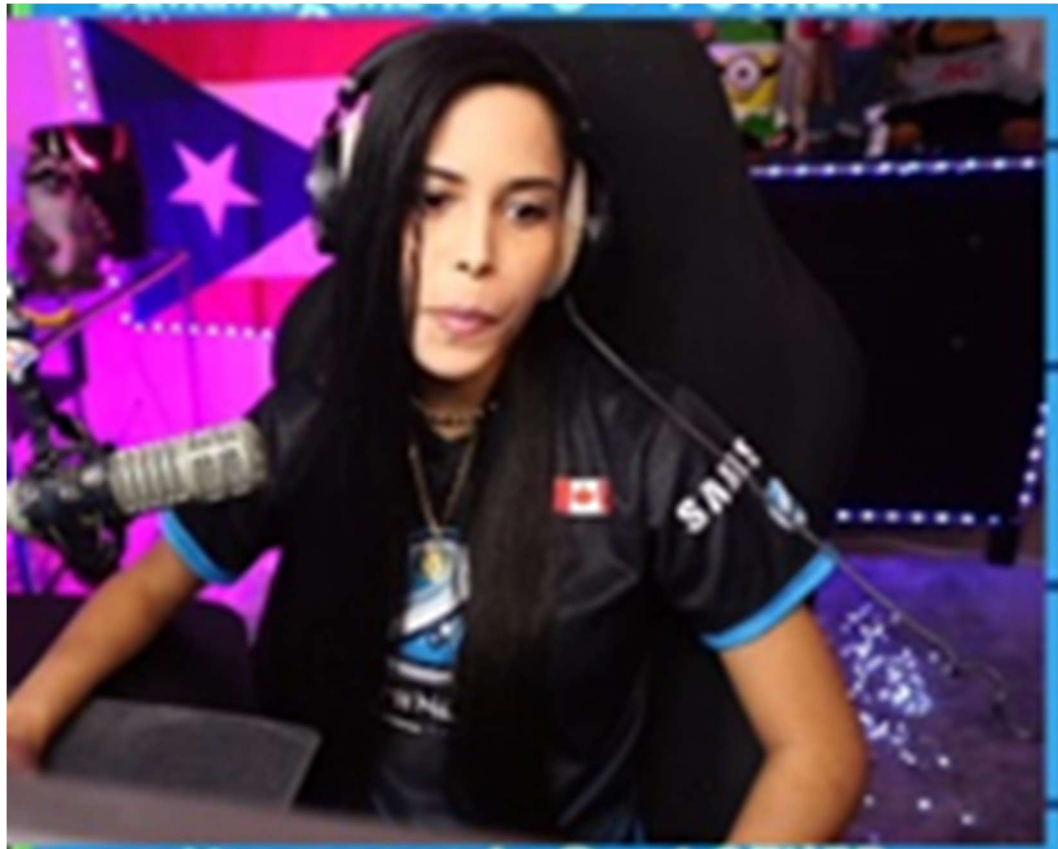
Figure 2-23: Close-up Chica Playing Fortnite (April 16th, 2021)

Along with props associated with gaming, Men were also far more likely to have sponsored items in the stream themselves. Some streamers, both men and women, had advertisements for sponsored products or their own merchandise in their streams. However, only men consistently had physical items from their sponsors displayed in their streams. This included energy drinks, with both Ninja, as seen in Figure 2-24, and Sumit1G, as seen in Figure 2-25, having energy drink mini-fridges visible near them. xQc

would also actively mix, drink, and promote energy drink powder in his streams. Some of the men I observed had flavors of the GFuel (a popular energy drink mix among gamers) powder that were "inspired" by them, including a tropical fruit punch flavor inspired by xQc, which was the flavor he promoted in his stream, and a raspberry cream flavor named "Summit1G." Additionally, Summit1G even spent much of his stream on April 16th, 2021, talking about and showing off a diamond encrusted computer mouse that he had received from a sponsor, Finalmouse (Figure 2-26). The mouse is reported to be worth $100,000, with Finalmouse only producing 50 of them (MousePro 2021). Again, these sponsored items were more prevalent in the men's streams. The only exception to this was a stream in which Chica spent the entire session playing mobile games to highlight the products she received from Samsung, including a new phone. However, this was not something that was consistently featured in her streams, unlike products like the RedBull fridge that was in each of Ninja's streams.

Figure 2-24: Close-Up Ninja Playing League of Legends (March 14th, 2021)
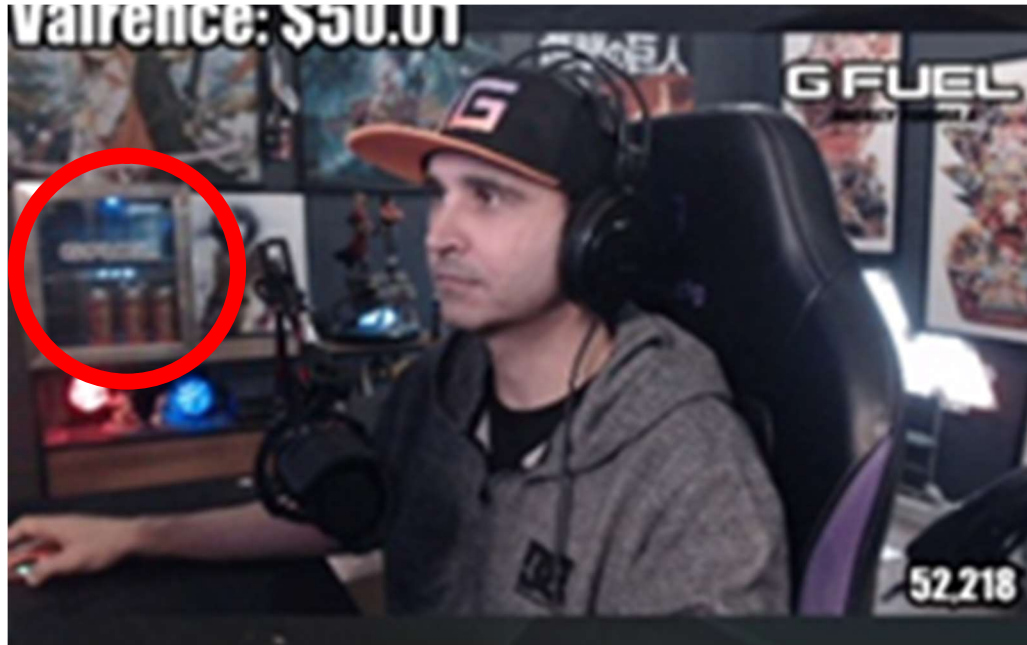
Figure 2-25: Summit1G Playing Grand Theft Auto 5 Online (April 16th, 2021)
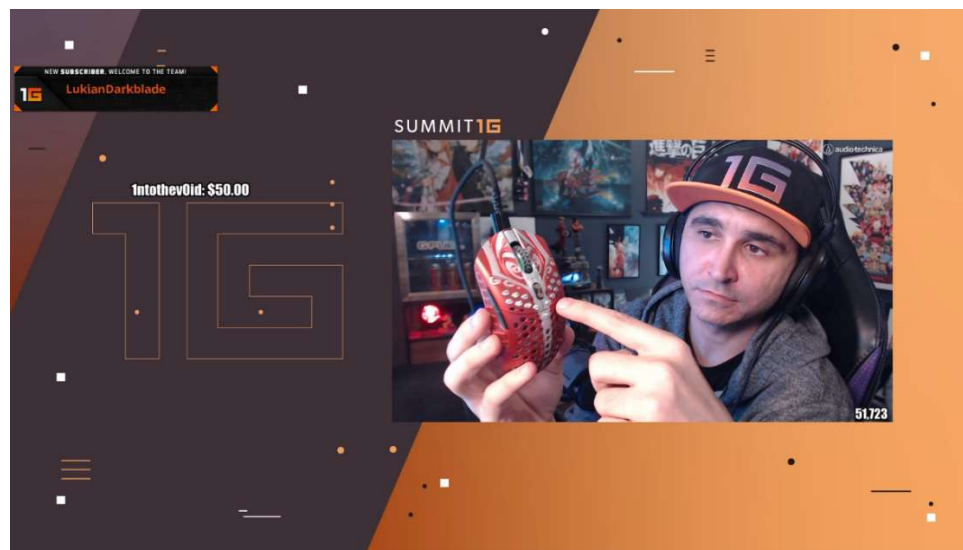
Figure 2-26: Summit1G Shows Finalmouse Product (April 16th, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Where the streamers landed on the Gamer-Entertainer continuum also reflected the way they spoke to the audience and to or about others, including in tone and in facial expressions. This included how they expressed themselves nonverbally through facial

expressions and body language. Those who were more on the Entertainer end of the continuum, particularly women, were more likely to smile and show positive facial expressions while they were streaming. Their body language was often relaxed and did not often convey being upset, even when they were not doing well in the game that they were playing. For instance, they would not appear to be tensing their muscles or clenching their jaw while playing. This was also true of Dakotaz, who again was more on the Entertainer side of the continuum. This contrasted from those who were more on the Gamer end of the continuum, who would physically tense their body and clench their jaw when they were upset about what was happening in the game. Similarly, in speech, Entertainers would often use a tone that conveyed positivity, regardless of the situation they were in. This included speaking in more casual tones and higher voices. They were also more likely to express themselves verbally in general, with minimal time not talking or interacting with the audience in some way.

Overall, those on the Gamer end of the continuum presented themselves very differently in terms of verbal (tone, word choice, how often they spoke) and nonverbal (facial expressions, body positioning, body movements) expressions compared to the Entertainers. Verbally, there were often less expressive in terms of saying things to the audience because these streamers were far more focused on the game than they were on entertaining and interacting with the audience. Their tone was also more varied compared to the Entertainers. While the Entertainers, especially the women, were more likely to keep the same up-beat tone throughout the stream, the Gamers' tone could shift from neutral to angry to upbeat throughout the stream, and this tone shift was usually connected to what was happening in the game. Similarly, there was more variety in their

nonverbal expressions. While the Entertainers were more relaxed and would smile frequently, the Gamers' nonverbal expressions were often a reflection of what was happening in the game. Their facial expressions often conveyed concentration while playing the game. Again, depending on performance (doing well or poorly in the game), their facial expressions conveyed happiness or anger and frustration. This extended into their body language, with Gamers more likely to make body movements that conveyed anger or frustration when they were not doing well in the game. Some streamers would through their arms in the air in a quick, jerking motion when they were frustrated with what was happening in the game. They would also frequently adjust their position in their chair and in sort of rock back and forth to express that they were agitated in that moment. These motions conveyed that they were not calmly enjoying the game, but instead were deeply emotionally invested in what was happening and would physically express frustration when things did not go their way in game. The verbal and nonverbal expressions of Gamers and Entertainers will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, as I discuss the ways in which this continuum and the gender of the streamer connected to differences in terms of emotion work and emotional labor.

CHAPTER III

FEELING RULES AND EMOTION MANAGEMENT: GENDER AND RACE IN THE

STREAMING WORLD

As previously discussed, while observing the streamers, a pattern emerged that suggests a continuum in the ways that streamers present themselves. The two ends of the continuum are what I refer to as "Gamer" and "Entertainer." Gamers are those whose presentations of self as streamers appear to be directly linked to their gaming ability. For these streamers, the emphasis was on the games they were playing and the skills they were able to display. Those who fell on the Gamer end of the continuum managed their emotional displays differently and engaged with the audience less often compared to the Entertainers. On the opposite side of the continuum, "Entertainers" placed more emphasis on being entertaining by doing things like singing, dancing, and role playing, along with interacting with the audience, including supporting the audience members emotionally. For these streamers, their presentation of self as a streamer seemed less tied to the game and their ability to play the game well. As such, they were more likely to engage in emotional labor and making the audience feel good and doing the emotion management to control the way the presented to the audience to be more positive. In this chapter, I discuss gender and race differences related to streamer emotion management and emotional labor.

Different streamers engaged in emotion management in varying ways, which correlated with where I located them on the Gamer-Entertainer continuum. In our interactions, we often express and suppress certain emotions and work to display emotions that are seen as appropriate for the situation at hand (Goffman 1967; Hochschild 1979). This emotion management was noted throughout my observations, with some streamers expressing a range of both positive (happiness, a sense of accomplishment, joy) and negative (anger, frustration, disappointment) emotions, while other streamers only expressed positive emotions and suppressed negative emotions. The ways in which streamers managed their emotions coincided with feeling rules, or social rules dictating how we should be feeling in varying scenarios (Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983). Feelings rules are not equal, and marginalized people, including BIPOC individuals and women, are often at less liberty to feel and express more aggressive emotions, such as anger, compared to white men, including in workplace scenarios (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016; Wingfield 2010). This coincided with the differences in emotion management that I observed with the streamers, with white men expressing intense anger far more than women and men of color.

There were also differences in emotional labor, or the emotion work that is done for others as part of a job (Hochschild 1983). For the streamers, especially the women, this included managing their own emotions in order to express concern and interact with the audience. This also fit with differences in identity stakes. Identity stakes are the rewards for being able to "convince an audience that we are who and what we claim to be" (Schwalbe 2005: 66). The identity stakes for the streamers differ based on things like

gender and are connected to emotion management, feelings rules, and emotional labor and what parts of these identities are emphasized. In the following, I will give an in-depth discussion on the ways in which streamers managed their emotions and engaged in emotional labor in connection to feelings rules, and the identity stakes involved with portraying these images.

GENDERED AND RACED EMOTIONAL DISPLAYS AND IDENTITY STAKES

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, where a streamer landed on the Gamer-Entertainer continuum was determined in part by the different emotional reactions to what was happening during their streams. Gamers often had their emotions closely connected to what was happening in the games, and this showed through the ways that different streamers presented their emotions. Women, who were far more likely to land on the "Entertainer" side of the continuum, were less likely to display anger, especially in a volatile way. Similarly, when men fell closer to the entertainer side of the continuum, they also did not react in the same ways as Gamer men. In addition to being gendered, the emotions and who was allowed to express what types of emotions were also connected to race, with men of color expressing anger less often than white men. In the following, I explore the emotional displays that were featured in streams and how they differed by gender and race. I also discuss how these emotions are connected to identity stakes, which relates back to this Gamer-Entertainer continuum.

Men, Misogyny, and Anger

As previously noted, men were more likely to place emphasis on the games they were playing and their gaming skills as opposed to their interactions with the audience. As such, most of the men I observed displayed some amount of aggression or anger

during the stream that was connected to what was going on in the game and how well they were doing. They yelled, swore, and got angry at the game, their opponents, as well as their audience members. This would show in their facial expressions, which included clenched jaws, scowls, and contracted eyebrows. It was also evident in their body movements, which included sudden, jerking movements such as throwing their arms in the air, or quickly and aggressively adjusting their position in their chair. When they expressed these things, I coded them as either "mild frustration" (expressing frustration through non-verbal expression for a moment) or "frustration" (expressing frustration through both non-verbal and verbal expressions that would last longer). Combined these codes appeared 135 (68 mild frustration, 67 frustration) times for men, compared to only 48 (34 mild frustration, 14 frustration) times for women. Men were also more likely to express more intense frustration while I only saw glimpses of women's frustration. In moments when men were frustrated, what they said, how they said it, along with their body language and movements all clearly conveyed their emotions. Yet, if these men were punished in any way for their emotional expressions, it appeared negligible considering they remain at the top of the Twitch ranks, and therefore are likely to be well compensated (many streamers make millions of dollars from ad revenue, sponsorships, subscriptions, and donations). As Boler noted (1999), the "rules of emotions" allow those with power, particularly white men, to express emotions, including anger. Most of the top, English-speaking, men on Twitch are white. Of the ten men in the sample, eight were white, one was Black, and one was Middle Eastern. Most of the white men, at some point in at least one of the videos observed, displayed intense anger or frustration. Men, both in gaming communities and in traditional workplaces, are at more liberty to express anger,

and in fact this anger often lends to their credibility in their positions (Mayock 2016; McKinnon-Crowley 2020). The anger I observed often stemmed from how well they were doing in the game, as well as how the audience was reacting to them. It appeared that being a gamer was an important aspect of their identity. Oftentimes, their anger and frustration manifested as screaming or, for lack of a better term, throwing a fit. This would happen when they went on extended rants about what was happening in the game, where they expressed anger through their verbal expressions (raised voices, swearing) and their nonverbal expressions (jerking arm movements, clenched teeth, scowls). In this way, they were able to be "angry white men" and this space allowed for that behavior and it many ways embraced it.

One notable example of this came from the streamer Ninja. Ninja is by far the most popular streamer on Twitch in terms of the number of followers he has. In many ways, Ninja at times embodies the "angry white man." His emotions and his emotional displays are highly tied to how well he is doing in the game. His identity and self-image that he has of himself appears to be someone who is good at the games he plays, and when this identity is disrupted, he can react in volatile ways. During a stream that took place on April 13th, 2021, Ninja was playing League of Legends with a team who he described as the "worse players ever." As they are playing, you can see Ninja becoming more agitated physically in his movements and his body language. For a little while, he is quiet but it is possible to see that he is angry. His nonverbal expressions during this time suggest frustration, including clenching his teeth, exhaling loudly, and occasionally shaking his head. When he typed during this time, it was very loud because he was forcefully pressing on the keys out of anger. Eventually, the anger moves beyond his

nonverbal expressions into his verbal expressions. At this point, he angrily says out loud the words that he is furiously typing to his teammates for the audience to hear:

> You are fucking horrible. [Player], fucking quit the game. You're trash. You're awful. You're so fucking stupid. I literally told you to stop. I said 'don't,' 'don't,' 'don't,' and you fucking try. You're so bad.

After this interaction, where he also called his teammates "dog shit," he then spent the next 12 minutes ranting to the audience about everything that his team had done wrong, including using the playback feature on the game to show the audience what happened. The entire time he does this, he moves between explaining what had happened in a level voice and yelling. His body language very clearly displays agitation and frustration. These feelings of agitation and frustration were visible through his clenched teeth between yelling and occasionally agitated body movements, such as throwing his arms in the air and moving around frequently in his chair. Towards the end of this rant, Ninja says, "Why the fuck do I play this game? I don't want to play anymore," before getting up and walking away for a moment. He then comes back and continues this rant until the start of his next game. He is still noticeably agitated after this happened, including silently shaking his head.

Figure 3-1: Ninja Yelling at Team (April 13th 2021)

This example is interesting because it shows how white men in this space are allowed to be angry, and they are allowed to be angry for an extended period of time. He was able to berate his teammates, who may have also been his fans, without remorse or noticeable consequence. Ninja also does not hesitate to yell at and speak condescendingly to his own audience and the people in chat, especially when they question his gaming skills. In this way, Ninja's negative emotions were connected to his identity as a gamer, and when people in the audience or his fellow team members question or threaten that identity, he responds in volatile ways. Despite these negative emotional displays, Ninja does not seem to get labeled as someone who is difficult or toxic, and during his rant, several people subscribed or resubscribed to his channel. This gave the impression that he was being celebrated for his anger and the way he displayed it.

Much of the men's anger also involved the use of misogynistic insults, primarily calling teammates, opponents, and occasionally audience members "bitches" or "pussies." Towards the end of the rant described above, Ninja says "[player] you're such

a bitch and you sound like one too." This also occurred when players were jokingly "angry." One instance of this occurred on March 31st, 2021, when Shroud was playing Valorant. While Shroud typically did not display any sort of serious anger during my observations, he would occasionally express anger in a playful or mocking way. In this instance, Shroud was killed by a member of the opposing team and immediately yelled, "You whore!" in reference to the other player. While this exclamation initially came off as angry, he quickly laughed and said "sorry," indicating that he was not actually upset. It is interesting that even when he was not genuinely upset, the way he mockingly presented as angry at the situation still involved misogynistic language. Even jokingly, angry expressions in gaming, especially when coming from men, use misogynistic language.

There were also times when men used misogynistic language in defense of their own masculinity. While not related to the game that he was playing at the time, NickMercs was chatting with the audience on April 11th, 2021, and was specifically talking about his height. This seemed to be a sensitive topic for him, and he got frustrated with people claiming that he is shorter than he says he is. At one point, he pulled up a picture of himself next to Kyler Murray, a quarterback for the Arizona Cardinals. He argued that he was about two inches taller than Murray, who is 5'10", to prove that he is 6 feet tall. This was a point of frustration for him, as several people had claimed that he was lying about his height. This appeared to threaten his masculinity, which he was not happy with. Research has shown the men who embody traditional masculine characteristics are more likely to exaggerate their height and place emphasis on their height as an indicator of masculinity (Bogaert and McCreary 2011). This fits with NickMercs, who expresses himself in very masculine ways through his emphasis on his

muscular physique. In multiple streams, NickMercs also mentions that he has what he refers to as an "uncomfortably large" penis. This again shows the focus on his masculinity, especially the physical aspects of his masculinity, which is reflected in his reaction to those challenging his height. He responded to this challenge by getting angry and raising his voice before showing the picture as proof. After showing the picture, he finished his argument by saying "so go fuck yourself, bitch." In this way, misogynistic language was connected to the ways that men presented their anger, including in defense of their masculinity. This works to uphold hegemonic masculinity, as NickMercs and others who use misogynistic rhetoric perpetuate gendered inequalities in their attempts to establish their own dominant forms of masculinity (Connell 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

While many men displayed anger and hegemonic masculinity, there were a few men who did not typically display volatile anger and frustration. Of the men who did not, two of them were white. One was Shroud, who, as previously discussed is very quiet for the most part and does not display much emotion in his streams. All of Shroud's energy seems to be focused on the game and being good at it, and he often does well. Even when there are times he does not, he does not get explosively angry. He occasionally expresses mild frustration through disappointed facial expressions or sighs, or will express anger in a joking manner as discussed previously, but I never witnessed him yelling or getting noticeably angry in the videos I observed. That being said, it is possible that this lack of anger was not due to the fact that he never gets angry during streams, but that during my observations he was doing incredibly well in the game. Because he was performing the way that he wanted to, he may have felt calmer. Again, Shroud represents the Gamer end

of the continuum, and as such, his emotions and identity as a streamer are often tied to the game. A Google search reveals that there are compilation videos of Shroud "raging" when he gets angry at a game. These videos include clips from several of his streams spliced together to form a single video. This shows that, while for the most part he is calm, he does get angry when things don't go his way. That being said, the fact that this is not a constant feature in all his streams suggests that he does more work to control his anger, or that it is not a central part of his streams, compared to some of the other men.

The other white man who did not display intense anger during my observations was Dakotaz, who again falls more on the Entertainer side of the continuum, especially compared to the rest of the men observed. A key aspect of Dakotaz's streams and personality is that he is a very positive person and just wants to spread as he says, "positive vibes." One of the ways that Dakotaz works to spread "positive vibes" is through a hand gesture he makes to the audience where he makes a heart with his fingers (Figure 3-2). This gesture is characteristic of Dakotaz's positive attitude and how he displays positive emotions to his audience. As such, Dakotaz also never displayed intense anger, and very little frustration. Dakotaz was different in his presentation compared to Shroud. While Shroud never really interacted with the audience and the focus was entirely on the game, Dakotaz focused more on the audience and making them feel good. He would do this by actively engaging with the audience in positive ways. This included wishing people happy birthday when they said it was their birthday and enthusiastically reading their username and thanking them when they subscribed to his channel. Both Shroud and Dakotaz displayed masculinities that did not fit with white hegemonic masculine ideals (Connell 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Shroud demonstrated

how one could have their identity tied to the game, yet his emotions usually were not, and Dakotaz put in more of the work to be emotionally available to his audience, which was a characteristic that was seen far more in women streamers compared to men.

Figure 3-2: Dakotaz Making Heart Gesture with Hands (April 21st, 2021)

Along with Shroud and Dakotaz, both Myth and SypherPK also appeared to control their emotions more than the other men. Myth is a Black Muslim man and SypherPK is a Middle Eastern Muslim man. One noticeable difference, other than race/religion, between Shroud/Dakotaz and Myth/SypherPK is that it was fairly clear that Myth and SypherPK did in fact get angry or frustrated, but they controlled it more often and usually did not express it in the same way that the other men did. This was visible through their nonverbal expressions, which would occasionally include clenched jaws and tightening their lips. They would also occasionally exhale loudly through their nose, which gave the impression of anger and frustration. Despite these smaller expressions of anger, they would usually resist yelling or raising their voices and these expressions went

away fairly quickly. This suggests that, while Shroud and Dakotaz rarely got angry, Myth and SypherPK had to do the work of controlling their anger when it did appear. It is likely that both men felt it necessary to control their anger because their anger is not celebrated and privileged like that of white men's (Boler 1999; Wingfield 2007; Wingfield 2010). Between the two, SypherPK tended to express his anger more often than Myth. This specifically happened more when he was playing with a group of white men, including NickMercs and TimTheTatMan, who frequently express anger and do so using misogynistic language and insults.

Men's Identity Stakes

Many of the men I observed seem to have their identities closely tied to gaming and being great gamers. In terms of success in the streaming world, the men have a lot riding on these identities (Schwalbe 2005). Sponsors often look for not only the most popular people, but also the most talented. While streamers get revenue from the streams themselves, through advertisements, subscriptions, and donations, they get even more money from sponsorships, including energy drinks, tech companies, and even gaming chair manufacturers. Ninja is reported to make over $500,000 a month on Twitch through subscriptions, donations, and ad revenue, in addition to revenue made though his YouTube channel, sponsorships, and merchandise sales. It is estimated that he had a net worth of $25 million in 2021 (Fitch 2021). One of the things that draws people to Ninja is his skills in the game. In fact, when asked by an audience member on April 20th, 2021, Ninja expressed his belief that for someone to be successful in streaming they have to be good at playing the games. From this lens, Ninja's outburst and behavior in reaction to his performance team letting him down and ruining his presentation of self can be seen as

a defense against identity loss. While, from an outsider's perspective it may appear strange that Ninja would get so worked up over a low-stakes game, we can also consider the fact that Ninja's brand and reputation rely on him being a good player.

That being said, Ninja's race provides advantage in minimizing consequences to his display of negative emotions. The negative emotions, in the form of anger and hostility, of white men are tolerated and even celebrated, which is often not the case for streamers of color (Boler 1999; Collins 2004: Wingfield 2007; Wingfield 2010). In this way, his negative emotions do not diminish his reputation with his fans or sponsors, because his negative emotions are less likely to be seen as controversial or wrong. Instead, he is mainly held accountable to the performance expectation that he plays consistently well. Arguably, the 12-minute-long rant where he told the audience exactly what his team members did wrong and what he did right was an attempt to provide cover for himself and convince the audience of his identity as a good gamer. By shifting the blame, he conveyed to the audience that his identity was not disrupted because his skills did not match his identity, rather his identity was disrupted by the failure of his performance teammates, who likely did not have identity stakes in this game. This rant and the arguments he made served as an aligning action, specifically an account that showed the audience why his identity as a gamer was disrupted and placed the blame on others to avoid embarrassment (Goffman 1959).

WOMEN IN A MAN'S STREAMING WORLD: GENDER/RACE PERFORMANCE

Compared to the white men I observed, women did not display anger as often or in the same way. In terms of race and ethnicity, four of the women were white, two were Latinx, one was Asian, and one was of Northern African/Middle Eastern descent. When

women showed emotions that were not positive and upbeat, their affect could best be described as cantankerous. This was more apparent for white women, particularly Demisux and JustaMinx. In this way, it feels like white women may be able to show negative emotional displays more than women of color while still being seen as legitimate and appealing. The women of color were often far bubblier and more positive, which they likely needed to be to find success in this context. There were certainly times when women were noticeably angry or upset, though this was not always connected to the game that they were playing. For instance, the women often faced sexual harassment from the audience members. This reflects larger trends that are seen in gaming, where women in online gaming spaces face sexual harassment regularly (McLean and Griffiths 2019). When this would happen, the women would express disgust and anger through wrinkled noses, bringing their eyebrows together, and narrowing their eyes. However, even when they did appear angry, their tone and some nonverbal expressions, such as their smile, were often controlled to still come across as pleasant.

One example of this occurred during a stream by Pokimane that took place on May 3rd, 2021. As previously noted, Pokimane is originally from Morocco and is primarily of Northern African and Middle Eastern descent. Multiple times throughout this stream, Pokimane received inappropriate and sexually harassing comments from the audience. They were able to have their comments read out loud by a computer voice by leaving the comments with a small donation to the stream. Initially, Pokimane did not say anything about these comments, but used her nonverbal facial expressions to show disgust at these comments. When the comments came through, she would wrinkle her nose, narrow her eyes, and contract brows together. She eventually did say something,

when someone in the chat said "Hey, Poki can you take your shirt off?" She replied by calmly saying "Yep, just like every other human on Earth, I surely can take off my shirt. But will I? Fuck no." Despite her words conveying anger and annoyance at the comments, she still presented them in a tone that was calm and pleasant, with a touch of sarcasm. She also said this with somewhat of a smile while looking into the camera to address the commenter, as can be seen in Figure 3-3. Unlike men who are faced with comments they do not like from the audience, Pokimane did not yell or swear directly at the person, rather she handled it with humor and sarcasm. Unlike the white men I observed, Pokimane does not express her anger directly. Her status as a woman in this context does not afford her the same emotional privileges to express anger and frustration in the face of actual harassment like white men when their gamer identities are disrupted.

Figure 3-3: Pokimane Responding to Harassment (May 3rd, 2021)

The main exception to this rule is Chica. Chica is a Latinx woman from Puerto

Rico, who is particularly well known for "raging." In her rages, Chica yells and goes on

long rants, usually in Spanish. Oftentimes, when she goes into these "rages," they are not

directed at any particular person or opponent, they are often more aimed at her own

performance. This is especially true when she dies due to fall damage (falling from high

structures rather than being killed by an enemy), which she is also well known for. In this

way, her emotions are a bit more tied to the game compared to a lot of the other women.

That being said, her anger often seems more performative than genuine. While her tone

and verbal expressions give off the impression of anger, her nonverbal expressions often

show more amusement, with her trying not to laugh or smile. This suggests that she is

engaging in "surface acting" rather than "deep acting" (Hochschild 1979) and that her

outward emotional displays are not a direct representation of her emotional/mental states.

After she is finished "raging," she quickly goes back to being upbeat and happy.

This is significantly different than a lot of the men who yell and rant, because they tend to

remain in a bad mood after doing so. While her anger may not be as celebrated as that of

white men, it is very possible that Chica is also playing into raced and gendered

emotional displays. Often in media, Latinx women are depicted and stereotyped as

"fiery" and "passionate" in their emotional displays (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 2005;

McLaughlin et al. 2018; Rivadeneyra, Ward, and Gordon 2007). These portrayals of

irrationality and emotion are often viewed as comical and entertaining (McLaughlin et al.

2018; Ramirez Berg 2002). Chica may be playing into this stereotype, which she is often

rewarded for. For instance, she often receives positive feedback from her audience when

she goes into her rages, such as people directly telling her that they love it. This translates

to the number of followers she has, which at the time this data was collected was around 1,870,000. Her audience often reacts positively to her "rages" and jokes along with her when this occurs. These reactions were visible in her chat, which she had displayed on screen throughout the duration of her streams.

Figure 3-4: Chica "Raging" During Stream (April 20th, 2021)

Women's Identity Stakes

For most of the women, their identities seemed far more tied to being entertainers rather than just being gamers. The most popular of the women streamers I observed (Pokimane) was consistently performing. This included not only playing the game, but also engaging with the audience through the comment section, singing, dancing, and role playing along with the game that she was playing. For instance, when she was playing the

game Minecraft on April 12th, 2021, every time her character went under water she would also dramatically inhale before hitting the water and hold her breath for the duration of the time her character was underwater. When the character resurfaced, she gave small coughs like someone who had nearly drowned. This added to the engagement she had with the game and the entertaining aspects of her streams. In this way, Pokimane's identity stakes were more tied to the emotional labor, friendliness, and entertainment she portrayed and provided than it was to how well she was doing in the game. In this way, it makes sense that she did not get explosively angry when she lost a game, because for her the identity stakes did not hinge entirely on being a good player.

Interestingly, it appears that Pokimane is much more accountable to her sponsors than she is to her audience in terms of finances. In a recent Twitch leak, it was revealed that Pokimane makes $1.5 million from streaming, which would include ad revenue and donations. This is considerably lower than someone like Ninja. Part of the reason she makes less from the streams is that she implemented a cap on how much audience members can donate, with a cap at $5 per donation. Despite this, she still works to make her audience feel good, even without the additional compensation through large donations. She does this by engaging with them, supporting them emotionally, and even wishing them happy birthday when they mention it in the chat. Capping donations or actively discouraging them was not something that was unique to Pokimane. Hafu also tried to dissuade people from donating to her channel, telling them that she gets enough money from sponsorships and advertisements, and she wants her audience to spend their money on them. While in some ways Hafu was slightly more on the Gamer side of the continuum in the ways (or lack thereof) that she interacted with the audience, she also

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placed less emphasis on getting paid by the audience directly for her work. This is interesting compared to some of the men who turned large donations into a way to get attention from the streamer.

FEELING RULES: GENDERED AND RACED EMOTION MANAGEMENT

The types and amount of emotion management that streamers engage in differ based on social location, including gender, race, and ethnicity. This makes sense when we look at the differences in feeling rules in society. Oftentimes, men are seen at more liberty to be angry and express anger as an extension of masculinity (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1983). Due to differences in feeling rules and the sanctions associated with them, men do not feel the same obligation to control anger compared to women. Therefore, when they feel anger, they are less likely to feel societal pressure to use suppressive emotion management to avoid outwardly displaying these emotions. Feelings rules change for women and Black, Indigenous, and other people of color who do not have the same privileges when it comes to feeling rules (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016; Wingfield 2010).

We particularly see these inequalities related to feeling rules in digital spaces, which are often seen as an escape for cishet white men from politically correct culture in places like 4Chan (Sparby 2017). While some online spaces, such as Tumblr, have tried to maintain political correctness, including being inclusive of marginalized people and sensitive towards those experiencing trauma, places like 4Chan, which are popular among cishet white men, take an active stance against political correctness. Those in these spaces often view those dealing with trauma as weak and actively engage in misogynistic, homophobic, and racist rhetoric (Sparby 2017). This is similar to online

gaming sites where, by being angry and expressing it freely, the men streamers recreate spaces where (white) men can be men, without fear of being "emasculated" by expectations of political correctness.

White masculine anger can also be considered a commodity, as these streamers may get more positive attention for their explosive emotional displays. For instance, there are many compilation videos that splice together many moments of white men streamers being angry and lashing out at others during their streams. These videos are found on sites like YouTube, and can further benefit the streamers by getting them more views on other platforms and by introducing these streamers to new viewers. Positive attention and views in the streaming world translate to income, including through ad revenue, audience donations and subscriptions, and sponsorship deals. The same can likely not be said for men of color, as their anger is not as valued in society as those of white men and is in fact often seen as a threat (Collins 2004: Wingfield 2007; Wingfield 2010). Myth and SypherPK then had to play by different rules in terms of emotions and the emotion management that they did, including suppressing anger, at the very least in terms of surface acting.

Women in this space also had to play by a different set of feelings rules compared to white men. Other than Chica, none of the women really expressed anger, at least not in the same ways as men. This is likely because doing so would be seen as unappealing to their audience and they could get fewer positive responses to these emotional displays than white men would. Women arguably have more at stake in being appealing to their audience considering they often have significantly fewer audience members and followers. This puts added pressure on women to come across as happy in these

situations. Women may also be more likely to receive "rule reminders," which tell them how they "should" be feeling during their performances (Hochschild 1983). To a certain extent this was true for Chica, who would get commenters saying things like "Language!" or "This is supposed to be family friendly," whenever she would go into one of her "rages." While this seemed to be part of the joke and fun of her emotional performance, these comments also served as reminders that she was supposed to be "family friendly" which includes the ways in which she feels and expresses emotions. There may also be more pressure on her as a woman to fit in with that "family friendly" role compared to men.

Women were also far more likely to control any negative emotions they may have had to be supportive and attend to the emotions of their teammates, rather than berating them for mistakes. As noted in the case with Ninja, teammates were occasionally used as scapegoats when the game was not going as planned. Blaming the teammates allowed them to retain their identity as gamers, even when they lost. Those who focused more on the entertainment aspect of the stream (overwhelming women) did not have the same reactions to their teammates not performing to the same standards as them. Women and Entertainers were more likely to say things like "good job" or "nice try," when their teammates lost. An interesting example of this was while Hafu was playing the game Valorant on April 22nd, 2021. In this game, one team attempts to plant and detonate a bomb, while the opposing team tries to eliminate the other players before the bomb can be planted or defuse the bomb before it goes off. In this particular round, Hafu's team was playing the role of the defenders, whose goal was to defuse the bomb. After intense fighting, the only player remaining was on Hafu's team, meaning the only thing they

needed to do to win the match was defuse the bomb. Prior to dying, a member of the opposing team placed acid near the bomb. Hafu's teammate did not wait for the acid to dissipate and was subsequently killed by the acid, giving the other team the win for the round. It was fairly clear from her facial expressions that she was disappointed with this outcome, as her mouth was downturned, and her eyebrows were furrowed. The tone of her voice also conveyed slight disappointment. Despite her disappointment with her teammate's mistake, Hafu stepped in to make the other player feel better, thus putting the teammate's emotions above her own. She said "good try" to her teammate and moved on. Not only did this serve to make the teammate feel better about their mistake (which they were already beating themself up about by apologizing profusely and claiming that it was a stupid mistake and using a tone that conveyed shame and embarrassment), but it also served to preserve her image for the audience.

It can be argued that the types of emotion management that the streamers engage in can contribute to and possibly fight against inequalities that exist in these spaces. Schwalbe et al. (2000) discussed the ways in which the emotional regulation that is taught to and expected of service industry workers can contribute to the perpetuation of social inequalities. This includes when women in the service industry are required to ignore or at the very least not get angry when faced with sexual harassment while working. Arguably, the same could be said for women in streaming and the ways that they express their emotions. Even when faced with sexual harassment from the audience, they usually remain calm and do not express anger. This makes sense as they are following feeling rules that women should be calm and pleasant, even in the face of harassment (Boler 1999; Good and Cooper 2016). At the same time, the lack of

consequences that the harassers (who are likely men) face in these spaces and the lack of outrage on the part of the women works to recreate the notion that such behavior, if not acceptable, is at least tolerated in these spaces. While on an individual level the ways that women manage their emotions can be a form of self-preservation and a way to receive benefits. The expectations that they should behave in such a way speaks to larger systemic issues of misogyny and inequality.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: EMOTIONS AND THE GAMER-ENTERTAINER CONTINUUM

The different identities that the streamers presented and what aspects of the stream were emphasized were connected to the types and amounts of emotional labor that was performed during these streams. In similar ways to the service industry (Hochschild 1983; Schwalbe et al. 2000), the emotions of the streamers are also commodified, as they feed into the performances that they are selling. Not only are streamers expected by sponsors to display certain emotions, but the streamers are also directly accountable to the audience who pay them by way of subscriptions and channel donations. Like customers, the audience members often expect to be treated well by the streamers, and occasionally get upset if they are being ignored. It is expected that the streamers will both control their own emotions (to varying degrees depending on status characteristics such as gender and race), but also attend to the emotions of the audience and occasionally other players. This expectation is even stronger for women, who are often tasked with providing more emotional labor in their occupations (Hochschild 1983). This was evident in the interactions that fans had with women streamers.

Women were far more likely to take time either before or after their streams for "catching up" time. This could last anywhere between 20 minutes to multiple hours where they just sat and talked to the people in chat. Some men did this as well, but it was often far more the exception than the rule, whereas most of the women took the time to do this at some point. This emotional labor was a common feature for women, and again seemed to be expected of them. Comparatively, Ninja had monthly "Inside Ninja's Head" streams, which featured him talking to the audience and doing a question-and-answer session prior to starting the game. This was part of his rebranding when he came back to Twitch after previously switching to a different streaming platform. In this way, Ninja was able to market and possibly profit from occasional emotional labor, whereas women performed it consistently without additional compensation or marketing appeal.

In many instances, audience members for women streamers would share their experiences with the chat in order to gain sympathy from others, especially the streamers themselves. For instance, people would share that they had been crying or that they were having a bad day. More often than not, when women streamers saw these comments they would respond. In these responses, the emotional displays of the women would shift to express concern, often with furrowed brows and lowering their voice. While this would not last for very long, they would say things like "I'm sorry to hear that." Occasionally, they would ask for more detail, such as, "Oh, why were you crying?" These instances were common among many of the women, especially Pokimane and Chica. However, they were far less common among the men. If people in chat behaved the same way by sharing their difficulties, the men were not nearly as responsive to these types of comments. While it is difficult to know for sure since only one streamer (Chica) had the

chat visible for the entirety of her streams, it is possible that men did not receive the same types of comments as often. The expectation seemed to be that the women streamers would provide this type of emotional labor in consoling their audience members. This also seemed to be a way to ensure that women streamers would interact with a comment, as they typically did not let these comments go by without addressing them if they saw them. Again, this reflects the expectations that are placed on women in these scenarios, and they may feel they cannot ignore these comments because of the commodification of their emotional labor.

The women also frequently gave advice or words of affirmation to the audience and people in the chat while they were interacting with the audience. One example of this from the streamer Alinity took place on April 11th, 2021. During the time period where she was just chatting with the audience rather than playing games, she discussed the issue of someone not liking things, such as media, that are widely celebrated. She discussed her own distaste for the Star Wars franchise and then went on to say:

> You are allowed to be different. You are allowed to like different things than other people. That doesn't mean that there is something wrong with you. Okay? That just means that you have different taste and that is awesome.

In this moment, she is conveying positivity and addressing concerns that her audience has in a way that is affirming. This is something that many people in these streams seem to appreciate and expect from the streamers, particularly when they are women.

Another noticeable difference in the ways that streamers interacted with the audience was when and how they thanked the audience for subscribing, resubscribing, and donating to their channels. Throughout the streams, small on-screen notifications, as

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seen in Figure 3-5, would pop up letting the audience and streamer know that someone had subscribed, resubscribed, or donated to the channel. For the women and those who fell on the Entertainer end of the spectrum, they interacted with these notifications often and with enthusiasm, even while they were actively playing the game. On the Gamer end, Shroud would completely ignore these notifications, as his focus was always aimed towards the game that he was playing. Other men would acknowledge these notifications and thank the subscribers and donors more when they were not actively playing the game. However, when they did this their tone would be different compared to women or men like Dakotaz who was more of an Entertainer. They would often read through the notifications in a flat voice. Some of the men would also just read the names of people who had subscribed or donated rather than saying "thank you," to each one. Some men, including Ninja, would be more likely to acknowledge and enthusiastically thank people when they donated large amounts or gifted many subscriptions (buying subscriptions that would go to other people in the stream at random). In this way, many of the men were more likely to engage with subscribers and donors when they received more money for it. Most of the women, on the other hand, frequently engaged with these notifications and did so loudly and with excitement, both while they were talking to the audience at the beginning of the stream and during breaks, and while they actively played the game. They would convey genuine gratefulness for the subscription or donation through their verbal expressions, such as raising their voice and using exited tones, and their nonverbal expressions by smiling. The gender exceptions to this were Dakotaz and Hafu. Again, Dakotaz is more on the Entertainer side of the continuum and when he thanked people for subscribing and donating he would do so with enthusiasm and excitement and said the

words "thank you" to each person he mentioned. However, like the other men, he typically would not do this while he was playing the game, rather he would do this when there were breaks between rounds. Hafu, who falls more on the Gamer end of the continuum compared to the rest of the women would also engage with these notifications less often than most of the other women and mainly did so during breaks.

Figure 3-5: Resubscription Notification in NickMercs' Stream (April 15th, 2021)

In some instances, women also had to engage in emotional labor with the people they played with. This was less noticeable when playing with friends, however when women played with random players they often engaged in emotional labor as well. While the people they were playing with may not have been their "customers" in these moments, the expectation was still that this type of labor would occur. This was especially true for Chica, who often ended up playing with kids. The kids would often tell her about things they were going through, such as bullying, and she would talk to them

about it and try to offer comfort or advise. With Chica, her teammates were also often her fans, so it is possible that they specifically expected this type of emotional labor from her and felt more comfortable seeking it out.

In the service industry, it often happens that workers will have to engage in emotional labor, even in the face of harassment and mistreatment (Hochschild 1983; Lively 2008; Miller and Lewis 2020; Kundro et al. 2021). This was something that carried over to the emotional labor engaged in by women, such as when they were sexually harassed. Another instance of this happening was when Chica encountered a child who had used a racial slur in her chat. While she was streaming, a user was ejected from the chat for the use of the n-word. Shortly after this, she encountered the same user in the game of Fortnite she was playing. She confronted him about it, but still did so in a way that was not angry. In many ways it seemed more like a parent asking a child about a misbehavior than someone confronting racism. The kid initially denied that he had done so, and when the moderators confirmed that it was in fact his account, he changed his story and said that it had been a friend using his account rather than him. Instead of getting angry and yelling at him for his racist behavior, Chica calmly said "That's a bad friend." Managing her emotions was important in this moment, partially because she was giving a performance to the audience in general, but also because she was talking to a kid.

As noted, the different expectations on emotion management and emotional labor were connected to the Gamer-Entertainer continuum, as well as race and gender. Those who were not white men had to engage in different forms of emotion management and emotional labor. Women and men of color needed to manage their emotions far more

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than white men did. Similarly, women were expected and did engage in more emotional

labor with their audience, while men were more able to ignore this aspect of streaming if

they chose to do so. These differences in emotion management and emotional labor are

reflections of larger inequalities connected to emotions that we see in society, such as

men being at more liberty to express anger and be seen as legitimate and women being

more expected to engage in emotional labor in the workplace (Boler 1999; Hochschild

1975; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016; Wingfield 2010). They also

show inequalities that occur in the gaming world. In all aspects of gaming, from game

development to journalism to streaming, inequalities exist that benefit white, straight men

(Chess and Shaw 2015; Gray 2012; Gray 2017). The differences in what streamers who

are not white men have to do in terms of their emotions are just one way that we see

inequalities within streaming. In the following chapter, I will discuss ways in which

streamers perpetuated or fought against inequalities in their streams.

CHAPTER IV

BEYOND #GAMERGATE-KEEPING: STREAMERS' ROLES IN REPRODUCING

AND FIGHTING INEQUALITIES IN GAMING

In August of 2014, a movement within the online gaming world known as

#GamerGate began. It started when a gaming programmer, Eron Gjoni, released what

was known as the "Zoe Post," a series of blog posts detailing highly personal information

about his ex-girlfriend and game developer Zoe Quinn. Gjoni posted Quinn's information

as an act of revenge after he claimed she cheated on him with gaming journalist Nathan

Grayson in order to get positive reviews for her game Depression Quest. This led to

multiple attacks on Quinn by those in the gaming community on websites such as 4Chan,

including death, rape, and stalking threats issued against her. While Grayson did not even

review Quinn's game, and only mentioned it once in a publication prior to the beginning

of their relationship, that did not stop conversations occurring in the gaming world

claiming that women in the industry would use their sexuality to unfairly get ahead of

men (Chess and Shaw 2015; Dockterman 2014). Many who engaged in #GamerGate and

supported the actions of those involved claimed that the movement was about the ethics

and integrity of gaming journalism rather than about misogyny or trying to remove

women from gaming.

Around the same time as the attacks against Quinn, gamers were also attacking

gaming critic Anita Sarkeesian. Sarkeesian hosted a YouTube show titled "Feminist

Frequency" which featured videos focusing on the ways in which women are portrayed in video games and how these portrayals reinforce gender inequalities and stereotypes. The attacks against Sarkeesian and her work resulted in death threats to the point where she had to cancel speaking engagements. Anyone, especially women, who spoke out against the attacks on Quinn and Sarkeesian found themselves on the receiving end of attacks themselves, including game developer Brianna Wu, who ended up having to leave her home and go into hiding as a result of the attacks against her. There was a general fear amongst some white men gamers that women in the industry and feminist critiques of games would be the death of "the gamer" (Dockterman 2014). In the eyes of many, the "gamer" was characterized by being a young, white, presumably straight man. This fear that these men were having their space invaded even led to a conspiracy theory that feminist academics were attempting to infiltrate gaming and push a feminist agenda within these spaces. This led to attacks not only on women within the gaming industry, but women who study video games in academia as well (Chess and Shaw 2015).

The story of #GamerGate and the attacks that occurred against women and those who spoke out in support of them highlights the inequalities, including misogyny and racism, that are prevalent within gaming (Chess and Shaw 2015; Gray 2012; Gray 2017). Many feared the death of "the gamer," and those who do not fit into this image of what a gamer "should" be, and who critique gaming or ask for more representation within the industry have been met with attempts to push them out of the industry, including by violent means (Dockterman 2014). #GamerGate is a clear example of how gender inequalities are reproduced through this boundary maintenance (Schwalbe et al. 2000) which is carried out through the use of violence and threats. The effects of #GamerGate

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were felt beyond the gaming industry and impacted women who occupied any space within the gaming world, with more women facing increased harassment when they entered online gaming spaces in the aftermath of #GamerGate (Neiborg and Foxman 2018).

These inequalities that benefit white men in these spaces also impacted the streamers that I observed. As discussed in the previous chapters, there are gender and race inequalities that impact streamers' presentations of self and their ability to express emotions and the amount of emotion management and emotional labor they engage in. Those who are not cisgender white men tend to be less successful in this medium. Table 5-1 (same as Table 1-1), shows that the top three streamers on Twitch when these data were collected (Ninja, Tfue, and Shroud) were all white men, and Pokimane was the only one woman in the top 10, ranking at number 6 overall at the time these data were collected. Next to Pokimane, the woman with the next highest follower count at the time this data was collected, Loserfruit, was ranked number 62 overall (TwitchMetrics 2021). This suggests that women struggle far more than men in terms of success on this platform.

Table 5-1: Streamer Demographics and Followers (Source: TwitchMetrics; TwitchTracker)

Streamer Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Twitch Followers and Ranking (April 20th, 2021)	Approximate Monthly Income from Subscriptions *(April 2021)
Ninja	Man	White	16,733,782 (1)	$17,950-$35,899
Tfue	Man	White	10,209,349 (2)	$43,317-$86,634
Shroud	Man	White	9,182,290 (3)	$23,653-$47,307
Pokimane	Woman	North African/Middle Eastern	7,632,546 (6)	$28,735-$57,470
Myth	Man	Black	7,225,372 (7)	$2,153-$4,306**
TimTheTatMan	Man	White	6,436,133 (9)	$105,227-$210,453
Summit1G	Man	White	5,884,675 (10)	$113,209-$226,418
xQc	Man	White	5,501,536 (12)	$183,039-$366,078
NickMercs	Man	White	5,488,792 (13)	$185,047-$370,094
Dakotaz	Man	White	4,718,742 (16)	$13,660-$27,321
SypherPK	Man	Middle Eastern	4,643,310 (19)	$15,143-$30,286
LoserFruit	Woman	White	2,538,026 (62)	$2,677-$5,355**
Chica	Woman	Latina	1,869,794 (94)	$11,712-$23,424
Demisux	Woman	White	1,427,267 (118)	Unknown
Loeya	Woman	White	1,417,148 (158)	$10,135-$20,271
Alinity	Woman	Latina	1,300,458 (182)	Unknown
Justaminx	Woman	White	1,299,943 (183)	$5,222-$10,444**
Hafu	Woman	Asian	1,294,759 (184)	$17,667-$35,335

*Does not include income from sponsors, ads, donors, or other revenue sources
**No information for April 2021, taken from November 2021

Along with game developers and critics, women streamers have also faced inequality and harassment (Cook 2021). During my observations, I witnessed women streamers being harassed or sexualized by their audience members multiple times. This would often come in the form of comments in the chat. For example, on April 16th, 2021, Demisux took a break from playing a game to order food and was discussing what she was going to get with the audience. At one point she said she might get Subway

delivered, to which a commenter replied, "Can I bring you a footlong?" For some of the streamers, when audience members donate to the channel they can have a computerized voice read their comment out loud for the streamer and audience to hear, which also allowed audience members to make sexualized comments towards the women streamers. One instance of this happened on May 3rd, 2021, when someone donated to Pokimane's channel with a comment that read "Did you eat Lucky Charms this morning? Because you look magically delicious." Both of these examples show the ways in which women continue to be sexualized and harassed in gaming in the years following #GamerGate. The inequalities that were pervasive at this time continue to impact those within the gaming industry. That being said, streamers also have the ability to perpetuate or fight against inequalities in gaming using their positions. In this chapter, I will discuss how streamers contributed to or went against major inequalities that exist within gaming.

PERPETUATING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

An important aspect in understanding inequalities is looking at how they are produced and reproduced within society. Work by Schwalbe et al. (2000) examined the generic processes by which many inequalities are produced and reproduced within society. In my observations, I witnessed several examples of all four of these processes in action. One generic process that Schwalbe et al. describe and is evident in my data is emotional management. As discussed in the previous chapter, different streamers had different feelings rules based on their identities (Hochschild 1983). These feelings rules and the ways they are connected to inequalities in gaming reflect how streamers can express themselves while remaining popular. Men, like Ninja, are able to express anger in serious and volatile ways and potentially profit from it, while women who face

harassment are unable to respond to their harassers in the same ways. Women also frequently put the emotional needs of others above their own, including tolerating harassing behavior.

Beyond the inequalities in terms of emotional management and who was allowed to express emotions in certain ways, I also witnessed other forms of generic processes that can contribute to inequalities within gaming. One of these generic processes that Schwalbe et al. (2000) identified as key in the reproduction of inequalities is othering. Othering refers to the ways in which the dominant group separates themselves from others, thus creating an inferior group. Schwalbe et al. (2000) discussed multiple forms of othering, the main type that is evident in the current data is oppressive othering. Oppressive othering occurs when one group attempts to separate themselves from others, establishing themselves as superior in some way.

Another generic process that Schwalbe et al. (2000) discussed revolved around the actions of the oppressed groups and is called subordinate adaptation, or how those in subordinate groups adapt to their positions, which occurs in three forms: "trading power for patronage," "forming alternative subcultures," and "hustling or dropping out." When trading power for patronage, those of the subordinate groups may align themselves with the dominant group, even at the expense of the subordinate group as a whole. As will be discussed further, this is something that is seen when women engage in misogynistic rhetoric and align themselves more with masculinity. While not evident in my data, there has been evidence of people forming alternative subcultures as a form of subordinate adaptation in gaming. One example of this is when those who don't feel welcome in mainstream gaming, such as Black women (Gray 2012) will form subgroups away from

mainstream gaming, in some ways contributing to the lack of diversity in the mainstream gaming world. Husting or dropping refers to people finding alternative ways of making money that are illicit or illegal, or leaving all together, which I did not see as much in my data. Another generic process that Schwalbe et al. identify is boundary maintenance, which takes the form of transmitting cultural capital, controlling who has access to certain networks, and the use of violence or threats. A prime example of this in gaming is #GamerGate, where women were forced out of these spaces and the industry by the use of violent threats.

Streaming is a multi-billion-dollar industry that is only expected to grow in popularity in the coming years (Kelly 2019). As such, those who make it big in this industry have a significant influence over millions of followers. This suggests that streamers are in a prime position to perpetuate and recreate inequalities through generic processes and the rhetoric they use and attitudes they display due to the number of people that see them. Alternatively, they can potentially use their platform to fight against inequalities. While it may not always be conscious, as with other celebrities, what streamers say and do is often under a microscope. Research has shown that celebrities, their behaviors, and their beliefs that they show the world can have significant impacts on those who view them, especially kids. This can influence things from what people buy to the political beliefs and candidates the people support (Jackson 2008; Saraf 2013). It then stands to reason that streamers, who are watched by kids around the world, would also have a significant impact on socialization, including beliefs connected to inequalities. As noted, the aftermath of #GamerGate had far-reaching consequences and led to further inequalities in many aspects of gaming (Neiborg and Foxman 2018). As such, it is

important to understand the ways in which streamers may contribute to or fight against systems of inequalities that exist within gaming to better understand how these inequalities continue to be reproduced.

In my observations of streamers, many did or said things that could be considered problematic and, often in subtle and likely unintentional ways, may serve to perpetuate and recreate social inequalities. Research suggests that socioeconomic factors, including being in positions of power, contribute to how individuals present themselves, including by distancing themselves from others who may be viewed as "lesser" in order to preserve their own place within the hierarchy (Goffman 1959; Keane 2011; Schwalbe et al. 2000). This was seen among streamers who often said and did things that showed their privileged places in society and distanced themselves from others. As such, this was more often seen by white men, who stood the most to gain from distancing themselves from those with lower status in gaming. However, white men were not the only ones guilty of saying or doing things that were in line with social inequalities that we see within gaming. In some ways, women also distanced themselves from others, including other women through the rhetoric they used. In what follows, I discuss the ways in which streamers arguably perpetuate inequalities through their presentations of self and their behaviors during stream. This includes misogyny, emasculation, fatphobia, and racism. I then discuss the ways in which streamers used their platforms to fight against social inequalities.

Misogyny and Emasculation

Due to the fact that sexism is something that is frequently seen within gaming culture and the aftermath of #GamerGate (Gray 2012; Fox and Tang 2014; Neiborg and

Foxman 2018), it is not surprising that misogynistic language was a huge part of the streams. While analyzing the streams, I used the code "Misogynistic Language" to refer to instances where streamers used words and phrases that are rooted in misogyny, such as "bitch," "pussy," and "whore," and was one of the most common codes applied to the data, appearing 115 times within my observations. Oftentimes, this appears to just be the way that streamers and others in society speak, rather than overt misogyny. Most of the streamers won't openly say something misogynistic, such as claiming to hate women. However, many streamers did use these common misogynistic words and insults against others.

The use of misogynistic language was particularly common among the men streamers, who would use misogynistic insults, especially when they are expressing anger or have their identities as gamers challenged, as discussed in the previous chapter. For some men, misogynistic language was the norm. This was especially true for NickMercs, who used the word "bitch" frequently within his streams. This was done in reference to other players, the game, the audience, and sometimes not referencing anything at all. While this was not always directed at people, it can be argued that NickMercs' use of this misogynistic rhetoric serves to normalize it in these spaces. The word bitch has deeply misogynistic connotations yet is a very common insult both in and out of the gaming world. The word "bitch" is often used to target women in gaming spaces, which serves to push women out of those spaces (Sobieraj 2017). Arguably, when streamers repeat these words they allow for spaces where misogynistic rhetoric is seen as acceptable and normalized. This can further cause this rhetoric to be used against others, including

women. NickMercs has over 5 million followers, meaning that his content reaches a wide audience and can further contribute to the reproduction of inequalities seen in gaming.

NickMercs is also interesting in that he primarily plays the game Call of Duty: Warzone. As discussed in Chapter 2, Call of Duty games have been criticized for their use of violence, which reflects hegemonic masculinity that is promoted within gaming. Online communities surrounding this game series have notoriously been some of the most toxic for women and minorities (Gray 2012). Even within the game, preprogramed characters also use misogynistic language. The characters that the players can control include pre-recorded phrases and sayings that they use at various times throughout the game, including referring to opposing teams as "bitches." Arguably, the game that the streamers choose to play is important in their presentation of self, as it lets the audience know a lot about the streamers, including the types of communities, toxic or otherwise, that they may be a part of. Playing the game on stream and promoting it also sends the message that he condones the language within and community surrounding the game.

While this language was primarily used by men, it was also used by women. This is important because, in maybe unconscious or unintentional ways, the vocabulary that these streamers use reinforces gender inequalities that exist in game. One way that inequalities are recreated is through subordinate adaptation, in this case trading power for patronage (Schwalbe et al. 2000). It can be argued that women who engage in sexist and misogynistic behavior are trading power for patronage by accepting the lesser position of femininity within gaming and aligning themselves with men. By so doing, they are able to be seen as connected to the dominate group in gaming, while simultaneously hurting women as a whole in the gaming world by using misogynistic rhetoric to tear down

others. This is especially notable when most of the people who use these insults are trying to emasculate their opponents. The emasculation of their opponents also serves to separate themselves from other women and align themselves with masculinity.

One example of this came from Justaminx on April 16th, 2021. During this stream, she was playing a horror game called Escape the Ayuwoki. In this game, we see the character wake up in an unknown house, and the player must find their way through the house to escape. As they are doing so, they must avoid being killed by a monster that roams through the halls. The monster in this game appears to be a zombie-like version of Michael Jackson, which led to Justaminx referring to him as "Michael" while playing the game. This game is interesting in that it is voice activated, meaning that sounds made in real life have an impact on the game. Specifically, when the player makes noises in real life, it attracts the in-game monster. There were places in the game where the avatar could hide and be safe from the monster, even if the player made noise. When her character was in these safe spots, Justaminx would loudly taunt the monster, including using misogynistic language. In these instances, the monster would "hear" what she was saying and pace back and forth near the safe zone, but be powerless to do anything to harm the character. In one example of this, she is standing outside, but near a safe zone, listening for the monster to approach. As she's doing so, her character is holding a candle as a light source in front of them and looking back and forth, waiting for the monster to appear. She taunts the monster who is not visible or heard right away by saying the following:

Justaminx: You ain't do shit. You don't do shit, Michael.
Pause to listen for the monster
Justaminx: Fuck you, Michael. Come out and fight me like a man.
Sees monster approaching and runs to safe zone
Justaminx: Haha, pussy. Pussy boy. *Beckoning whistle* Here pussy boy.

Justaminx used misogynistic rhetoric to taunt a perceived male monster multiple times during the stream. In addition to referring to him as a "pussy" she also called him a "bitch." Similarly, she challenges the monster's masculinity by saying "come out and fight me like a man," in some ways portraying herself as more masculine than the monster. She also specifically does this when the monster is powerless to do anything to the character, which in subtle ways connects these insults to powerlessness. Again, this form of emasculation was a common way to taunt other players and characters. It seemed the most insulting way that streamers could think to put down others was to use misogynistic insults against them, perpetuating this idea that femininity, or anything related to femininity, is undesirable and worthy of mockery.

While most of the streamers who used misogynistic rhetoric and insults did so in a way that was aimed towards people of all genders, there was also one streamer who almost exclusively used these insults when aimed at characters who appeared to be women. While playing Grand Theft Auto Online, xQc would attempt to sell drugs to non-player characters (NPCs). These are characters that are preprogrammed parts of the game and not controlled by actual players. Oftentimes, the characters would refuse the purchase and keep driving. When the character appeared to be a man, xQc would insult them by calling them "cheap" or "bastards." While he got angry with these NPCs for not buying drugs from him, he did not express this anger in a way that was misogynistic in nature. However, exclusively when the characters appeared to be women, he would use the word

"bitch" to insult them. In this way, these misogynistic insults were directed specifically at women characters. This seemed far more directed and intentional compared to other streamers who used misogynistic insults towards other players and characters regardless of the person or character's perceived gender. In this way, these insults that tend to carry more weight than just being called "cheap," were aimed towards women and only women. xQc's behavior is thus a reflection of the sexism and misogyny that exists within gaming (Fox and Tang 2014; Fox and Tang 2017; Thomkins et al 2020). While in these scenarios he is not interacting with another person directly, it still in some ways works to "other" women. Women characters were treated differently and arguably more negatively, which serves to separate them from the dominant group (Schwalbe et al. 2000). This is something that is reflected in the real-life interactions that we see in the gaming industry, such as #GamerGate. This othering makes it so women are constantly perceived more negatively within the industry. Even though these insults weren't directed at actual players, these actions were done on a very popular platform, which serves to normalize and perpetuate these attitudes. This may in fact contribute to his popularity as a streamer, as many cisgender, heterosexual, white men turn to online spaces as a way to escape political correctness, as discussed in the previous chapter (Sparby 2017). xQc clearly does not censor himself in the name of political correctness, which may make him more appealing as a performer in this space.

In addition to his use of misogynistic language directed at women characters, xQc was also unique in that he took it a step further and actively sexually harassed another player during gameplay. On April 15th, 2021, xQc was playing Grand Theft Auto Online Role Play. In this particular version of the game, players get far more into playing certain

roles than they do in other versions. Some players in this version spend huge amounts of

time role playing as everyday characters which would normally be represented by NPCs.

For instance, actual players will spend time "working" in the virtual restaurants or will

become police officers, whereas in other versions of the game these roles are performed

by preprogrammed characters. In this particular scenario, xQc encountered a woman who

was role playing as a restaurant worker. During their interaction, he continuously asked

her about her boyfriend and argued that he would make a better partner. He accused her

boyfriend of being broke and buying her a cheap ring and saying if he were her boyfriend

he would buy her an emerald. At this point she responded by saying "He's not broke,

we're just both down bad." To which xQc replied "If you were on my train you wouldn't

be down so bad." While this comment is not overtly sexual, there is an implication of sex

based on the language that he used referencing a train.

At one point during this interaction, she asked him if he was hitting on her and he

initially said "no," then continued with the following:

> xQc: I'm just, you know…you know how when you go ice fishing? Sometimes you
> don't know if the ice is thin…
> Role Player (RP): A hole!? Is that all I am to you!?
> xQc: Well, the hole is the prize, I got to test the waters first.
> RP: …Well…my hole is closed.
> xQc: Right. Damn then-then he [RP's boyfriend] really is down bad, holy shit. He
> must not be getting some.
> RP: *In a tone that conveyed panic or embarrassment* "No, it's not like that! It's
> just closed for you.
> xQc: Yeah, right.
> …
> xQc: I feel bad now, poor guy. He bought you a whole gem and the doors are
> closed?
> RP: The doors are open for him. He opens the doors five times a day.

During this interaction, it seemed that the player was at times uncomfortable. She repeatedly said that she was happy with her boyfriend to try to dissuade xQc. When he suggested that she did not have sex with her boyfriend, she raised her voice in a high-pitched tone that sounded panicked or embarrassed. She then switched to being defensive with her claim that her boyfriend "opens the doors five times a day" after he shamed her for not having sex with her boyfriend despite him giving her jewelry. This interaction was interesting because it implies that women are obligated to have sex with their partners in exchange for nice things. This fits with sexual social exchange theory, which suggests that many view women's sexuality as having commodity value. Many people believe that, in a heterosexual relationship, if the man pays for an expensive date or gifts that the woman is then obligated to provide sex in exchange (Basow and Minieri 2011). This belief is also connected to higher rates of rape myth acceptance, in this case believing that women who have their dates paid for should expect men to ask for sex, and as such put more of the blame on the woman in a date rape scenario when the man pays. This agreement tends to go up when more money is spent on the date (Feltey, Ainslie, and Geib 1991).

It is interesting that when xQc was attempting to convince the worker that he would make a better partner than her boyfriend, he talked about the ring as being cheap. When he used the ring to shame her for not having sex with her boyfriend, he used the wording "whole gem" to suggest it was of high value and that she owed her boyfriend sex. This seems to connect to the belief that sexual coercion is more acceptable when more money is spent. The fact that xQc reinforces this idea by implying that the person he was talking to should have sex with her boyfriend in exchange for him buying her nice

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things can arguably work to perpetuate these attitudes in those who watch his streams and contribute to violence against women that we have seen both inside as well as outside of the gaming world.

This interaction was also interesting because, despite her discomfort at times, she continued to be pleasant towards him, similar to how women behave when sexually harassed while working in real life (Good and Cooper 2016). While it could be argued that in this scenario xQc is also role playing the part of a toxic man, the fact that he chose that role is telling of what is seen as funny or desirable in this context. His attitude towards women throughout his streams suggests a certain level of misogyny. This is important because he is one of the most influential streamers in terms of numbers of followers. In fact, he has only gained in popularity since these data were collected, nearly doubling his follower count from 5,501,536 on April 20, 2021, to 10,174,649 on April 1, 2022 (TwitchMetrics 2022). One of the things that seems to draw audience member to xQc is his toxic behavior, so in many ways he is rewarded for these behaviors. This was demonstrated when multiple people donated hundreds of dollars at a time to his channel while he was sexually harassing the other player. Not only did he not receive sanctions for his behavior, but he was also actively rewarded for it.

Fatphobia in Streaming

While not as discussed in terms of inequalities related to gaming or as prevalent compared to misogyny, fatphobia was present during some of my observations; fatphobia was coded 8 times in data analysis. The code for fatphobia was used whenever someone made negative comments about someone's weight, including towards their fans, other players, and people outside of gaming. Some literature has focused on the ways in which

bodies are represented within gaming, particularly when focusing on the representations of women in games. Women characters are often hypersexualized, often with large breasts and small waists (Burgess, Stermer, and Burgess 2007; Dickerman, Christensen, and Kerl-McClain 2007; Martins et al. 2009). Men's bodies are often portrayed as extra muscular in video games (Martins et al. 2011). This is particularly important because research has found that the way character bodies are represented in games has real world impacts, including men who play video games with more muscular men characters having less body satisfaction within themselves (Matthews, Lynch, and Martins 2016). This means that the ways in which bodies are represented within video games has real-world effects on those who view them. As such, it is important to understand the ways in which bodies that don't fit these hypersexualized or muscular frames are represented within gaming. Oftentimes, overweight and obese characters are portrayed as monstrous and grotesque within games (Stang 2018). This includes characters like the "Boomer" in the Left4Dead game series, which are one of the special types of zombies players encounter within this game who have unique abilities. The ability that the Boomer uses against the protagonists is projectile vomiting bile that damages the player's health. These zombies are interesting when compared to the heroes of the game, who are for the most part physically fit, the only exception of this being the character "Coach" in Left4Dead 2 whose weight is often used as comical relief within gameplay. In many games, the overweight characters are the villains who are defeated by the fit (and conventionally attractive) protagonists. This depiction of bodies in games also serve to recreate inequalities by showing the audience who is considered heroic and who is portrayed as the gross villain, which serves as a form of othering in this context

(Schwalbe et al. 2000). Clear distinctions are made between the heroes who are not overweight, and the villains who often are. This perpetuates negative stereotypes based on bodyweight that create divides between those who are seen as desirable and good in society and those who are not.

Like with other forms of media, fatphobia is deeply embedded in gaming. This was reflected in the behaviors of multiple streamers observed. It is interesting that the negative stereotype associated with gamers is that of an overweight person yet gaming itself actively perpetuates fatphobia. It appears that in order to distance themselves from the stereotype, game developers and streamers alike engage in fatphobia. For instance, TimTheTatMan was frequently made fun of for his size. Most of the men that I observed were either skinny or muscular, with only TimTheTatMan and Dakotaz possibly being considered overweight at the time these data were collected. In many ways, TimTheTatMan seemed like the comical relief in streams, especially when he was streaming with others. He was the butt of many jokes about his weight that came not only from the other streamers, but from his own fans as well. For the most part, he did not get offended and played into the joke. He would also engage in fatphobia to make fun of other streamers as well as his own audience members.

During a stream on April 12th, 2021, TimTheTatMan watched a video of another streamer who unsubscribed from him because Tim did not have his channel under his "recommended channels" on Twitch. The streamer then went on to mention that he didn't actually have Tim under his recommended channels either. In response to this, Tim said that the streamer "Put the hippo in hypocrite. That's a good one. You get it? Because he's fat." While this may have been done in a lighthearted way to tease the other streamer, this

still arguably reinforces fatphobia within gaming as many are attacked for their size within this space. This again serves as a way of reproducing inequalities through defensive othering (Schwalbe et al. 2000), where TimTheTatMan distances himself from others who are overweight. Later in that same stream he watched a video of himself making fun of his audience members because his merchandise was sold out in all of the larger sizes. In the video, he called his audience members "fat asses." As he watches this video, he laughs and says that that is how he sees all of his followers. Again, while he himself is in on the joke, this works to reinforce the stereotype that people who are into gaming are all overweight or obese.

Other streamers would make comments and jokes that reinforced fatphobia as well. One example of this came from NickMercs on April 11th, 2021. During this stream, he tells the story of his head of security and how he once took down a car thief. In this story, he mentions that the bodycam footage he saw made him really comfortable with the man being his head of security and followed it up saying that it was good because "Craig's getting a little fat on me." The lack of confidence in someone's ability to do their job, especially one that may require physical labor, works to reinforce fatphobic notions that bigger people are incapable or incompetent in completing their jobs (Rudolph et al. 2009). By casually making this statement, NickMercs reinforces this idea within his streams. While he is praising his head of security and talking about how he is comfortable with him in his job, the doubt that he conveys based on the man's perceived weight gain again reinforces fatphobic ideals.

One interesting thing about the fatphobia I witnessed was that there was a gendered component to it. All of the fatphobia that I observed in streams was aimed at

men. A few of the men I observed, including NickMercs and SypherPK, not only regularly streamed themselves playing video games, but they would also stream themselves working out at the gym. This is interesting because, to my knowledge, none of the women I observed make the same kind of content and these streams seem far more popular among men streamers in general. This fits in with the idea that men who embody hegemonic masculinity display physical strength and dominance (Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010). Men in this context are rewarded for their physical strength by views and are punished for having bodies that do not fit the hegemonic ideal by being made fun of. In this way, engaging in fatphobia serves to other men who do not fit the hegemonic body ideal and reproduces dominant and subordinate (Schwalbe et al. 2000) types of masculinities. In the case of TimTheTatMan, he is arguably engaging in defensive othering (Schwalbe et al. 2000), as he continues to make fun of those who do not fit this ideal while he himself also does not. By doing so, he is further separating himself from the subordinate group.

Instances of fatphobia that I saw were never directed at or made by the women I observed, none of whom would be considered overweight. While the men have side streams in the gym, some of the women I observed are models or social media influencers in addition to streamers, including Demisux, who is known for modeling on Instagram. There is some mix between modeling and gaming, as Loeya is a streamer for Fnatic, an esports organization, and also models the apparel they sell. Alinity is also reported to have made millions of dollars by creating "18+" content on her OnlyFans site (Purcell 2021). The content on her OnlyFans site includes videos of her dancing in the nude as well as paid interactions with subscribers. It seemed that all of the women I

observed who ranked highest in terms of followers were conventionally attractive, and some even make additional income based on their perceived attractiveness. While men like TimTheTatMan could be popular in this medium even while not fitting hegemonic body standards, the same was not true for the top-rated women. This fits with research that suggests that overweight women in particular face workplace discrimination and income inequality (Carlson and Seacat 2014; Mason 2012) and are portrayed more negatively in media such as movies and television (De Brún et al. 2013) compared to overweight men. While the women themselves did not express fatphobic attitudes, the fact that none of the women were overweight reflects the inequalities surrounding women and weight in work and media.

Racism and White Privilege

As noted before, one of the fears of #GamerGate was that it would lead to the death of the "gamer," who is seen as a white man (Dockterman 2014). In similar ways that we see sexism and misogyny in gaming, in many ways attempting to push out women, the same is true for BIPOC individuals. Nonwhite characters have largely been underrepresented in games themselves (Jansz and Martis 2007; Williams et al. 2009) and when they do appear their depictions are often rooted in racial stereotypes (Burgess et al. 2011; Daniels and Lalone 2012; Peck, Ketchum, and Embrick 2011). Racism extends beyond the ways in which people are depicted in gaming and is evident in how people interact with each other in online spaces. Racist tactics are a common way to "troll" or trash talk other players (Cote 2017; Gray 2011; Gray 2012; Ortiz 2019). This racialized trash talking is a form of boundary maintenance that perpetuates racial inequalities in these spaces (Schwalbe et al. 2000). As previously mentioned, boundary maintenance,

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which serves to keep people out of dominant groups, can be done in a variety of ways, including violence and threats of violence. In this case, the "trolling" which takes on very racist and harmful rhetoric is a form of violence against non-white gamers. This boundary maintenance is unfortunately effective, with many BIPOC people, especially women, leaving mainstream gaming spaces in favor of their own smaller gaming communities (Gray 2012). As previously noted, the number of followers that these streamers have means that what they say and do in these contexts can have a significant impact on the attitudes and norms of those who watch them. As such, streamers are in a prime position to either further perpetuate the racist rhetoric that is common in gaming, or fight against it.

The streamers I observed did not display overtly racist behavior while streaming. By this I mean they did not use racial slurs or make obviously racist jokes. Compared to very open instances of sexism and misogyny that are seen in gaming, there does seem to be some negative attention that is given to those who express overt racism in gaming. One instance of this happened with a streamer, Alinity, who was accused of using the n-word during a stream. She has gone on record saying that her Columbian accent was to blame for a miscommunication, and what she actually said was "Nick your…" referring to her friend named Nick (Young 2016). Nevertheless, she did receive negative press for this incident. Many streaming fans and fellow streamers were upset that she was not banned for using the n-word and claimed that Twitch was doing her a favor because she is sexually appealing (Patterson 2018). It is interesting to note that, despite this accusation, she continues to be one of the most popular women streamers on Twitch. Additionally, both Ninja and Tfue, who ranked number 1 and 2 respectively in terms of

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followers on Twitch at the time these data were collected, have used the n-word during a live stream (Mehta 2021). Pokimane has also used racial slurs in her past streams, something she formally apologized for in a YouTube video released in 2020. The fact that so many of the top streamers have a history of using or being accused of using racial slurs during their streams suggests that, even when streamers do receive negative attention for racist behaviors, it is not something that would permanently end their careers or their popularity. This again reflects the inequalities that exist within gaming and the ways in which gaming spaces can be unwelcoming towards BIPOC individuals.

There were some instances during these streams that, while not overtly racist, did arguably reinforce racial stereotypes, with covert racism coded 5 times in data analysis. This code appeared in segments of videos where streamers, while not overtly being racist, would say things that reinforced stereotypes. On a subtle level, the streamers would occasionally say or do things that served to "other" those who are not white (Schwalbe et al. 2000). One example of this happened during NickMercs' stream on April 15th, 2021. At the beginning of his stream, NickMercs tells the audience that he found something on Twitter that was "fucked up" but so funny that he had to show it to the audience. The Tweet was about Jennifer Lopez's breakup with Alex Rodriguez. The text of the Tweet said, "NBA and NFL players pulling up into Jennifer Lopez's DMs tonight after breaking up with Alex Rodriguez," and included a video of a group of Black men carrying a large speaker playing music as they ran and danced towards the camera. This is significant, because many hold stereotypes of Black men as hypersexual (Slatton and Spates 2014), which are perpetuated with this idea that they would be jumping at the opportunity to be with Jennifer Lopez after her breakup. The fact that he claims that the tweet is "fucked

up" prior to showing it suggests that he recognizes the fact that it contributes to negative stereotypes about Black men being overly sexual and opportunistic, yet he shows it to the audience anyway because he "can't help it" that he found the Tweet so funny. He then followed this up by saying that her "DMs have to be a warzone right now." This again suggests that people, particularly Black men as implied by the video, are likely going after her when she is vulnerable after a public breakup. While this may not have been NickMercs' intent with his comments and showing the video, there is an implication that can be potentially damaging and serve to further stereotypes by showing and laughing at them.

While there was no overt racism in terms of things like using racial slurs that I observed in the streams, there were also instances where streamers had the opportunity to speak out against racism and did not. One example was seen in a stream by xQc on April 13th, 2021. At the beginning of many of his streams, he would start by watching YouTube videos which he shared with the audience. On this particular day, he clicked on a news story about Army 2nd Lt. Caron Nazario, a Black man, being unjustly pepper sprayed during a traffic stop and the police officer's subsequent firing. During the video, xQc did not comment on what was going on or the police officer's actions. The only time he commented on this video was to make fun of the beard on the white man who was representing Nazario. In many ways this felt callous and coming from a place of privilege. It has been argued that one key aspect of white privilege is not feeling connected to race, and thus failing to see one's own connection to racial systems of domination (Case 2012; Flagg 1997; Wildman and Davis 1997). White people also use their privilege to avoid confronting issues of racism when they do occur (Case 2012;

Frankenberg 1993; Wildman and Davis 1997). As a white man, he was able to show this video of violence towards a Black man without any emotional connection to it. To then show this video of violence to an audience of thousands of viewers without regard to the emotions and trauma they may have attached to it and to laugh at some part of it, even if it wasn't the violence itself, felt dismissive of the significance of what he was showing. In this moment, xQc could have used his platform to speak out against racism or the actions of the police officers, yet instead he watched a video that included footage of violence towards a Black person at the hands of a white police officer passively and to make fun of it.

xQc's refusal to speak out against racism in this moment is not entirely surprising when considering the fact that he, like other popular streamers, has exhibited racist behavior in the past, to the point where he had to be removed from an esports tournament in 2018 (Selk 2018). He was removed after he had been fined and suspended for previous behavior, including homophobia against a gay player on an opposing team. xQc was ultimately removed from the team he played on (Dallas Fuel) after he joined in the harassment of a Black announcer for the tournament, Malik Forté, by posting a meme of a Black man in the chat when the announcer appeared, along with many other people doing the same thing. This is a tactic used by people in chat to try to demean Black streamers and announcers during tournaments (Selk 2018). His removal from the team sparked outrage amongst his fans, who reacted by harassing those in charge of the team as well as Forté (Selk 2018). Again, despite this incident and past behaviors, xQc remains one of the most popular streamers on Twitch, showing that racist behaviors do not necessarily result in the loss of one's career in the esports and streaming industry.

FIGHTING INEQUALITIES

Similar to the ways in which streamers did not typically contribute to inequalities with overt actions, there were not many instances of the streamers directly using their platforms to discuss and fight against inequalities. That being said, in many ways, some of the streamers' presences in these spaces can be considered revolutionary acts in themselves. As previously noted, the gaming world has not always been one that is welcoming to those who are not white men (Cote 2017; Gray 2011; Gray 2012; Gray 2017; Fox and Tang 2014; Neiborg and Foxman 2018; Ortiz 2019). In the wake of things like #GamerGate and attacks aimed at those who do not fit with the idea of who a "gamer" is, it is not uncommon for those who are marginalized in gaming to either leave these spaces, or create their own spaces away from the mainstream gaming world (Gray 2012). While this is an understandable choice that serves to protect people from further marginalization, it also makes it so these spaces continue to be dominated by white men. The fact that the women and BIPOC streamers continued to occupy these spaces and gain success within them works to further diversify gaming and helps to fight against inequalities.

That being said, there were a few times where streamers used their position to actively fight against social inequalities. During the time these data were collected, multiple streamers I observed participated in a charity Valorant tournament and played for a charity of their choice. The team that included Myth was playing for the charity "Stop Asian Hate." This is significant in a few ways. Myth is a Black man, who in this case was using his platform to fight against one form of racism. Again, historically, online gaming spaces have not been kind to those who are not white (Cote 2017; Gray

2011; Gray 2012; Ortiz 2019). Despite this, Myth was still openly a part of a team that was giving money to those who do not fit the idea of what a "gamer" should be that many have in the gaming world. Myth is arguably in a delicate position because his very presence among the most followed streamers on Twitch goes against trends we have seen with streamers. Black streamers are often seen as less desirable to watch to mainstream white audiences, and therefore struggle to be successful in streaming (Gray 2017). Yet, Myth's participation on a team that was actively fighting against racism shows that he does not shy away from issues of race in gaming, which could be potentially damaging to his career. This arguably not only works to fight against inequalities in terms of giving money to the charity, for which they were able to secure $21,000 due to their second-place finish in the tournament (Akhtar 2021), but also worked to show that multiple high-ranking streamers were taking a stand against racism.

Of all of the streamers I watched, Pokimane specifically stands out as someone who used her platform to speak out on certain issues, including trans rights and universal healthcare. During her stream on April 12th, 2021, a person in the audience requested that she say the words "trans rights." When she first read the comment, she did so in a high-pitched voice that conveyed happiness. She then leaned closely into the microphone and in a deeper, more serious voice, said the words "trans rights." The fact that she did not ignore this request and she did so with enthusiasm heavily conveys the idea that she supports trans rights and trans people. While seemingly small, I would argue that this act is important in fighting against inequalities within gaming. Again, those who are not cisgender white men are often mistreated within the world of gaming (Gray 2012; Maloney, Roberts, and Caruso 2018). To openly support people who do not fit the idea of

the typical gamer likely runs the risk of losing followers within this medium. Despite that risk, Pokimane does so openly, which is especially important considering her high rank in terms of followers on Twitch. As we saw in the case of #GamerGate, what people do in the gaming industry has far reaching consequences. By supporting people who have historically been marginalized in these spaces, Pokimane is arguably working to change the narrative that exists in the gaming world.

Another streamer who is fighting against inequalities simply by existing within gaming is Chica, who is a queer Puerto Rican woman. Chica's queer identity along with her ethnicity are important, as homophobia and racism are both common within online gaming communities (Gray 2012; Maloney, Roberts, and Caruso 2018). In spite of this, Chica continues to be one of the top streamers on Twitch, increasing the representation of those who do not fit in with the white straight men gamers. In some ways, this can be attributed to subordinate adaptation (Schwalbe et al. 2000), in which Chica plays into inequalities in exchange for popularity. As noted in the previous chapter, Chica frequently "rages," which plays into the stereotype that Latina women are "fiery" and that their anger is comical (McLaughlin et al. 2018; Ramirez Berg 2002). On the one hand, this can serve to better Chica's position by gaining popularity and viewers who want to see her rage and yell. On the other, this can also work to reinforce inequalities by perpetuating these stereotypes.

That being said, Chica's popularity within gaming also arguably fights against inequalities in gaming due to the platform she has and the potential influence she can have over her followers. While Chica is not always very open with her sexuality and her relationship status, she fights against inequalities in a more subtle way. During her stream

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on April 30th, 2021, Chica had her wife join the stream through a call over the application Discord. During this call, both Chica and her wife, a fellow streamer named "Pursuit," were very open about their relationship. While on the call, Chica mentioned that the room she streams in is uncomfortably hot. Pursuit teased her by saying that "It's uncomfortably hot sleeping beside you. It's uncomfortably hot holding your hand. It's uncomfortably hot being in a small space with you because you're a spot heater." She said this in a tone that conveyed teasing as it was light and did not sound angry or annoyed. Chica responded to this by laughing. This was an interesting interaction because it was lighthearted and, even in a teasing manner, openly acknowledged intimate moments in their relationship. This representation of a lesbian relationship, especially talking about moments that are intimate but not necessarily sexual is important in terms of representation since lesbian relationships in media are often hypersexualized (Diamond 2005; Jackson 2009).

Interestingly, after much encouragement from the chat who wanted to hear it, Pursuit also told the story of the first time she took Chica to a strip club. Despite the location and context of this story, it was not used as story to sexualize Chica or her relationship with Pursuit. This was used as a funny anecdote to talk about how "wholesome" Chica is, according to Pursuit. She explained that upon entering the club they walked past windows into a room where a man was getting a private dance and that, while Pursuit walked by and thought nothing of it because she was used to it, Chica stopped dead and stared with a shocked and confused look on her face. Pursuit was amused at the bewilderment that Chica had towards nudity, and this sexualized act while Pursuit was desensitized to it and walked past it without a second thought. This painted Chica as someone who is fairly innocent, which goes against the hypersexualized

depictions we see of lesbians in media (Diamond 2005; Jackson 2009). They also generally talked about their relationship for the audience to hear. During this call, there was noticeably positive feedback in the comment section, with many people commenting on how cute they found the couple together. This representation was important because in many ways it counteracted the heteronormativity that exists within gaming (Pulos 2013). Here we were able to see a seemingly happy relationship between two women of color. This is significant because research has shown that the representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in media has positive effects on attitudes towards this group (Lissitsa and Kushnirovich 2019). Simply by existing in this space and showing her relationship with her wife, Chica is fighting against the recreation of inequalities by providing positive representations of queerness in gaming.

Chica and her fanbase also would stand up against things like racism and homophobia. As discussed in the previous chapter, Chica confronted a child that had used the n-word in her chat when she encountered him in the game. While she was not mean to him, she still told him that it was not okay. Similarly, on April 30th, 2021, Chica was playing Fortnite with another player who she did not know but was getting along with. However, at one point where Chica believed the only people in the chat were her and the other player, you can hear the words "fuck you, faggot" followed by more things that Chica muted and did not reveal to the audience. This noticeably upset Chica through her facial features which included looks of confusion and anger, and she did not stay silent about it. She told the player that saying that "doesn't make you cool, it just makes you weird." She was not afraid to fight against hate and homophobic rhetoric that is very common in gaming (Maloney, Roberts, and Caruso 2018). It turns out that the person she

yelled at was not the person who had said those words and she spent time finding the player to apologize to them. Nevertheless, by standing up to that hate (even aimed at the wrong person) arguably sent a message to those watching that that sort of behavior was not okay. This is significant because many of Chica's followers appear to be children when they recognize her while playing the game based on their voice.

This stance against bullying and hate speech was echoed by her fans who also made it very clear that they would not stand for it either, by pointing out those who used racist and sexist language in the chat and getting them banned by the moderators. This is what happened to the kid who had allegedly said the n-word in the stream prior to being kicked out by a moderator. Interestingly, after Chica was done playing the game with him, he asked if she would add him as a friend on Fortnite. This is something that Chica usually will do when the players she interacts with request it. In this case, her chat vehemently tried to persuade her to not add the boy back because of his racist language. Other times the audience would call out people who made inappropriate sexual comments in the chat. During one stream on April 20th, 2021, a commenter typed "PP" followed shortly by another message that read, "Do you want to see my PP again?" This was something that was seen as inappropriate to many in the chat, as expressed by multiple messages calling for that user to be banned from the chat, which they ultimately were. It is clear that Chica has created an environment that discourages racism and sexism, which can be hard to find in online gaming communities and digital spaces in general.

CONCLUSION

#GamerGate and the ways that women were treated during and in the aftermath of it clearly showed the ways in which inequalities exist within gaming. With the increasing popularity of streaming, streamers themselves are at a prime position to reinforce these inequalities through generic processes (Schwalbe et al. 2000) or to possibly go against the inequalities within gaming. Inequalities were held up using the generic processes discussed by Schwalbe et al. (2000) in a variety of ways. As noted in the previous chapter, the streamers play by different feelings rules, which connects emotion management to inequality. White men are more able to express anger, while women and men of color were not able to do so in the same way if they wished to avoid being further marginalized in this space. Streamers would often engage in othering, where they separated themselves from subordinate groups, even in likely unconscious ways. In my data, this appeared in the form of oppressive othering, where streamers would, in often subtle ways, paint those who are not typically seen as "gamer," including women and BIPOC individuals, as different or inferior in some way. This included using misogynistic language to insult and demean opponents, as well as contributing to racial stereotypes. Some of the women also engaged in subordinate adaptation by trading power for patronage. This included playing into stereotypes and also engaging in misogynistic rhetoric to distance themselves, which aligned themselves with those in power while distancing themselves from others in subordinate groups. On a subtle level, boundary maintenance was also performed by those who used misogynistic insults, especially when they were aimed specifically at characters who appeared to be women. This served to further separate women from gaming and send the message that these spaces are not for

women. That being said, in subtle ways some of the streamers also fought against inequalities that we see within gaming. This included not tolerating racist and sexist behavior, as well as simply existing in spaces that have historically been inaccessible to those who are not cishet white men.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I examined the ways in which videogame streamers present themselves during their live streams or "let's plays." By observing videos of 18 streamer, I identified three main themes. The first is the streamers' presentation of self generally, which is the focus of Chapter 2. This includes videos they use to introduce their streams, as well as their body positioning, costumes, props, and verbal and nonverbal expressions. The second main theme is the ways in which streamers engaged in emotional labor and how this varied by race and gender, as discussed in Chapter 3. This included some streamers controlling certain emotions while some streamers openly expressed emotions, as well as the ways in which they interacted with the audience and attended to the perceived emotional needs of audience members. The third main theme was the ways in which streamers contribute to inequalities that exist within gaming, as discussed in Chapter 4. This happens through generic processes of inequality reproduction (Schwalbe et al. 2000), including emotional management, othering, subordinate adaptation, and boundary maintenance. I also considered how streamers might fight against inequalities within these spaces. In what follows, I discuss the major findings from all three of these chapters.

In "From Gaming to Entertaining: Gender, Identity, and How the Game is Played" (Chapter 2), I focused on how the streamers presented themselves and how these

presentations differed based on identity, including race and gender. Through my

observations, I began to place streamers on what I refer to as the Gamer-Entertainer

continuum based on the ways they presented themselves in their pre-stream videos,

positioned their bodies, and expressed themselves. Emotional management and labor, as

discussed in Chapter 3, were also factors in placement on the continuum. On the one end

of the continuum, Gamers were streamers who emphasized the game and the gaming

elements of their streams and drew less attention to the audience or themselves. On the

other end, Entertainers were those who emphasized the entertainment aspect of the

streams, including singing, dancing, role playing, and being engaged with the audience,

all while also playing the game. This continuum was very gendered, with women as

Entertainers and men as Gamers.

One of the first things that viewers see when entering at the beginning of a stream

is an animated video that tells the audience that the stream is beginning soon. The

majority of the streamers (15 out of 18) I observed had played some sort of video prior to

their stream. These videos showed different aspects of the streamer's personality or brand

and were the first hint that different streamers emphasized different aspects while

streaming. For the men, who often fell on the Gamer side of the continuum, the emphasis

in these videos was on elements of gaming, including violence. Multiple streamers had

weapons featured in their pre-stream videos. This was especially true for those who

primarily played violent shooting games. The Entertainers had pre-stream videos that

focused more on aspects of their personalities and other talents and interests that they

highlighted in addition to gaming. This included pets, with three of the women having

some reference to their pets in these videos. Interestingly, Dakotaz, a man who fell more

on the Entertainer side of the continuum also had an introduction screen that featured elements of his brand (a wolf), but focused less on gaming, placing the emphasis on his personality rather than the games he played. These videos gave the audience a preview of the personality of the streamers they were about to see based on what the streamers thought the audience would find appealing.

Once the stream had begun, the streamers would present themselves in a variety of ways. One aspect was the ways in which they positioned their bodies and cameras. This noticeably varied by gender, with women facing more towards the camera while the men faced away from the camera. Women interacted with the audience far more than men. Women also had more of their bodies visible in the stream compared to men. The camera angles for the women were often looking down and the windows that they appeared in were taller than those of the men. This let the audience see more of the women compared to the men who often appeared smaller in the screen or mainly showed their face and chest. In this way, the focus was more on the women's bodies, while the men made themselves smaller which centered their skills in the games they were playing.

In addition to the ways that streamers presented themselves through camera angles and body positions, they also used costumes, props, and settings in unique ways. Men consistently wore t-shirts, hoodies, and sweatpants, while women wore a variety of clothing that included t-shirts as well as blouses and other styles of tops. Women were also more likely to specifically coordinate their outfits with what they were doing in stream, including wearing costumes to match their characters and dressing specifically for tournaments they were competing in. Some women wore more revealing clothes, highlighting their bodies. Men were also more likely to use their costume to promote

their brands by wearing their own merchandise. This was similar with the props that men would use consistently in their streams, including products from sponsors. While the women would have these products occasionally, they were not a consistent feature in their streams compared to some men. Again, this often fit with the different aspects of the Gamer-Entertainer continuum, where the Entertainers (primarily women) were more likely to use their clothing and props to express their personalities, whereas the men used their costumes and props to promote themselves and others, thus getting less personal with the audience. The same was true with the settings that they streamed in, with men more often streaming in professional appearing spaces while more of the women streamed in places like their bedrooms, which gave the feeling of being in an intimate part of their lives.

An important aspect of the presentation of self was verbal and nonverbal expressions. Streamers managed these expressions as well as engaged with the audience in different ways. In "Feeling Rules and Emotion Management: Gender and Race in the Streaming World" (Chapter 3), I examined the ways in which streamers performed emotion management and emotional labor during their streams. The amount and type of emotion management and emotional labor that the streamers engaged in related to their position on the Gamer-Entertainer continuum, which was also connected to race and gender.

Overall, white men were more likely to express anger or frustration compared to women and BIPOC men who I observed. In this way, the types of emotion management they engaged in differed. Feeling rules indicate that white men have more freedom to express anger compared to women and BIPOC men, whose anger is often not seen as

legitimate (Boler 1999; Wingfield 2010). White men were also more likely to be on the Gamer end of the continuum and thus their emotions were more tied to the progression of the game. When they were doing well in the game, their emotions reflected that. For instance, they would smile and laugh or even brag about how good they are at gaming. On the other hand, when they were not doing well and their identities as good gamers might have felt threatened, they were more likely to lash out in volatile ways. This included yelling and using misogynistic rhetoric towards those who were threatening their identities, as well as nonverbal expressions such as clenched teeth, agitated movements, and aggressively typing on their keyboards.

There were a few exceptions to this, with Shroud and Dakotaz both being less likely to express anger. Shroud focuses far more on the game that he is playing (and is oftentimes very successful at) so most of the time he is streaming he is quiet. Dakotaz, on the other hand, fell more on the Entertainer side of the continuum compared to most men, so like many of the women, his emotions were not visibly tied to how well he was doing in the game. His goal as a streamer was to spread "positive vibes," as he put it, and as such to make the audience feel good by engaging with them in an upbeat way. While Shroud and Dakotaz, who are both white men, did not seem to get angry often, Myth and SypherPK were two BIPOC men who had to actively manage their anger when it occurred. It was possible to see that both Myth and SypherPK got angry at times, through their nonverbal expressions such as clenched teeth, however unlike the white men who got angry they did not express anger through yelling or verbally assaulting others. This was especially true of Myth, who is a Black man and never expressed anger in the same ways as someone like Ninja. This fits with feeling rules that show that white men are

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more able to express anger and be seen as legitimate (Boler 1999; Wingfield 2010) while Black men are often viewed more negatively or even as a threat when they express anger.

Like the BIPOC men, women also controlled their anger far more than the white men did. While it was possible to see that they were angry through nonverbal expressions, such as clenched jaws, tightened lips, wrinkled noses, and loud sighs, they did not express anger verbally as much as white men who would often raise their voices and swear at others when they were angry. Again, this is connected to feeling rules that we in society that place expectations on women to control their anger while men are seen as more legitimate when they express it (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016). Women rarely expressed intense anger and would only occasionally appear frustrated with a situation. As previously mentioned, women were more likely to focus their streams on being entertaining rather than entirely being good at the games they were playing, and as such their emotions were less tied to what was happening in the game. The only exception to this was Chica, who would frequently go into "rages" while playing the game, which in some ways fit stereotypes that Latina women are "fiery," which she could be using to be entertaining (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 2005; McLaughlin et al. 2018; Ramirez Berg 2002; Rivadeneyra, Ward, and Gordon 2007). Even in the face of harassment, women overall were less likely to express anger or to lash out at the audience or others.

The ways that the streamers expressed their emotions were also connected to the ways that they interacted with the audience. Entertainers interacted with the audience more often. These interactions included before, during, and after the game was played. The Gamers were more likely to engage with the audience very little, or only before they

started playing the game and then focusing their attention on the game for the rest of the stream. The Entertainers more often engaged with the audience on a personal and emotional level and these interactions would happen throughout the stream, including when they were actively playing the game. For the most part this was also gendered, with women more often engaging in emotional labor with the audience by consoling them and talking to them about their problems. They also occasionally did this with other players when they made mistakes that cost the team victories. This is a stark contrast to some of the men, like Ninja, who expressed anger towards his team when they contributed to their loss. Overall, Entertainers, especially women, were more likely to create a positive environment and be engaged with the audience more than the Gamers whose focus was on being good at the game rather than providing extra entertainment for the audience.

The gendered nature of this divide contributes to the inequalities that were explored in "Beyond #GamerGate-Keeping: Streamers' Roles in Reproducing and Fighting Inequalities in Gaming" (Chapter 4). Inequalities can be reproduced through generic processes (Schwalbe et al. 2000) one being emotional management. Feeling rules about who is allowed to feel or express certain emotions (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016; Wingfield 2007; Wingfield 2010) contributes to larger social inequalities. This contributes to what Schwalbe et al. (2000) refer to as conditioning emotional subjectivity. Those who are marginalized, including women and people of color, have been taught to express emotions differently compared to white men. Women especially have been taught to put the emotions of others above their own, which is reflected in the ways that women put the emotional needs of their audiences first. Men on the other hand are taught to devalue emotions that are linked to weakness, making

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them more likely to express anger compared to other such as sadness. Men of color are also taught to not express anger as much to avoid stereotypes, such as being seen as "angry black men" (Wingfield 2010). These feeling rules and sex-based and race-based socialization serve to reproduce inequalities surrounding emotion. This was something that was seen in the emotional privilege that men like Ninja had to express anger while women and men of color were less able to do so. There was also added pressure for women to attend to the emotional needs of their teammates and the audience above their own, including suffering through sexual harassment without directly lashing out against the perpetrators.

Inequalities were also reproduced in other ways, including the use of misogynistic rhetoric while gaming. The frequent use of misogynistic language as a tool to bring down and emasculate others fits into the generic process known as oppressive othering (Schwalbe et al. 2000). By using insults that were specifically misogynistic in nature, streamers sent the message that femininity was viewed as less desirable in this space. This constituted oppressive othering when done by men, who used this language to berate and emasculate their opponents as well as audience members who threatened their masculinity and status as gamers. On the other hand, the use of misogynistic language by women could be considered subordinate adaptation (Schwalbe et al. 2000). Specifically, women using misogynistic language could be considered trading power for patronage, in which they align themselves with the dominant group. Women using this rhetoric to emasculate others served to distance themselves from femininity and align themselves more with masculinity. While this arguably damages women as a whole, they are able to

gain some amount of prestige by aligning themselves with men. In a very male

dominated field like gaming, doing so can help women gain popularity in the industry.

Interestingly, fatphobia occurred during my observation, but only among the men.

While little research has been done on fatphobia in gaming, there is research on the

representation of gendered bodies (Burgess, Stermer, and Burgess 2007; Dickerman et al.

2007; Martins et al. 2009; Martins et al. 2011). In one exception, Stang (2018) focused on

the ways in which overweight bodies are often portrayed as villainous and grotesque

within gaming. This seems to have translated into the world of streaming as well, with

male streamers expressing fatphobic rhetoric in their streams. This is oppressive othering

(Schwalbe et al. 2000) when done by physically fit people, such as NickMercs, in that

they were separating themselves from overweight people and discussing them in ways

that were negative or undesirable. On the other hand, TimTheTatMan who engaged in

fatphobia was using subordinate adaptation to make fun of himself and others to align

himself with the dominant group. Interestingly, none of the women I observed appeared

overweight. So, while none of them engaged in fatphobia, they were more likely

themselves to reflect idealized female bodies.

While not as overt as misogynistic rhetoric, I did see covert forms of racism and

white privilege within my observations. This included showing content that reinforced

racial stereotypes as a way of laughing at it and not challenging the stereotypes. Despite

this not being overtly racist, meaning there was no use of racial slurs or obviously racist

jokes, stereotypes were shown and oppressive othering (Schwalbe et al. 2000) occurred in

subtle ways. Similarly, there was some amount of white privilege that I saw. Prior to

beginning his streams, xQc would frequently watch YouTube videos with the audience.

One video he clicked on was a news story that included images of police violence towards a Black man. While doing so, the only comment he made on the video was to make fun of the white lawyer who was representing the Black man because he thought the lawyer's beard was ugly. This seemed very privileged in that he was emotionally disconnected from the violence that was occurring in the video, and also was arguably a missed opportunity to stand up against racism in this space. One aspect of white privilege is that white people often do not feel themselves connected to a race, and therefore do not link themselves to larger systems of racial domination nor feel the need to confront or object to racism (Case 2012; Flagg 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Wildman and Davis 1997). This privilege was reflected in the fact that he was able to passively watch the video and show it to his thousands of viewers with no acknowledgement of the content of what he was showing.

Despite there being ways that streamers recreated inequalities within their streams, there were also instances in which they resisted and even questioned inequality. Marginalized individuals taking space on this platform serve as a challenge to inequalities by increasing representation. This is especially true for women, LGBTQIA+, and BIPOC streamers, who are often less welcome in these spaces (Cote 2017; Gray 2011; Gray 2012; Gray 2017; Fox and Tang 2014; Fox and Tang 2016; Maloney et al. 2018; Neiborg and Foxman 2018; Ortiz 2019). There is a conventional view of what a gamer should be, a white straight man (Dockterman 2014) and in the wake of #GamerGate there was a movement to push those who do not fit in this category out of gaming through harassment and threats of violence. As such, remaining in this space that is hostile to them serves to fight against the inequalities that exist within gaming. Some streamers

would more explicitly fight against inequalities by using their platforms to advocate for social change such as trans rights or use their positions to raise money for anti-racism causes. By doing so, they were able to demonstrate standing up against inequalities to their millions of followers, which could arguably impact socialization and views surrounding these topics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LITERATURE

This dissertation contributes to the existing literature by focusing on three main concepts: the presentation of self, feeling rules and emotional labor, and the reproduction of and resistance to inequalities in gaming spaces. Throughout the years, there has been research that has focused on the ways that we present ourselves in everyday life (Goffman 1959; Goffman 1979). In an increasingly digital world, more has been done to examine the ways in which we present ourselves online. This includes through text-based communication (Golder and Macy 2014; Marder et al. 2016; Menchik and Tian 2008; Walther 2007), as well as how individuals present themselves visually online through photographs (Fox and Vendemia 2016; Kapidzic and Herring 2014; Rui and Stefanone 2013; Walker 2000; Zhao et al. 2008). How we present ourselves online can often mirror the ways that we present ourselves in face-to-face interactions, including controlling what aspects of ourselves are front stage and what is kept away from the audience's view. Research has also explored the ways that video game players present themselves through text-based communication within the game (Grant 2009; Johnson, Hyysalo, and Tamminen 2010) as well as how they present themselves visually through customizable characters (Baerg 2007; Brickell 2012; Dunn and Guadagno 2012; Gottschalk 2010; Martey and Consalvo 2011; Messinger et al. 2019; Williams et al. 2011). Very little work

had been done on how streamers present themselves in this medium that combines gaming and video components. Pietruszka (2016) looked at how some components of video streams are connected to the presentation of self in strategic ways to gain popularity, including video titles, thumbnail pictures, and catchphrases. However, to my knowledge there is no work that looks at how streamers present themselves throughout live streams. My findings around the presentation of self of streamers supports previous research in that they were able to control different aspects of their presentation, such as their costumes, props, settings, and verbal and nonverbal expressions to portray different aspects of themselves. Similar to other research focusing on the presentation of self both in person (Goffman 1959; Goffman 1979) and in online spaces (Baerg 2007; Brickell 2012; Daniels 2009; Dunn and Guadagno 2012; Martey and Consalvo 2011), I also found that how streamers present themselves varies by race and gender. These findings further Goffman's work on the presentation of self and show how it remains applicable in our increasingly digital interactions.

The second major theme in this research was connected to the presentation of self and how streamers engage with the audience, express emotions, and perform emotional labor throughout their stream. Research has focused on the ways in which emotions are expressed within social interactions and how there are feelings rules attached to these expressions (Goffman 1967; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983). We have certain expectations of how people will express emotions in different situations. There are also expectations of who is allowed to express certain emotions, with white men often being a more liberty to express emotions like anger (Boler 1999; Hochschild 1979; Hochschild 1983; Mayock 2016; Wingfield 2010). Women, on the other hand, are expected to

present in positive and friendly ways, especially in workplace settings (Hochschild 1983; Kundro et al. 2021; Lively 2008; Miller and Lewis 2020). This dissertation also furthers this literature by looking at the ways in which streamers expressed emotions. Similar to past research, white men were often at more liberty to express anger while women and BIPOC men were more likely to control their anger, even in the face of harassment, and consistently express positive emotions. Additionally, research has shown that women are expected to not only attend to their own emotions, but also to the emotions of others (Schwalbe et al. 2000). This was largely seen with the women that I observed interacting with the audience more frequently and in more personal ways compared to most of the men. This work furthers the literature on feeling rules and emotional labor by applying them both to online contexts, as well as an entertainment occupation.

Lastly, research has shown that there are major inequalities within gaming, especially around race and gender (Cote 2017; Gray 2011; Gray 2012; Gray 2017; Fox and Tang 2014; Fox and Tang 2016; Maloney, Roberts, and Caruso 2018; Neiborg and Foxman 2018; Ortiz 2019). Schwalbe et al. (2000) discuss the ways in which inequalities are reproduced using generic processes, including emotion management, othering, subordinate adaptation, and boundary maintenance. Throughout my observations, I saw several instances of inequality, including misogyny and covert racism. The rules regarding who was allowed to express certain emotions and who was expected to cater to the emotions of others reproduced inequalities so women in these spaces had to be pleasant, even in the face of harassment. Othering was performed by creating separations between the dominant and subordinate groups through stereotyping and treating certain groups more negatively. Those in the subordinate groups would engage in subordinate

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adaptation specifically by trading power for patronage (Schwalbe et al. 2000) and aligning themselves with the dominant group. Lastly, boundary maintenance was created and upheld subtly by using misogynistic rhetoric and racist stereotypes to give the impression that women and BIPOC individuals are not welcome in these spaces. This again supports literature that suggest that women and BIPOC communities are marginalized in gaming (Cote 2017; Gray 2011; Gray 2012; Gray 2017; Fox and Tang 2014; Fox and Tang 2016; Maloney, Roberts, and Caruso 2018; Neiborg and Foxman 2018; Ortiz 2019). This research adds to the literature by showing how inequalities in gaming are reproduced through generic processes in streaming. It also adds to the literature by looking at the ways streamers might use their platforms resist or counteract inequalities within gaming.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research significantly adds to the literature on the presentation of self, emotional labor, and inequalities within online video game streaming. Little had been done previously that focused specifically on streamers and this research opens avenues of further research. As with all research, there were some limitations in this study, the first being the limited sample. For the purpose of this study, looking at those who have significant influence within streaming, I sampled specifically from the top English-speaking streamers by follower count. This yielded a sample that was limited in terms of racial diversity, especially for BIPOC men. The lack of racial diversity, as well as focusing on the top streamers, makes the results of this study less generalizable. Lack of racial diversity also limited the analysis of location the Gamer-Entertainer continuum. It was also difficult to gather information on the streamers' sexual orientation or income.

While there are many sources that report this information, the sources vary widely to the point of unreliability. Thus, in terms of sexuality, only two streamers specifically stated their orientation: Chica who identified as gay and Justaminx who identified as pansexual. Several streamers were in heterosexual appearing relationships. For instance, Ninja, NickMercs, and TimTheTatMan are all men who are married to women. However, I could not with any certainty say what their sexual orientations were. Similarly, sources vary on what the streamers' incomes are, giving less information in terms of looking at socioeconomic status. I calculated a rough estimate of the amount the streamers made through subscriptions for the month of April 2021, however this does not account for other revenue sources, such as donations, advertisements, and sponsorships. Lastly, I was able to get little in-depth information from my observations in terms of the motivations for streamers' actions, such as why they dressed the way they did or used certain camera angles. I also was not able to tell exactly how streamers felt about certain topics, such as the emotional demands from audience members or inequalities within gaming. As such, more is needed to understand the conscious effort that goes into the presentation of self in streaming and how the demands of emotional labor and inequalities impact the streamers.

Based on the limitations of this study and themes that were touched on, there are several opportunities for future research. One is looking at streamers at every level of success, not just those at the top, to understand more generally how streamers present themselves in these spaces. This includes looking at a more diverse sample in terms of race and gender, including transgender and nonbinary streamers. There is some work that has focused on how race impacts streamers, particularly how well they are received by audiences (Gray 2016), but more is needed to understand race in terms of the presentation

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of self, emotional labor, and the recreation or resistance of inequalities in streaming. Interviewing the streamers themselves rather than just observing their streams would allow researchers to obtain more in-depth information on motivations and feelings surrounding streaming, how they present themselves, how they control their emotions and attend to the emotions of their audiences, and inequalities in gaming.

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