

Portfolio
Rodolpho Kanecadan

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Communication Arts and the Christian Faith Essay

My previous years at Gordon were some of the hardest years of my life, not directly because of Gordon but what had been going on at the time with me. Despite that, there were a few things in courses that stood out to me throughout the years that truly have affected the way I think about things and see the world around me. Some of these courses, which have had a lasting impact on me, are Perspectives of Communication, Screenwriting, Intermediate Production. Some of these have been positive experiences, and others negative, but both were beneficial to me and how I was able to develop an understanding of the world and of God.

In regards to Perspectives of Communication, I remember vividly our in-class analysis of the film *Tree of Life* in which we were called to interpret the message and meaning behind the film as well as specific scenes. Up to that point I had mostly been exposed to very commercial films and dreamt of making films that were more for the value of entertainment than for their value as an art piece. While we went through interpretations of why trees were filmed a certain way, the timing of certain shots as well as the words that were chosen to overlay some scenes of the film, I was brought to see the greater power that film has beyond its entertainment value. It was a paradigm shifting moment for me where I realized that things can have more meaning and depth than I had previously imagined. That went hand in hand with my understanding with God as well. As I came to understand art at a deeper level, there was a shift in how I saw the world around me and interpreted things like our existence as well as the incredibly beautiful things around us. While the course was not the only factor for that blooming understanding of things for me, it was definitely a defining factor to it.

A short time later came the Screenwriting course. It was something that was not completely new to me at the time, but I had never been formally introduced to it other than my

own experiences and research. The instructor for that course was John Sarrouf, he had an unusual background that made the emphasis of that class different than what I had expected. We did learn the technical side of writing a screenplay, as the course intended, but he brought his experience with conflict resolution to the table as well. Sarrouf's approach to screenwriting and the creative process in a group setting really challenged me and made me better for it; what his approach consisted of, and focused on, was respect to peers. The process of development of a storyline and subsequent script is full of iterating and rewriting; part of which consists of peer reviews and critiques. In these critiques we were pushed to go further than just to criticize someone else's work but to also to back up those criticisms and suggest possible solutions. I remember him explicitly telling us about points of view and how when people make a mistake there are times they don't realize it is a mistake so just saying it is wrong is not enough to truly help them. To give reasons and guidance is a much better way for improvement of one's work, not just writing. This is a core part of Christianity to me, one of the interpretations of iron sharpens iron as well: we are called to do more than to just criticize the fallen world around us, but to improve it and help other understand a better way of living. This is something I apply in all areas of my life now. Almost immediately this concept, this approach, made sense to me, and I have not looked back ever since.

In the first semester of my Junior year my health had already declined considerably, and the Intermediate Production course was not the best experience for me. At the time, the Communication Arts department had lost all professors who were able to teach the course, so they hired a Chilean director who would fly in and meet with us once a month. The other weeks we would meet with him over Skype as a class. In that course I had very negative experiences, but I was able to take something good from it as well something disappointing but ultimately

good as well. In our production of shorts, which would only happen on the days that he flew in, we were all assigned production role and would proceed to fill that role until the end of the project. For one of them I was the Assistant Director. I loved keeping the production on track, organizing what we were going to film, making sure everything was ready for every shot, and just ensuring that the process was going smoothly overall. It was only much later that I realized my love for the management aspect of creative project. I always had trouble starting an idea, having a specific vision to how actors were to interpret something or how a shot was to be framed, but I loved the technical side of it all. Providing solutions to production problems was also something I really enjoyed doing while working in that position. Only in 2020 has this realization really taken effect in me, but I now realize that my passion is not as much focused on being a creative director but a production manager.

Overall, however, Intermediate Production was a very stressful, morale destroying process to everyone in that course that semester. To me it was when I realized I did not have a passion for films. Given my superficial history with films I should have guessed that to be the case, but in many situations, when one is focused on a goal, it becomes hard to see if something is truly good objectively. While this was not something that was explicitly being taught in the course, it was being taught by the course. While it was a very hard experience it was one that could be pushed through with love and passion for the process, something I did not have. It was not an easy time for me to come to that realization either. With my mental health state declining tremendously at the time, this came as a subconscious shock that I would only fully come to terms with during my three years back in Brazil (from 2017 to 2020). To put it simply, I had discovered I did not enjoy film production. I had grown up dreaming of it, attending workshops worldwide, writing and producing shorts; at the end what I enjoyed was none of those things

directly. For the time, both the good and the bad that came from this course had little to no meaning to me, but now, in hindsight, I see the hand of God in that experience. The only thing I used to think was how bad the experience was, now I see that it helped define my path better than most other courses. It is truly incredible to me how something so seemingly negative has had some of the best, character forming impact on me. This ability to transform something seemingly terrible and use it for good is one of the most surprising and warming attributes of God that I have personally experienced in this manner.

Through all of these experiences, the bottom line was the learning of becoming a better communicator, both internally and externally. When people are more confident in who they are and what they like they can more easily help others without doubting themselves. I believe that as Christians, it is our duty to be able to use art and our ways of communication to improve society around us. We are privileged to have the opportunity to be in contact with the Creator and His community. While I think an obvious application is to say that we learn how to create from the best Creator, I believe it is much deeper than that. We are not imposing our views onto others when we spread the Word of God. Much like how Professor Sarrouf taught me, we need to understand the other and help them, not tell them how and why they are wrong. We have the capability and perspective to do so, and through becoming better communicators we can do so more effectively and with love.

I spent some of my more tenuous years here at Gordon, but they have informed me much of who I am. A bad experience is not simply bad, it is one of the best learning moments, and a good experience can show someone what to emulate and how to proceed in certain situations. In learning about the depth of art, respect for others as well as the things one can learn from suffering, it really shows there is no one way of being taught something. While it is easy to teach

a specific film technique, it is harder to create a life changing appreciation for people, their works and the world around them. Those are all things I am greatly thankful for and would not want to forget in any way. I believe I am a better, more mature person from all of these experiences, and I can only hope that there will be many more in my future. We can never stop learning in our lives and respecting both the good and the bad events that occur in it. It is only through accepting that God works through both that we can truly have a better appreciation of what He does.

Pro Report

Name: Christopher Murray

Title: Senior Management, Online Learning & Senior Technical Marketing Manager

Organization: Epic Games

Interview Date: February 19, 2020

Method of Interview: Skype call

Christopher Murray represents the vocational field I am interested in, in this case video game development, because of his current, and previous, employment at games companies. Currently at Epic Games, he works on the company's relationship with their clients as well as gathering their input to change and improve their primary product: Unreal Engine. The Unreal Engine is used by many, if not most, game studios and is the basis for the development of their games. Murray also mentioned that the Unreal Engine is being used in other fields such as the film industry, architecture industry and automobile industry. What he told me therefore, applies to many industries today and is pertinent information to not only my desired field, but ones I can possibly join and have experience in as well.

How did you become interested in this field?

Murray was originally interested in 3D graphics in the early 1990s and was interested in the initial push towards it companies like Pixar had in the industry. He was self-taught in regards to what he knows about 3D graphics. At the time the people making the most use of it was the military, and most of the information came from their projects. From there he worked in video games for the arcade as well as simulations for theme park rides. Since there were no experts teaching these skills, he ultimately became one of the top instructors for 3D graphics in the 1990s and 2000s. His college undergraduate degree was in Communication Arts.

How does one get started in this field?

Murray described that his trajectory was very different than ones someone nowadays would be able to take. He joined the field at a time there was no formal education for it, but nowadays there are many courses that colleges and universities offer that cover the vocational field of video games. However, while that is a method for entering the industry, he reinforced that having the skills and demonstrating them through something like a portfolio, is more important. He explained that many of these colleges that offer video game development and design courses teach only the technical level of the craft which is the easiest to attain nowadays. There is a much larger interest in someone being able to fully design something competent than to build something through the use of the software.

What are the most effective strategies for seeking a position in this field?

Murray gave me a great amount of insight into this that I was not expecting. He recommended that I actually start either in the automobile or architecture industry if I want to eventually get into video games from a technical standpoint or start in the film industry for the creative portion of it. There are also students of game design that might make their way through smaller projects in smaller companies or through independent production of games (which is a growing scene). The bigger companies, like Epic, seek people with a good amount of prior experience before hiring them. He did not have much perspective on smaller game development companies however and did not inform me his opinion on that venue.

How did you get your current position?

Epic Games had been noticing that their game development engine was being used by industries other than the video game industry for many different purposes. They did not have a way to respond the needs of these companies, and the way they were using the software for

practical demonstrations and tests was not fully supported by the software. Epic wanted to reach out to these users and make the Unreal Engine better for their use as well. They built a team of 3D graphics specialists to run this side of their business. Among them was Murray, he held the position of Marketing Director. What that meant is that he went to the firms and got their feedback on what they needed for each of their use cases. He would then return and report to the engineering team what was required and how the software was being used. From that, the engineering team would make changes according to the necessities. Later Murray would become the head of the project as well as the project for the education of professionals with the software.

What is a typical day/week like for you?

His team is focused on the development of the Unreal Engine in accordance with the need of their clients, so his week begins with a meeting with all of the producers of the development teams. They have a film and television team, architecture visualization team, game development team, and foundations team. From there they establish what will be done for the week. His job after that is to meet with clients or the producers and find solutions to all of their problems. Murray described that his current job is way more managerial and involves making sure that all the teams are able to do what they need, and make sure that their weekly goals are met.

Exit Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose the Communication Arts major?

When I was coming into college, I really had a dream of becoming a filmmaker. Communication Arts was a broader approach to film that would've allowed me to explore other areas and concepts in the realm of filmmaking and communication.

2. What connections can you make between your Communication Arts classes and your general Core classes?

Communication is the basis to almost everything we do as humans. This means that in all other areas the concepts learned through communication arts can be applied. History, for example, is filled with stories, paintings and sculptures that represent conflicts and perspectives people had throughout history about the world and the people around them. To truly reach and interpret those are something that comes from the many things we learned throughout the Communication Arts course.

3. Describe one of most positive experiences you had in the department.

I believe the best experience I had was with the Perspectives of Communication. I have mentioned this before, but the ability to truly see films through the lens of an art piece really changed my perspective on a lot in life. It truly made me rethink how I wanted to develop and create things, and the depth that they had.

4. Describe one of the most negative experiences you had in the department.

Intermediate Production was a nightmare for me. The format of only having a professor once a month and only producing films during those days was incredibly hard. The amount of pressure and tension was what I believe would be the closest to a realistic worst-case scenario in an actual production, in that sense it was good, but I do not want to repeat that experience despite how instrumental it was for me.

5. Describe one of the most negative experiences you had at Gordon College, in or outside the classroom.

The worst would probably be a moment in a class where I completely shut down at the time of presenting something and was just quiet in front of class. It was a terrible feeling, that had nothing to do with anybody else but myself, but it was probably the most negative experience.

6. Describe a time in your life when you failed at something. What did you learn about yourself?

I failed in completing my course in four years. Yes, it was something I did not have much choice in, but in regards to my mentality there was also room for me to have thought of it differently. I was so set in finishing my degree that I did not insist in taking a break earlier. That was definitely fueled by the desire of my parents, but I should have been more insistent if I knew the gravity of the situation.

7. What are some of the weaknesses of the Comm. Arts department?

I do not know if this applies to the current state of the department, but the greatest weakness the department used to have was its instability. No one in staff stayed for a long time, and it was very hard to truly develop with depth without having someone who knew what was going on with you as a student and even as a person.

8. What advice would you give to freshmen who are thinking of majoring in Communication Arts at Gordon?

Sadly, there is a lot of heavy lifting that they have to do themselves if they truly want to follow something like film. That could be seen as a positive, but given the position many students find themselves in when they are entering college not having the tools to back them up at the start, it becomes hard to follow through with the desire to become a filmmaker in an environment like that.

9. If had to do it all over again, would you choose the Comm. Arts major? Would you choose Gordon College? Why or why not?

I would have chosen Communication Arts as a secondary major, and probably would have chosen game development, or computer science as my main major. I had a change of heart during these years, and Gordon does not have a focus on something like this, that I would prefer now. While the community is good at Gordon, that would be the only thing that would make me pick it again given my current goals.

10. What are your plans following graduation?

I am looking for an entry level job in game development, and will attempt to join them. Although, I just recently received the news that my OPT has been rejected so the possibility that I will be here doing what I want is very low, but not impossible. It is hard to find a company that is willing to sponsor you. So, I'll see.

Significant Works Analysis

Note: Given the theft of my computer which held all of my college projects I am unable to include them in this portfolio.

Communication Arts

1. I Hate Coffee – *Introduction to Screenwriting*

Summary

The story of a job interview, this script consisted of one scene that told, through dialogue and setting. The dialogue was short and snappy which gave it an unnatural rhythm that exemplified the nervousness and knowledgeability of both sides: the interviewer and interviewee. The roles, in terms of attitude, were swapped, and the interviewer was more on his back heels than the interviewee. This resulted from him having prior knowledge of who he was interviewing and seeing this opportunity as a redemptive moment. At the same time, the interviewee was in a moment of desperation and unwillingness given that the company that she was applying for had hurt her in the past, but she felt she did not have another option. It concludes with her accepting the job. This scene starts and ends with the waiter of the coffee shop, who takes the order at the beginning and brings it at the end. The relevance of the coffee exemplifies both the relationship with the title of the scene as well as the reluctance and improbability of this interview.

Analysis

This was the final project for my Introduction to Screenwriting course, and through it I was able to implement all I had learned it regards to description and dialogue while still adding my own style to it. It deeply reflected what I believed about compassion and community. These are things that were deeply rooted in the Christian morals that I held,

and still hold. It was also a moment of experimentation with the dialogue and context style of my scripts. I wanted it to feel like there was a whole world around them, much like in the real world, and that meant that many minor details from the world were taken for granted by the characters, and the audience was left to understand the world just like a person moving into a new country with given facts that they do not quite know but do not ask either.

2. Final Project – *Intermediate Production*

Summary

This was a short film that dealt with someone hearing a voice in an empty art gallery, and, after searching for its source, discovering that it was the janitor who teaches the protagonist not to expect things to be what they appear to be. This project was written, produced and edited by different students that were part of the group. I was interesting to see how through each step the story was interpreted in a different way.

Analysis

The great takeaway from this project was the actual process of its creation and not the final product itself. We were rotating through the roles of production throughout the development of this short. This included preproduction, production, and postproduction. Through this rotation method I adopted the role of Assistant Director during the production phase and that really clarified what kind of role I enjoyed. I had never really thought of the fact a more managerial role in a creative project would be something I would want to focus on, but it turned out to be the best fit for me. This has actually informed a lot of the things I chose to do, and the method I use in my approach to different projects. Discovering this preference was truly instrumental and I can now see

that God used a course I struggled through to change my perspective, and clarify my skills, as to what I am to do in the future.

3. Gender Stereotypes in Video Games – *Media & Society*

Location: Pages 17-28

Analysis

This paper is relevant to the industry I hope to be joining, and was written at a time I did not know that yet. There had always been a lot of mental commitment to the inner workings of the video game industry on my part, and in retrospect it should have been obvious to me that my passion lied in this industry. It was interesting going back through this paper because these are topics I am still passionate about and am going to directly address in my projects that are geared towards game creation. This is a situation where the three year break I took help me distance myself from the sense that I had to stick to something I did not really love, but now I am able to see more clearly, through God, that there is so much flexibility in what humans are and do. To force oneself to a specific plan even when it is not desired at all does not make any sense.

Non-Communication Arts

1. Artificial Intelligence – *Brains, Minds and Persons*

Location: Pages 29 - 35

Analysis

This paper exemplifies my thoughts on consciousness and mentality, and it is something I do think about a decent amount. As someone who is incredibly introspective, these types of topics are always on my mind and contribute to my writing and creation process in a major way. Before Gordon I did not have a passion, or a basic understanding, of

philosophy. Upon discovering it, I realized they dealt with topics I would think about on a daily basis and enjoyed greatly. My previous idea was of a topic that dealt with issues of no real significance to everyday life, but in fact it was the exact opposite.

Communication imbued with philosophy is what I believe to make the best examples of communication pieces as art. While in a post-modernist setting most things can be called art, this method is what elevates it to what I believe to truly be art. This type of piece looks to make an impact on the world, either at a personal level or at a societal one. They might not promote change but promote the expansion of one's perspective.

2. The Next Evangelicalism Book Report – *Contemporary Development in World Missions*

Location: Pages 36 - 38

Analysis

This book has been very influential on my views of the American church and makes me very hopeful for the future of Christianity in America. There are few books that have a truly lasting and paradigm changing impact on me as a reader and this was definitely one of them. It shifted my perspective on the state of the church from one of staleness to one of transition and hope. The approach is one that very much relies on the successfulness of communication between different people groups and generations. While it was not something that I agreed with immediately it is something I believe will happen eventually given the changing population of the States. It is also a transition that will require a lot of attention and love from the Christian community at large. The resistance that already exists might be the greatest barrier, but as the spreading of God's word is part of His will, I believe it will continue to happen.

Course List

- PED 015 E - DISCOVERY
- BCM 101 B - OLD TESTAMENT
- COM 101 A - VISUAL STORYTELLING
- COR 107 N - THE GREAT CONVERSATION
- PHI 118 C - EXAMINED LIFE

- BCM 103 B - NEW TESTAMENT
- COM 205 - PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNICATION
- COM 217 - INTRO TO SCREENWRITING
- HIS 121 B - HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

- COM 152 - MEDIA & SOCIETY
- COM 254 - INTRO DIGITAL VIDEO PRODUCTION
- ECB 101 A - PRINCIPLES OF MICROECONOMY
- ENG 141 B - WESTERN LITERATURE

- COM 371 B – PRODUCTION & PROMOTION
- ECB 117 - PRINCIPLES OF ACCOUNTING I
- MAT 134 A - SURVEY OF CALCULUS
- PHI 241 - BRAINS, MINDS AND PERSONS

- COM 350 - INTERMEDIATE PRODUCTION
- ECB 102 - PRINCIPLES OF MACROECONOMY

- ECB 245 - PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT
- THT 234 - INTRO TO THEATRE

- COM 325 - PR & ADVERTISING
- ECB 118 A - PRINCIPLES OF ACCOUNTING II
- ECB 277 - PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING
- NSM 202 E - SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE

- COM 271 A - CINEMATOGRAPHY
- BCM 308 H - CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
- COM 222 - JOURNALISM
- MAN 101 - BEGINNING MANDARIN I

- COM 492 - SENIOR SEMINAR I
- COM 493 B - SENIOR SEMINAR II
- PED 025 B - BADMINTON
- PED 039 A - MEN'S BALLROOM DANCING
- HIS 341 - BYZANTINE HISTORY
- MAN 102 A - BEGINNING MANDARIN II
- BCM 216 - CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT IN WORLD MISSIONS
- BCM 308 C - CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
- COM 371 D - VISUAL MARKETING
- COM 491 - SENIOR SEMINAR

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HIGHLIGHT OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Full project cycle video production experience in a multi-cultural team environment
- Led team to produce eight videos on time and within budget
- Direct team of four to record and broadcast live shows
- Proficient with Adobe Photoshop, Premiere Pro, Microsoft Office
- Fluency in English and Portuguese

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Communication Arts, Minor in Business Administration

Gordon College, Wenham, MA, Anticipated Graduation: May 2020

Related Classes & Professional Development

Visual Storytelling ♦ Introduction to Screenwriting ♦ Perspectives of Communication, Media & Society Introduction to Production ♦ Production & Promotion ♦ Intermediate Production
♦ Marketing ♦ Public Relations

New York Film Academy Four-Week Digital Filmmaking Workshop

New York Film Academy, Burbank, CA

DIRECT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Office Assistant

July 2019 -

January 2020

Soluz Eyewear Shop, São Paulo, Brazil

- Created marketing material for the firm's campaigns for all locations
 - Created posters Social Media Posts
 - Aided in solidifying the online visual identity of the brand
 - Worked on remaking the logo
- Managed and renewed the patents and copyrights of the company
- Participated in administrative decisions
 - Was part of the decision making for new investments
 - Aided in the renovation of the company's image
- Organized the client archive

IT Support - Freelancer

November 2018 -

January 2020

FK Lawyer Firm Contract, São Paulo, Brazil

- Implemented a new cloud-based system for the simplification of processes and cases that involved many lawyers
 - Taught staff members how to make use of the new system
 - Transferred case files and archives to the new system
- Purchased and transferred files and applications to new computers

Broadcast Director

December 2015 -

May 2017

Exit 17 Live, Wenham, MA

- A live "late night" talk show with SNL format influences recorded at Gordon College
 - Head the broadcasting team consisting of five student volunteers
 - Coordinate all efforts to broadcast the show live

Full-Time Video Producer

Summer 2014

Promente, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

- Brazilian based mental health startup
 - Hired to lead all efforts in video production including edits to scripts used for videos, coaching the on-camera spokesperson and directing, sound recording, and editing of all videos produced
 - Advised in the construction of the company's video production studio by selecting appropriate materials and equipment
 - Trained three employees for responsibilities listed above to ensure future productions were managed in my absence reducing the need to hire additional staff

Video Producer and Lifeline

January 2014 -

May 2014

Gordon College, Wenham, MA, USA

- Staff member of the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership competition that looked for student products and services to fund and promote
 - Recorded and edited videos of team presentations
 - Assisted teams in the creation of their promotional videos and on how to present themselves in front of an audience

Significant Works

Gender Stereotypes in Video Games – *Media & Society*

Throughout the years gender stereotypes have been a vehicle for many companies to promote their products by using idealized images of both genders. Video games are one medium that has succeeded in making the use of these stereotypes both in the products and in their promotional material with the goal to sell more units. This has been a growing problem within the industry and even with some of the developers. While there has been a growing push against this use of stereotypes there is still a strong use of these due to the profit that these idealized characters bring to the company (Near 14). Arguably this needs to be a decision that is strong within the development of the game itself, and not something that needs to fall on the hands of the business side of the company. But even as it is, depending greatly on the developer might not be the best solution because of their dependency on the publisher to create the promotional material.

One situation where the development studio wanted the promotional material to be featured one way and the production company, decided completely against it was in the blockbuster game Bioshock Infinite. The developers wanted the cover of this game to include the two main characters of the game, Booker and Elizabeth, but the final result was the male lead, Booker, on the cover alone with a gun over his shoulder. This would be a cover that would be considered boring and uninspired for most, but in an interview the creator of the game, Ken Levine, said, ““We went and did a tour... around to a bunch of, like, frat houses and places like that. People who were gamers. Not people who read IGN. And [we] said, so, have you guys heard of BioShock? Not a single one of them had heard of it”” (Kohler). By the end of this tour they were convinced that if they really wanted to

expand to the bigger ring of people who played games they would have to appeal to the type of people that only play first person shooter games like Call of Duty, and other games that are considered to be geared to the young male audience. The creator continued, ““I understand that our fan says, that’s great Ken, what’s in it for me? One, we need to be successful to make these types of games, and I think it’s important, and I think the cover is a small price for the hardcore gamer to pay”” (Kohler).

While the cover of the game *Bioshock Infinite* was something that angered some players, it did not affect the game in itself, but there are other situations where the content of the game was directly under attack due to its exaggerated images of characters. One of these games is the currently in development Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain. This is a game that revolves around espionage, and that, according to its creator Hideo Kojima, is going to be tackling some more mature and taboo themes. The problem arises with one of the game’s new characters who is a girl that is barely wearing any clothes. The name of this character is Quiet, and, as suggested by her name, she doesn’t talk at all. The creator’s intentions for the design of this character are also less than justifiable, “Inciting even more outrage was Kojima’s justification for the design, saying he made the choice to promote cosplay and action figure sales. It’s problematic enough to use a woman’s exposed body to promote sales, but it also flies in the face of Kojima’s early statements about his intention to put creativity before sales” (Strock). There were other instances that Kojima attempted to explain the design of this character due to the more mature themes, but as the writer of an article on the topic says:

Regardless of whether this is being done to promote action figure sales or to spark debate about the way we judge female characters, Quiet is ultimately a fictional character,

and incapable of speaking for herself. Her depth as a character, if there is to be any, will be directly overshadowed by the lust or disgust experienced by the people meant to connect with her (Strock).

It is true that the industry as it is, and as seen with the cover choice for Bioshock Infinite, is less than ready to first of all treat a character like this with respect. It is also hard to do so when it seems that the developers do not respect the characters themselves. The design of Quiet was chosen to sell more products and not to further the story, or the game as a whole. While many people are outraged by this design choice it is one that will still go forth to the final product.

There are countless examples of this treatment happening in many games, specially to female characters. While there is a growing number of female protagonists a writer for Gamasutra puts it best, “It seems that when you want to make a woman into a hero, you hurt her first. When you want to make a man into a hero, you hurt... also a woman first” (Alexander). This seems to be a motif that happens in most games. One recent game that highlights this is the revival of the old franchise Tomb Raider. This is a series that has spawned marginally successful movies, and has always presented an over sexualized main character, Lara Croft. In this recent reboot of the franchise there was a conscious push to make her a more believable character, one that was not over sexualized.

While they achieved a more realistic image of a girl in Lara Croft’s situation, they failed to present a character that was strong, but instead had one that had to suffer through horrible things to become the strong character that she is known to be. This seems to present two different problems that seem to be opposing when looked at. While the original character of Lara was physically stereotyped, she still was a strong character with a will of

her own and that took challenges head on. Her replacement, a good looking, yet a lot better clothed for the situation, girl that is afraid to do anything without the support of a male mentor character. Interestingly enough the story of this reboot also revolves around Lara saving her friend, another girl that is captured and that is powerless to escape throughout the entire adventure.

The same treatment is given to male characters as well, but in their case it is the woman that has to suffer once again. There is an enormous list of games with the exact same premise of a loved one, be it a spouse, daughter, girlfriend or so on, that dies and creates this new gritty version of this character that is suddenly empowered to do anything. This list includes: “Max Payne, God of War, Gears of War, The Darkness, Shadows of the Damned, Dante's Inferno, Deus Ex: Human Revolution, Dead Space, Watch Dogs” (Alexander), Last of Us, Bioshock Infinite, and so on. The list keeps going and continues to use women as the tool for the furthering of the story in a way that makes them nothing more than an item for cheap immediate bond forming with the player.

The problem might also lie with the consumers. While there are many examples of things that use gender stereotypes within the production side of games; there might also be a reason why this use is reoccurring. Games are an expensive form of entertainment which limits the amount of games that are bought and played, unless a consumer has enough money to buy all of the games which are usually sixty dollars each. Because of that production companies are usually less likely to allow new ideas through. This is a phenomenon that occurs in many creative industries including the film and TV industries. All of these mediums many times rely on a successful formula to retain audience with what is familiar

(Waard 7). In this case though it is due to the type of player that certain stereotypes are promoted within the industry. The sexual stereotype is one of them.

Many studies were made with the types of games that consumers enjoy and buy the most in the last few years that revealed patterns in which games are created. There seems to be a parallel between these two factors that control what types of games get made (Marchand 145-146). Currently the shooter genre is by far the most dominant in the industry. One example of this predominance in the market is the yearly release of the *Call of Duty* games. Each one of the is bigger than the last, and starting in 2011 each *Call of Duty* released became the biggest release in entertainment (Worstall). With each game being better received than the last one there is no reason for them to change their formula. While *Call of Duty*'s sales are not directly related with the gender stereotypes in the video games industry; it clearly presents that while there isn't a problem with a product it won't be changed. The same can be observed with the sexual exaggeration of characters in games.

Currently gender stereotypes aren't just well received, but are a strong factor for some gamers to go out and buy certain games. Most of the consumers that buy games that have these inaccurate depictions of characters are young men. They tend to buy games that either show a man with a gun in the cover or that has an attractive girl in the cover with little clothing and suggestive positions. While there are women that also buy these games they are a far smaller percentage than men (Near 12-14). This then becomes a problem with two sides: the majority of consumers that enjoy things as they are or do not mind the stereotypes, and the companies that see this data and infer that games that contain these inaccurate depictions of characters will be more successful than games that have more subdued characters. Another component of the stereotypes that comes with the fact that a bigger

percentage of consumers are male is that female characters are exploited in this way more than their male counterparts (Terlecki 24).

In the video game industry this is a problem that is not being addressed with any urgency and that is a problem in itself. Many people that complain about these problems with gender stereotypes do not avoid buying these games. They use the excuse that the story is good, or that the game's mechanic is good and that sometimes these aspects need to be overlooked. Even then the majority is still completely uneducated towards this problem and do not see it as a problem, sometimes even promoting it (The One-Sided Problem of Oversexualization in Video Games). Allegedly the greater part of the population that plays games are young boys that love violence, and by extension, first person shooters. They grew in a society that did not teach to respect the image of people and treat them as people therefore seeing these things as acceptable. This problem can many times be attributed to the education that a child is given. This sort of respect is something that is not taught as incorrect and offensive in households, but as something that is just part of the culture that needs to be accepted. There is no active action against it (Fighting Misogyny in Gaming Begins At Home).

Another factor to the problem of gender stereotypes are the over sexualized characters that are in so many games. Such games are Dragon's Crown, Soul Calibur, Dynasty Warriors, and many others (3 Times Videogames). This is something that occurs mostly to female characters. Even though it can also occur to male characters it is something completely different. With the example of Soul Caliber, "We have Misturugi, the shirtless Samurai warrior that would likely make many women swoon if he was a flesh and blood man. Then there's Ivy, the pirate's daughter whose chest seems to get larger with each new

installment of the game while her clothing shrinks” (The One-Sided Problem of Oversexualization in Video Games). There is a parallel with each gender, but the article goes on to say, “But what makes Ivy’s chest ridiculous while no one bats an eyelash and Misturugi’s head-sized biceps? Both are genetic mutants, by any stretch of the imagination, but one is sexual, and the other isn’t” (The One-Sided Problem of Oversexualization in Video Games). The difference with both genders and the way that they are stereotyped are completely different. Male characters are many times sexualized in games, but no one cares, they do care when it happens to female characters. The difference is actually in the fact of the way the culture sees each gender. While women are seen as objects, leading to their physical over sexualization, men are actually stereotyped in their actions, usually of violence. While both genders do experience gender stereotypes in many forms these seem to be the main ways that they are experienced in (Alexander; Williams). This also leads to the fact that many people do not see male gender stereotypes as a problem at all because there is an overall notion that physical sexualization is all gender stereotyping is when truly it is not.

There is one thing that seems to begin to redeem a part of this multifaceted problem, and it is the fact that more and more women are entering the industry into creative positions. Women like Susan O’Connor and Lindsay Morgan Lockhart have said in many interviews how the industry has never treated them differently just for the fact that they are women. O’Connor also said, “I think 99.5% of the audience doesn't care about the gender of the writer; they care about the quality of the story. And the writer works as hard as he or she can to deliver the goods” (Riendeau). There is actually an overall praise for female writers that are behind games. One thing that Lockhart said after explaining how there is little to no misogyny within the professional industry itself was, “If anything, the teams I have been [on

have been] earnest about wanting my perspective as a female gamer. They may sometimes regret that decision when I passionately insist on richer representation of female characters, but they do ultimately value my input!” (Riendeau). Susan O’Connor is one of the head writers for games like Bioshock 1 and 2, Tomb Raider, and Far Cry 2; and Lindsay Lockhart is a writer for the two most recent Halo games. These are all huge games within the industry and most receive great praise for their creativeness and high quality narrative.

As a whole this problem of gender stereotypes is something that is deeply engrained into everyone’s mind with each different culture. The idea of gender stereotypes is much bigger than people usually give it credit. As mentioned before, gender stereotypes doesn’t stop with how a character is physically portrayed, but it also has to do with the actions of the characters and how they go about doing these actions. This is a compound problem that affects both sides of the video game industry: both producers and consumers. While consumers grow up in a culture that has learned to accept these stereotypes; companies interpret their attitudes as desire for more of these stereotypes. There is something to be said about both sides and both sides need to be worked on in tandem. The growth of female members in game development studios is something that aids in the process of destroying this stereotypes. The problem still is that while the over sexualization of female characters is being deterred by these female writers they still have to get over the other aspect of gender stereotypes, the stereotyped actions and attitudes as seen by Susan O’Connor’s game Tomb Raider. There is still a long way for the industry to improve on how they tell their stories and portray their characters, but steps are being taken in the right direction slowly.

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Possible Artificial Intelligence – *Brains, Minds and Persons*

The question of machine intelligence has been a point of contention for over half a century and will continue until there is empirical proof of machine intelligence that please both sides of the argument, those being: people that believe that machine intelligence is already a reality today, and those who believe that there is much more progress to be made until there is a machine that can be truly called intelligent. It seems to me that the crux of both sides is what they each define intelligence as. With that in mind and the use of the most basic definition of intelligence there is room to believe that there truly are intelligent machines today even though they are not what would be considered intelligent like a human.

The first step to this debate seems to be based on Alan Turing and the test that he created to possibly assess if a machine could possibly be intelligent. The way that he presents his test is something similar to what he calls an “imitation game”, and that is where the constraining factor of this test is. The imitation game works by having a human guess if they are talking to another human or a machine. This is done by having two subjects, a human and a machine, answer questions given to them by an interrogator. Both answers are delivered to the interrogator in a form that would be indistinguishable from each other. One of the possibilities of having that is having both responses, from the machine and human, being typed on a piece of paper and handed to the interrogator. This would allow for the responses to be evaluated by content alone removing then the possible bias that might’ve existed at the point of discovering which response is created by a machine (Turing).

Most machines nowadays do not have the ability to pass the Turing test and rightfully so. The machines that have passed the test are created to simulate humans and have as their sole purpose to respond with human reactions. The most recent example of this was a

machine that simulated a human conversation in 2013 called Eugene. It was meant to act like a thirteen-year-old boy and entered the test as such. It was able to pass the Turing test. Many continue to be skeptical about Eugene's ability and if it truly passed the Turing test, but it is undeniable that it passed the test. It seems to me that this does nothing more than prove that machines can be made to copy human thinking and human interaction which is the goal of the Turing test, with it Eugene also proved itself to be intelligent. Before it is possible to move forward it is important to define why it is that the Turing test can signal intelligence, but why the test is not designed to evaluate the existence of intelligence. Eugene passed the test because of its ability to have a conversation that could possibly be taken for as a conversation that someone would have with a thirteen-year-old boy. The fact that it passed means that it was able to trick the interrogator, in this case multiple interrogators, into believing he was a human boy. Ultimately it fails the goal of the test once it is put in an environment that is not actively attempting to discover if it is human or not. If there was a way that Eugene could live a human life and there was no physical way that anyone would be tipped off to him being a robot he would not pass as a boy. Therefore, it fails to be human, and the Turing test fails at what it is supposed to test (Computer; Turing).

An argument that is commonly used against the Turing test and its ability to discover if machines are intelligent or not is the Chinese Room example. This is an idea presented by John Searle who does not agree that the Turing test is a viable option to discovering if a machine is intelligent or not, but he approaches it from an angle that contends a machine's possibility to interpret. The Chinese Room example states that there is a Chinese speaking person that asks a question, in a similar fashion to how the Turing test interrogator would ask a question. A person on the other side would have a manual that would tell what the response

should be. This person's job is simply to write down the answer, even though this person, the translator, does not understand Chinese. The response that the Chinese person receives is correct, but the person on the other side has no idea what the conversation is about. Searle's argument with the Chinese room example is that machines are programmed to simply regurgitate answers, and that there is no precedence for them to be thought as intelligent just from the fact that each response is preprogrammed for each type of question. With that he concludes that machines cannot be said to have intelligence from the fact that they can pass a test for which a machine can be designed to answer (Turing; Searle).

When Searle says that the Turing test is not a viable way to assess intelligence he is correct, but goes to far in saying machines can only repeat what has been given to them by their programming. Through this Searle rejects the possibility of having artificial intelligence since machines are bound to their programming, but it is possible to argue that the programming itself is exactly what give the machine the ability to be intelligent. In an almost comical way Searle makes the same fundamental mistake as Turing in attempting to compare any type of machine intelligence to human intelligence. It seems that there would be no real reason for machines to have human intelligent when they are not human; they would have their own machine intelligence. With that it is even possible to say that some of the most simple machines are intelligent since they are able to reach a different result from where it started. They are able to understand the information given to them and use said information to generate a result. A simple example of this is the thermostat. It is able to notice the temperature in a room and decide if the heating should stay on or if it should be turned of. In the most simple way the machine is able to conclude what it has to do even though it is very limited (Searle).

To most people such a response is not satisfactory, neither is it for me. It is true that for the basic definition of intelligence that previous explanation would suffice, but no one thinks of their thermostat as intelligent. The problem is finding the gap that bridges the idea of the thermostat being smart and something that would truly be considered intelligent by a larger group of people. With that said the definition of artificial intelligence cannot be constrained to the idea of being compared to human intelligence like the Turing and Searle assume. This idea of not having the human intelligence constraint is not new either. This is something that Robert M. French strongly believes in, and as a result also dismisses the Turing test as a good guide for discerning intelligence in a general form. French fails to find a good replacement for the Turing test and insists that it is still the best way to discover if an artificial being is intelligent or not. He calls into question a machine's ability to "categorize, to generalize, to make analogies, to learn and so on" (French 559). To French that seems to be the best way to discern machine intelligence, but he seems to fall again into the trap that is comparing general intelligence to human intelligence (French; Searle).

French seems to get the closest when it comes to really finding a good method to discover if an artificial being is intelligent or not, and as far as most formal theories go his seems the most appealing. The problem would be the existence of machines that would already pass his criteria. The question then becomes if French's criteria are enough to consider a machine intelligent. The example of a machine that would currently pass the things called into question by French would be Google's search engine computer which is able to fulfill everything that French proposes. Not even that it has the ability to learn as well. It knows when and what a person might be searching for a certain thing. It uses the environment of the person it is interacting with, such as time and location, to give them

personal suggestions. It also uses what it knows from each user's habits and preferences to give each one what they are probably looking for. It is able to understand colloquialisms and interpret them for a useful query as well. Most would still not consider it fully intelligent even though it would probably fulfill what French's requirements (French).

What seems to be the missing link is the ability to experience. French does refer to experience but through the veil of human intelligence, and what humans would consider experience. It is however possible that a machine might not experience things in the same way that humans do, for example, a pinch to the machine will not cause any reaction, unless it is pinched at a specific spot where a malfunction could result. Humans would react to that and many different responses could result. That is not the type of experience I am calling into question though. Experience that a machine could be entitled to have doesn't need to have any relation with one humans might have. An example that Turing uses is the ability to taste ice cream. That is not necessary for intelligence to be present. Those are experiences only possible to humans. Experiences must be more generic than such, something that suffices could be protection from harm. It knows that there might be a threat of some sort and it is able to take action against said harm. Current machines cannot do that, but that is something that most, if not all living creatures have some way of protecting themselves from harm.

I understand that such an argument also concludes that other animals are intelligent as well, and they are. They are not intelligent like humans, but they are definitely intelligent. They are able to analyze a situation and act upon it. It seems that a response like such would be a better form of discerning intelligence, even more than its ability to do advanced math problems. In this case even humans can be used as an example. There was a time that

complex mathematical problems were impossible for humans, but they were still considered intelligent. It's not about a culture or a instruction given to the intelligent being, but it is about something that is there from the beginning. This is something that machines have not yet achieved, but have the possibility of achieving. It is then that they would be able to be considered truly intelligent.

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The Next Evangelicalism Book Report – *Contemporary Development in World Missions*

The Next Evangelicalism by Soong-Chan Rah presents a very interesting perspective of the American evangelical reality that proves to be very hopeful yet divisive. The way Rah presents the past and the present of Evangelism in North America is very cohesive and sensible given the history and development of the country. It provides a thought-provoking perspective on what many would simply consider to be normal Christianity, but Rah describes it as the “western, white cultural captivity” of the church. At the same time, Rah flips the narrative around when speaking of the return of fruit from the rest of the world when Christian immigrants (many from countries primarily converted by Americans) return to the United States and aid the dying Christian community. He is also very hopeful about what the future holds for American Christianity, but I would say a bit inconsiderate and naïve about the possible flaws of his idealized future. Rah’s concern about the American Christian community – worldwide as well – is well backed, but seems obfuscated by passion. While not a bad thing, something to be considered.

Soong-Chan Rah starts the book telling the reader about his concern for the current state of Christianity in America and continues to describe the different aspects of it in a very compelling and trustworthy manner throughout the first part of the book (First three chapters). The chapters named “The Heartbeat of Western, White Cultural Captivity”, “Consumerism and Materialism” and “Racism” highlight a scary reality that, at least for me, was something that felt obvious but that I had never thought about. Given the history with race and the economic drive and duty placed on the citizens (Rah describes it as “To be a good shopper meant to be a good American.” (Rah, 48)) it can be almost assumed that Christianity, a religion that has been a cornerstone of the country’s development, would have been affected by it as well. Because of

these factors, Christianity in America is described as becoming too individualized, forgetting that there are pervasive, covert problems in the community. As a result of the individualization, Rah describes social problems like racism and poverty continuing without a solution, “When we claim that we are not complicit in the corporate sin of racism, we fail to grasp how being a beneficiary of an unjust system yields a culpability for those that benefit from that system.” (Rah, 70-71)

In describing the current situation, Rah likens this current state of American Christianity to the Jewish people at the time of the arrival of Christ and therefore in need of a drastic change given the complacency Christianity has fallen into. He says, “The Jerusalem Council depicted in Acts 15 releases the church from Jewish captivity and launches the church forward to continue pursuing the shalom community.” (Rah, 207) To Rah there needs to be a drastic shift away from the western, white Christianity that was developed in America, and he sees the solution coming from the outside. The immigrants that enter the US are in their vast majority Christian, “Immigrants and ethnic minorities are saving American Christianity. Immigrants and ethnic minorities tend to be socially and morally conservative.” (Rah, 74-75) Something he highlights that caught my attention is the fact that many of these places were evangelized by Americans in the preceding decades, and now these peoples are returning to reinvigorate Christianity again.

However, the solution to the problem is not the immigrants themselves but their offspring, or “the second generation”, according to Rah. This is where I found him to be laser focused on this idealistic idea that these would be the people to lead the next generation of the Church. He describes not only the second generation but also biracial and multiracial children of immigrants as having “the advantage of navigating multiple racial identities, giving them insight into the next evangelicalism.” (Rah, 185) As a downside, Rah explains that many people that are

second or third generation and biracial or multiracial can feel excluded from the society at large because they do not know where they fit in. I personally fall under this demographic, not here in the States but back in Brazil as well. I am multiracial and the fact is that many people, including myself, do not feel like they fit in and therefore many times adopt the predominant culture. The fear of being left out is sadly many times stronger than the will to stand out especially during the formative years. So, while I find Rah's perspective very hopeful, from my experience, it is not very realistic.

Rah's proposition and ideal for the future of American Christianity is one that is truly beautiful, and maybe that was the intent of the manner he described it. However, to take that as simple, inevitable truth is worrisome. That is something that will have to be fought for to become a reality, and will not happen in such an easy transition as he seems to indicate. Rah questions this himself but still chooses to conclude with a more optimistic purview. It is an ideal to strive for, but not a definite reality. I believe that there should have been a stronger call to action on Rah's part. The book was incredibly informative and enlightening towards the situation of Christianity in America, but the solution seems to be too idealistic to be taken serious by all. It would depend too much on the psyche of people who feel excluded and marginalized. At the end, I hope he is right however, the future he describes is a very beautiful one and one I wish for as well.