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DECOLONIZING GAMES[1]

DESCOLONIZANDO OS JOGOS

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Abstract

Introduction: "Práticas e Cuidado: Revista de Saúde Coletiva" is pleased to publish a lecture from our special section Conferences/Lectures, which aims to broaden the dissemination of debates and research on issues pertaining to contemporaneity and their interaction with education and health. **Aim**: The aim of this section was to promote a dialogue with researchers who study the world of games and their relationship with education, particularly with regard to the urgent need to decolonize games. **Method**: Our interviewee is Dr. Aaron Trammel, Associate Professor of Computer Science at the University of California, Irvine. This lecture was mediated by Dr. Suiane Costa, a researcher in the field of games at the interface with health and education. **Results**: Trammell addressed contemporary debates about how games promote the values of white supremacy and privilege, becoming a colonizing media and reproducing stereotypes, racism and violence against minority groups.

Keywords: Game; Decolonization; Racism; Education.

Resumo

Introdução: A Práticas e Cuidado: Revista de Saúde Coletiva tem a satisfação de publicar uma palestra da nossa seção especial Conferências/Palestra que se propõe a ampliar a divulgação de debates e pesquisas que trazem questões inerentes à contemporaneidade e sua interface com a educação e a saúde. **Objetivo**: Essa seção teve como objetivo promover o diálogo com pesquisadoras e pesquisadores que se dedicam aos estudos sobre o mundo dos jogos e sua interface com a educação, principalmente sobre a premente necessidade da descolonização dos jogos. **Método**: Nosso palestrante é o Dr. Aaron Trammel, que é professor associado de Informática, da Universidade da Califórnia Irvine. Esta palestra foi mediada pela Dra. Suiane Costa, pesquisadora da área de jogos na interface com saúde e educação. **Resultados**: Trammell abordou debates contemporâneos sobre como os jogos promovem os valores da supremacia e privilégio branco, consituindo-se em mídias colonizadoras e reprodutoras de estereótipos, racismo e violências contra grupos minorizados.

Palavras-chaves: Jogo; Descolonização; Racismo; Educação.

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INTRODUCTION

Práticas e Cuidado: Revista de Saúde Coletiva is pleased to publish a lecture from our special Conferences/Lectures section, which aims to broaden the dissemination of debates and research that address issues inherent to contemporaneity and their interface with education and health.

In this talk, the debate focuses on the urgent need to decolonize games.

Games, more than a pastime, represent a medium that brings together verbal, visual, sound and gestural elements, as well as rules and mechanics that carry meanings and emotions. They are therefore a powerful form of connection and communication. However, in modern times, both the process and the imagery used in the creation and enjoyment of games are almost exclusively based on a Eurocentric, white and colonial perspective (Bettochi, 2021; Ferreira, Garcia, Dias, 2023), reproducing universalizing information and visions, stereotypes and violence that confirm the dominant perspectives in a society that is hierarchical based on phenotype.

Game narratives and characters can act as an important instrument for strengthening and propagating stereotypes and, given their centrality in the construction of the social environment, they also contribute to their naturalization, confirming certain worldviews to the detriment of others.

Among the characters presented in the gaming universe, the black population is among those who encounter the most problems, because we live in a racialized world that hierarchizes lives. Games can present whiteness as something good or heroic, while presenting blackness as something dangerous or animalistic. In many games, we see "colonial" stories in which players take on the roles of European kings, conquerors and settlers (examples in Puerto Rico, African Star, Catan and the Civilization series, to name but a few). In many we take the side of white American soldiers or freedom fighters (America's Army, Resident Evil). There are also games in which you can fight with "good" white magic and "bad" black magic (e.g. Magic: The Gathering). These fantasies have their origins in colonial ideas that white Europeans are civilized and morally advanced, while the native peoples of the

South are inhuman creatures, beasts and savages (Harrer; Custódio, 2022). It is therefore important to recognize that games are not neutral technologies and that they carry stereotypes and racism.

Black players interacting with these games impregnated with colonial values, full of heroic white characters, begin to imitate and identify with them, introjecting behaviors, values, attitudes and a white-referenced culture, which doesn't fit within their own psychosocial reality and contains elements that degrade their own physical, cultural and ethnic self. Imaginative play can lay the foundations for feelings of inferiority, self-hatred, rejection of their people and psychological suffering (Wilson, 2022). Seeing themselves represented all the time by racist and dehumanizing discourses and images produces a distortion of self-image, damage to self-esteem and affects cognitive, emotional and social aspects of this player (Grossi et al, 2020).

To deepen this debate, our speaker, Prof. Dr. Aaron Trammell, who is an associate professor of Computer Science at the University of California Irvine, presents reflections on how games promote the values of white supremacy and privilege, constituting colonizing media and reproducing stereotypes, racism and violence against minority groups and the urgent need to decolonize this media.

The lecture given by Professor Dr. Aaron Trammell on the decolonization of games was mediated by Dr. Suiane Costa, a researcher in the area of games at the interface with health and education.

LECTURE BY PROF. AARON TRAMMELL

In this talk I want to talk about what I mean when I speak about decolonizing play. I think it's important to define some keywords that way we can all understand what is being discussed.

To start, I think we should begin by disambiguating what I mean when I talk about white privilege. For me white privilege is a term that comes from activist communities before it moved into academic discourse. It is a lived observation that white people tend to have socioeconomic advantages over people of color. Importantly, following the work of Sara Ahmed, it is also an affect. It is the idea that

a middle-class suburban lifestyle is deserved and that it will make you happy. People who enjoy white privilege are not necessarily white supremacists. I say this to contrast with white supremacy, which I'll often speak about in two forms, but generally when I talk about white supremacy, I am talking about the latter, which would be capital W white supremacy epitomized here in North America by a group like the KKK. And white supremacy is the ideology that one's fair skin tone and or European ancestry is superior.

Additionally, it is the belief that this superiority justifies violent and domineering power relationship over others. This is, I call it, capital W white supremacy, because this is an implicit ideology. It's been produced by state groups by things like giving property rights to some people and not others historically, by giving voting rights to some people and not others historically. And so although there have been amends and reparations made at least in North America along those lines, there is still a bunch of people who believe that this was a wrong decision. And so white supremacy comes as an ideological facet and historical material implication of those set of state decisions.

The other way it works is more infrastructural and that would be lower case W white supremacy and lower case W white supremacy is the idea that society itself is geared towards giving concrete material advantages to white people. And I will try to disambiguate if I use this term as I speak, but I want to go over both of them.

One being a clear and concrete ideology that is shared by people as part of a hate group or adjacent to a hate group. And the other as being a sort of attitude that permeates all facets of social life and leads to social inequality between white people and BIPOC people, black, indigenous, and people of color. So those were the key words I really wanted to talk about.

But for this talk, I kind of want to talk a little more about how these keywords are implicated within the sort of concept of play that I think many of you in this room and myself included work with. I kind of wanted to go through a history of some of the main names and play theory and talk to you all about how these ideas come out in their work and how they're actually still very much attached to this concept of play that we may all be still using today. And my goal in that is to kind of show you that when we talk about play, it's not really a neutral or apolitical term that there it is a

term rife with politics and these are an important and racialized sense of politics. So, it's very much connected to this idea of colonialism and all these other terms that really come from it.

Discussing play, there's two main traditions also I'm going to talk about today: the one can be discussed briefly as play as culture and the other as play and learning. It's my understanding that many of you work in the play and learning space, but both of these discourses, these conversations, work together and inform one another. When we talk about play, we're often talking about how ideas that are derived from both of these traditions have impacted and influenced one another.

And so to go through the theoretical notes here, highlights here, we have some key texts in play and culture. You have Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens written in 1938. That's an art historical approach to play, very famous for the concept of the magic circle and the idea that play itself is a voluntary activity. We also have Roger Caillois's book, Man, Play and Games, written in 1958. It's a sociological approach to play. And in it, he posits the play has several different forms, including competition, chance, imitation, and vertigo. And then finally, we have Bernard Suits, who also builds on these ideas of play in his book, The Grasshopper. And he talks about how play can kind of posit the utopic dream, an imaginary where people are able to play the game of life in a way where they win, and they move into a sort of utopic space. Of course, all utopia, all spotlights, cast shadows, and even this utopia might be corrupted by some of the colonial aspects of play itself.

Moving over to play and learning, there's another set of conversations here happening within this space. And in some ways, conversations that have happened earlier. Now, you'll notice here also that these timelines a little out of order with John Piaget publishing his book before Lev Vygotsky published his book. And that's because Piaget's book Play Dreams and Imagination was translated into English before Vygotsky's book. And so, Vygotsky's popularization as a key text in learning generally follows Piaget's popularization. I just kind of wanted to listen to them how they were chronologically appreciated by the English-speaking world, because I think that's also important to this colonial narrative that I'm tracing for play here.

Groos' work, The Play of Man, is an evolutionary approach to play. And he argues that play is a process that has come about due to natural selection that we have evolved the ability to play. This gets built on in all of the work that I showed previously in my play and culture slide, but also it gets very much built on John Piaget, who argues that there is a psychological approach to play in learning, and that we do this through processes of assimilation, pretending to do something until we are able to do it over and over again, and association, which is noticing how different things reflect or don't reflect each other. And this is very much what Caillois would talk about when he discusses mimicry or imitation. These are fundamental to the psychological process of learning, according to Piaget and also Vygotsky, who talks also about play as affect, and this thing he calls the zone of proximal development, which are basically these steps at different ages where we learn to play in different ways, and they help us basically learn bit by bit how we approach the world. And I kind of want to lay all of this out in detail, because I think it's important to challenge some of these fundamental concepts that are scientific approach to play and learning is predicated on. So going back through some of these texts, we can really see some problematic ideas circulating, not just problematic, I would actually say kind of horrifying, nauseating, especially as a black man speaking to this history.

The key thing that really comes out here in the overall texts is a dichotomy between what is referred to as civilization, and I put scare quotes around it because I don't believe in it as a term, and also quote, barbarism, which I also don't believe in in this term. But these are ways that play tends to be discussed as things that either civilized or barbaric people do. So, this illustration here is from 1902, it's by a man named Udo J Kepler, who was an illustrator for Puck magazine. And so here it's a satirical illustration showing the forces of civilization epitomized by British and American ideologies fighting against the forces of barbarism, epitomized here by black or Aboriginal and Indigenous people. And I wanted to put this here because this is contemporaneous to many of the discourses around play that we're going to discuss, such as Karl Groos'. And so one of the defenses that white supremacists tend to make of this work is that it is historically inaccurate to say that there was a discourse around racism happening. And you can see very clearly here that there

were some people who were concerned with this discourse around civilization, even though in scientific and academic writings at the time, people were very much using the term civilization and pitting it against a racist understanding of other people that were termed barbaric or primitive. And this very much does come up in the play literature of the time. For instance, Karl Groos said: "Amongst primitive races where the life work is the most part guided by natural impulse, at least in the case of males, boys may get sufficient preparation from play for their later life, even though they usually have some instruction at the outset.

But with civilized peoples' usage to earnest, persistent effort that is not dependent on caprice or impulse is an indispensable condition of success in the struggle for life, and for this reason, school life should promote a high sense of duty as opposed to mere inclination." So immediately, right there, you see this idea that the progenitor of play theory Karl Groos, who argued that play was something that people evolved, also held a White supremacist view, where he felt like some races were actually primitive and other races were actually civilized. And as he went on to discuss the implications in play and esthetics, this sort of idea that play was something that would civilize and had a civilizing function would be something that was imitated and repeated over and over again in the play theory, just as a colonizing country would come in colonized through violence, weaponry and brute force. Also in this idea of play, we have this sort of intellectual colonization, where there is an idea that something like civilization can be understood, and that that is something that upholds an European ideal of culture, a white European ideal of culture.

Continuing with Johan Huizinga, who wrote about play and culture and had the idea of the magic circle, writing: "For the savage with his extremely limited powers of logical coordination and arrangement, practically everything is possible." Here Huizinga is speaking to the idea that in play, sometimes when we make believe, we imagine that in the world, we can do anything and anything is possible. But here, he also brings in the sort of racialized discourse and compares the sort of childlike energy of play, which he also notes and discusses to that of the behavior of what he terms here to be savages. And by what he means by this are absolutely people living in the global south, people living in the non-European world, and of course people who have been impacted by the slave trade. And he's also falling

upon these really, really dark tropes around what rationality and logic is and who has these things, because these concepts were also European constructed scientific concepts. So, when he talks about logical coordination, he's also talking about European thinking and culture.

That's a really challenging and difficult part of revisiting his theory. Now also in his defense, he is writing as somebody who lived in Switzerland during the occupation of Nazi Germany. So, barbarism, which he saw in Nazism, was also weighing heavily on his mind. Yet he is at the same time reproducing in his writing the very same white supremacist tropes around superiority of races that the Nazis would use to indoctrinate people within Europe in World War II. These ideas continue on to inform the other aspects of play theory.

Jean Piaget, writing contemporaneously with Vygotsky, would also root his work within a set of European cultural norms and sensibilities. The interesting thing that Piaget does is he actually doesn't assume or he kind of takes for granted all the different ways that his work is actually plugged into a very, very Eurocentric dialogue. In order to research the psychosocial development of language and play within children, Piaget simply observed his own children and their behaviors as they grew, and Piaget was Swiss. Thus, the models of play and learning that Piaget posits centralizes and revere, through their methodological proclivities, white European culture. So although the sort of racism in Piaget's work is not as explicit as it was in Huizinga's work, or Karl Groos' work, he did cite and share his appreciation of their work. And then he didn't actually ask himself if there would be any cultural differences between the observations he made with his children and those children from some other culture. You can again see the sort of white normativity of play being re-inscribed in Piaget's work. And that also extends to Vygotsky's work within the space of play and learning as well, as his work was very similar to Piaget's and built it out within the same sort of line, just kind of talked more about how learning worked in earnest and in detail.

Moving over back to play and culture, Roger Caillois' work, actually Caillois was really concerned with what I would explain as idea of miscegenation, racial miscegenation and play. And this is coded again in his work, so you really need to read through it to see how this works. But when he talks about these different ideas

like competition and chance, for instance, he codes them onto different cultural tropes. He talks about competition and chance being forms of play that happen in civilized countries, and by this he means like Europe or North America. But then when he moves on to talk about mimicry and vertigo, he talks about these as being less civilized forms of play. And he also even has things he entitles, "forbidden combinations" of play, which are things like when you have combination, competition and imitation working together, he thinks this is a very dangerous kind of play. I argue that this is actually him saying there shouldn't be a sort of racial mixing between these tropes of play, because the kind of play that people do in Africa is not the sort of play that people do in Europe and dangerous to sort of mix these things together. He wrote directly, and I quote, "Just as the principle of agon, competition is a roughly destroyed by vertigo, chance or alea is similarly destroyed by mimicry. And there is no longer any game, properly speaking. He was really concerned that bringing these different forms of play, which he saw as productive within their different sociological contexts, would be dangerous. I think this is actually just an argument against racial mixing, which is really, really dark and really, really unsettling in and of itself.

Continuing on, I think today, we have many scholars who are doing some great work in unsettling this. I wanted to point to a few before I jump a little bit into a reading of Repairing Play, because I think it's important to show that it's not just me working on this project. It's actually many other people doing great work as well.

One amazing text is by my friend Souvik Mukherjee. He has an essay called Playing Subaltern, which I adore. And he writes here, "The player, whether from the erstwhile colonized countries or elsewhere, nevertheless, writes and writes back in games that engage with questions relating to colonialism, whether he chooses to or not. The video game medium offers the simultaneous possibilities of subalternity, protest, elitism, and hegemony; is the actualization by the player that results in a deeper understanding and experience of the post-colonial." And what Souvik is explaining here is that when you play a game with clearly colonial tropes, for instance, Far Cry 3, you not only play it and read it as a player, but also the game reads back to you. You have your own interpretation and your own reading. You might derive pleasures of this game, which are at odd with the pain of this game as well. And that sort sense of ambivalence that he's describing here, I think, is actually

really important to understanding and recognizing how the post-colonial experience that many of us are experiencing in our lives today can be navigated or negotiated as we think through play. Recognizing and embracing that ambivalence is really important to thinking critically through the post-colonial nature of games and play right now.

There's also Meghna Jayanth, who did a keynote at DiGra in India, in 2021. And she talks about how white protagonists are often portrayed in games as heroes. They are exceptional, they grow in power over time, they make consequential decisions for others in the world, and they are forgiven, they are individualistic, they carry guns, they remake the world as a mode of self-expression, and we do too when we play these games, and they do not see race, nor are they read through the lens of race. And I think here really concretely, if you have a chance to watch Meghna's keynote in Digra, India one day, it's really brilliant, and I think it's a wonderful explanation of how whiteness in the games we play pervades the discourse and creates a situation where we take many things within that discourse for granted.

And there's the fantastic Tara Fickle who's written a book called The Race Card. And in The Race Card, she writes that "the ludic provides the very definition of fairness that neoliberalism leaves to. And by this, you know, she's saying, whenever we talk about games, whenever we talk about play, whenever we talk about games as a different kind of expression from like literature or others. Where individuals or groups position can be seen as deserved in the same way that a winner and loser of a footrace can be said to deserve their respective lots so long as they both started at the same lines".

I think here she's basically saying that games assume a problematic definition of fairness in their very construction, because they assume that there is something like balance that can permeate the games that we play, this is a concept, and that games will always be balanced. When we know actually games themselves can often be very rigged by the forces of society that we live in in a variety of ways. And these ways are often, when you trace them back, directly linked to colonialism. So at this point, I'm going to break into part two of the talk, which will be more performative. It's me reading some highlights on Repairing Play, stringing them together.

It's a very lyrical text, so I wanted to read some of it out loud to you so that you could understand what my argument and contribution to this discourse in games and play is. I'm just going to kind of jump into here and begin reading , and I'm also going to ask you to listen to some things along the way. I might not have time to play them all, but hopefully I'll be able to play some. And as you experience them, I just appreciate it if you use your ears and kind of meditate with me on the meanings of these things, because I also believe that play is multi-sensory and that when we play things, we should be thinking also about music and listening as a form of play and poetry as a form of play. And that itself is part of the proof that I submit to you with this project and my book Repairing Play.

I also wanted to put this together. I am really proud of the cover because in many ways it's a sort of continuation of the conversation began by Roger Caillois. And this is a very deliberate citation of where I would like this concept to go in the present.

(Song: Sam Cooke, "Chain Gang")

Let's start with the problem. Our definition of play is broken. We game scholars know this intimately having watched as the terms most emancipatory potentials have been appropriated and co-opted by hatred far-right rhetoric and bigotry over the course of the last decade.One need goes no further than a voice chat for online play, a Twitch stream or Reddit forum to observe how adolescent hate speech sits alongside gameplay.

Was Gamergate the moment where play was appropriated by hate? Or was it instead the moment when a century of rot eating away at the concept broke through? Folks, our ship is sinking and we're about to be washed out to sea. Maybe we've been on the ship so long that we've forgotten what freedom is. Is play our savior or is it our oppressor? The black radical tradition is filled with stories of slave ships. It's also filled with stories of art, music and other forms of play that have very little to do with games. "That's the sound of the men working on the chain gang" goes the refrain from the old Sam Cook song.

The men in the song are singing but they're also in pain, they're playing, they're singing about how agonizing their work is, how miserable they are and how singing itself gives them hope. Play as read through the lens of the black radical

tradition is about diving into the messiness of life and embracing a philosophical praxis that is down, around, outside and always just out of reach. The slave ship defines the black radical tradition as its specter haunts us all who think within it.

It's a history that's no history at all. This location, relocation, trauma, pain, suffering, a hideous legacy for sure, but one that inadvertently produced kinship between centuries of black and other minoritized folk slowly piecing back together what centuries of colonialism broke. But what does this have to do with play?

In short, I want to repair a definition of play that has been largely informed by scholars and philosophers working within a white-trick European tradition. This tradition of play theorized most famously by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, French sociologist Roger Caillois, Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, and New Zealander Brian Sutton Smith read play in a mostly positive sense and asserts that certain practices, namely torture, are taboo and thus cannot be played. I argue that this approach to play is short-sighted and linked to a troubling discourse that renders the experiences of black, indigenous, and people of color invisible. In other words, by defining play only through its pleasurable connotations, the term holds a phenomenological bias towards people with access to the conditions of leisure. Indeed, torture helps to paint a more complete picture where the most heinous potentials of play are addressed alongside the most pleasant, yet in doing so, the trauma of slavery is remembered. In rethinking this phenomenology, I aim to detail the more insidious ways that play functions as a tool of subjugation, one that hurts as much as it heals, and one that has been complicit in the systemic erasure of BIPOC people from the domain of leisure.

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney are unflinching when they define blackness. "Blackness is the site where absolute nothingness and the world of things converge. Blackness is fantasy in the hold. We are the shift if we choose to be, if we elect to pay an unbearable cost that is inseparable from an incalculable benefit".

To restate, we are "the shift because we have been shipped." In cargo holds of slave ships, treated as objects, black subjectivity in this tradition is inhabiting objectification while also contending with the void of a shackled future and a colonized past. The discomfort of living in this place, this history, is itself the potential

of the black radical tradition. Embracing and understanding this dissonant place is reparative. It locates within itself a common ethic of resistance, struggle, and even survival. To repair play, we must strip away the racist dichotomies of civilization and barbarism that themselves were used to justify horrors like the slave trade. We must abandon the conceit that some forms of play are more intellectual or noble than others. For until we do, we are all still in the hold together on a sinking ship in dire need of repair. But here, within this hold, there is an ember of hope.

As critical race theorist Frank Wilderson has written, I would make my hold in the ship and burn it from the inside out. Indeed, let the blaze of the slave ship cast our shadows over the inferno of play that colonizes everything it touches. This play that is rooted in a fundamental and toxic lie of equity, morality, education, and leisure has long excluded BIPOC people, and we know how to repair it, and we shall dance, sing, chant, and celebrate as we do.

Now I'm just going to play a quick clip from the movie Dumbo…this is a song in the movie Dumbo. It's called The Song of the Roustabouts. And you can see what's happening in the illustration here. Here you have the Roustabouts, who are these black workers. They're basically a chain gang, the kind that Sam Cook was describing in his song, working. And they sing a song and wear happy faces as they do their work because this is Disney and, of course, as black people work, they can't be portrayed as being in pain or agony. This is the song of the Roustabouts, and if you have an opportunity to Google it after this talk, I recommend that you do it because I think it will inform this next bit of the talk. And this is the song that they sing, it Includes lyrics like: "We work all day. We work all night. We never learned to read or write. We are happy, hearted Roustabouts." And of course, this is imitating a number of black stereotypes that were circulating at the time in the 1950s about black people being less intelligent than white people. But of course, at the same time, they're doing this sort of infrastructural labor and they're happy about it. So, going back to Repairing Play, the problem with civilized play is that it pits BIPOC people against one another. The Disney film Dumbo speaks volumes here.

In Dumbo, the protagonist, an elephant named Dumbo, is antagonized and later befriended by a murder of crows. The crows in the movie are all illustrated as hept cats speaking with jive and singing a scat. And of course, they're black. In the original release of Dumbo, the main crow was named Jim Crow, an allusion to the offensive minstrel performer who used the moniker Jim Crow in the 19th century. The racism in the movie was so blatant that Disney later changed the character's name to Dandy Crow in an effort to make the movie less obviously offensive. The crows in the film are playful, they sing, cackle and strut around singing. And I bring this scene up not only because it shows how the play of black people was appropriated, twisted and commodified by a white film studio, but also because this inclusion was defended by Floyd Norman, the first man who was hired as a black animator by Disney. In defense of the crows, Norman involves the naivety of fun as a rationale for their inclusion, he wrote an article for his blog entitled Black Crows in Other Politically Correct Nonsense, where he explains, and I quote, "if you remember the story, a group of cool crows nesting in a field decided to have some fun at the elephant's expense. After Timothy Mouse scolds the feathered group, they have a chance, a change of heart, and decide to encourage the little elephant. The song is pure fun and entertainment and the animation is inspired." Norman's opinion here is clearly colored by the unique pressures he faced as the first black animator hired by Disney.

Many model minorities, minoritized people who are the first in their industry, feel a pressure to perform not just competency at their craft, but also competency with the social norms of the community that they are entering. Thus Norman defends the inclusion of black characters in Dumbo, despite the stereotypes they embody, at the expense of critiquing the white supremacist culture from which they had been created. If Norman were to call the crows racist, he would be critiquing the company, and thus his peers as racists. He would be violating a social norm and risk being seen as uncivilized. In other words, he would be playing the spoil sport. And that is the same, of course, for the roustabouts.

There is a video by Max Roach, and it's called Triptych: Prayer, Protest, Peace and when you get towards the end of this song - Max Roach is the jazz drummer -, Abby Lincoln, the singer, is screaming and hollering, and the screaming

is so severe that it had the neighbors checking in to see if she was all right. And again, there's a sense of ambivalence. We don't know if she was all right. We do know that they were black people working in a white area and a white studio, and the coded nature of that meant that the neighbors assumed that there was abuse happening in the performance of the song, actual abuse. But it's not known whether this was happening or if this was just stereotypes that were brought in to the studio by the white people around it. Fred Moten really likes to problematize that. He calls this, her scream here, the break. And understanding and appreciating the aesthetics that are born out of violence, danger, and pain, for Moten, is part of the black radical tradition. And while in his research tradition tends to focus on forms of play that are not gameplay, the aesthetics of black designers, composers, writers, and instrumentalists choose across all mediums speaks to what is common there.

Perhaps Franz Fanon said it best when he wrote, "not only must the black man be black, he must also be black in relation to the white man." Fanon is referring to the significance of colonization in the construction of blackness. Blackness as an identity or as a lived experience exists in so far as a result of years, decades, and centuries of subjugation and struggle. Indeed, it is the brutality and violence of colonization that pulls the inequity of blackness into focus and which has long been a common point of solidarity between BIPOC people worldwide. The focus is intended to shine a light on developers from a particular history of minoritization and do so doing speak to the unique conditions of blackness globally. So we minoritized designers, game designers have endured abuse, harassment, struggle, and dehumanization as we work to make our excellent games. Hortense Spillers, terms this break, a rupture in African culture.

She writes that "the massive demographic ships, the violent formation of a modern African consciousness that takes place on the sub-Saharan continent during the initiative strikes, which opened the Atlantic slave trade in the 15th century, interrupted the tears of black African culture".

And contending with the ascetic social and narrative impact of the fissure, described by Spillers means sketching the conquerors of an artistic scene that's endured in spite of its hardship across space and time. A scene that knows itself by the virtue of this history more than in it than even the folks know each other.

And Moten calls this the break, for him it's the essence of the black radical tradition. It's a recognition that black radicalism demands holding on to contradictions, embracing both the horror and the hope of expression. Moten describes music when Abby Lincoln screams in Max Roach's improvisational free jazz, Lincoln sounds troubled by the trace of the performance of that which she tells, and the performance of that which the performance. Is Lincoln in pain or is she exuberant? She's both and neither. She is the scream. She doesn't own the scream. She's just performing the scream. She's more than the scream. Lincoln's theorization of a black radical aesthetic is indebted to W.B. Du Bois' double consciousness where one is always evaluating themselves through the eyes of white society. Black artists constantly put this duality into their work. Their work is radical because they are radical. Survival, perseverance, and success of black people and cultures that have been colonized and defined by what Europeans is itself a form of radical expression.

Understanding how play arrests, we must juxtapose the concept of arrest, the ability to cease free movement of another body against the concept of volunteerism. Arrest helps to reveal through the language of discipline and policing that volunteerism of play is a one-sided affair. Huizinga's original theorization of the term argued strongly that volunteerism was a key aspect of play. I believe that this is true only for one of the many parties engaging in play. Like a police arrest, which is voluntary for the police, I argue that the power relations construed by play are similar. Play captivates. It captures and when we play, we capitulate. And so some of the implication of this idea of overturning this concept of play as completely voluntary is thinking through play as something that's not a mutual and consensual activity between two subjects, but an activity that is sometimes very violent, where one person is the subject and the other is made to be an object. Play is something that also polices. And torture, therefore, is something that for some people is unfortunately play. Moving against the grain here, I want to think about things like play as affect, trying to think through how when we get into brown feeling of black feeling of understanding how the feeling of minoritized people everywhere is not the same as the feelings that white people have, the joyful feelings and the normative feelings of pleasure that are usually wrought by play. I think we come to a very

different definition. One where we can see play, A, as both pleasure and plain, one where we can understand that even when we're in a mournful narrative, say a slave song, that's also play. The evocation, according to Frederick Douglas with slave songs, was supposed to be cathartic, to bring about tears as an educational way of explaining to the white audiences that reading his work on abolitionism in North America as important. And thus, allowing us, when we design games, to think through pain as allowing for a set of more inclusive narratives within the play of games. And finally, I would say, importantly, moving towards reparation and reparations and for me, this can take many forms.

Importantly, I want to argue that for reparations, we can support, we must support BIPOC artists, players and designers. I think that repair-ations is a pun also. It's important for us to read up on the legacies of colonialism when we discuss and think through play and that's how people educate themselves on how this is actually a horrific affair and, unfortunately, I think most of the world is under red on the topic. I don't think that this is a sort of mediocre substitution or mediocre call to action either. In the United States right now, book bannings are being called for everywhere, based on the fact that literature is often radical. And the idea, the very small idea that getting people to read up on the legacy of colonialism is itself radical and important act. The white supremacists of the world do not want the children of the world to do this reading and I think we should be educating ourselves and educating others on the sort of horrific violence of colonialism. And then finally, in our work, I think we must understand and contend with the fact that play is always political. It is not neutral, nor is it always necessarily positive in practice and as we go out to design, especially as we design games for black populations to play or minoritized populations to play, this is an act that is often an overtly political act. And assuming that the pleasures of play will be shared by these audiences and will be healthy for these audiences, I think is a problematic step to take on the topic.

And I want to embrace the idea that play is political and that when we play we are making a political choice and we are designing political things. So that's really where my thoughts are here on this topic of decolonizing play. I appreciate you all coming along for this ride and listening and letting me perform some of the texts from my book, Repairing Play for you. I hope this material has been helpful

and interesting. And I'm also excited to talk about anything here. If it's something that you found interesting, if you're having feelings about or if you thought it was exciting, I'm just really open to the conversation. For sure, I got some of this wrong and that's important and I really look forward to discussing this with you in the conversation to follow. So thank you all.

- Volunteering in the game

I'd love to discuss voluntarism in gaming a bit more. But before I do, I'd like to make an observation, because you also talked about the idea of games that promoted health in the community. And we have a narrative, at least in higher education, in the United States and in the social sciences about the Chicago school, which was the sort of foundation of the social sciences in many of the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. And they developed qualitative methods specifically to infiltrate black communities in Chicago and civilize the people living there. So this kind of social scientific apparatus of helping people through the process of civilization is something that is also inherited by social scientists working with games and learning today. And this is linked to the same worrying practices that were criticized in the Chicago School for not adequately creating or including people from within the communities in the design of the projects and the projects that would in turn inform the policies of those communities. And that's a very dark moment in the history of the social sciences as well. But yes, to the concept of voluntarism.

It's funny that you say that, because before I gave this talk, I went through all the literature again that I was going to share with you. And it was really kind of a trip to see that, actually, in games and education, looking at even the really problematic and difficult-to-read texts by people like Karl Groos and Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, nobody believed that. Nobody believed that games were actually something voluntary within this secondary discourse. Groos, when he was writing his really horrible notes on how civilized races play with each other and other races play differently, had to acknowledge that play wasn't always a pleasurable thing. And, in fact, it was often a kind of disturbing, non-consensual act that is all over the literature on games and learning.

What actually happens is that there is a second discourse that is based on the philosophy of John Locke, the American pragmatist philosopher, about games and learning. Locke believed that children were difficult to manage and therefore needed to be persuaded to learn. So, for him, games were like that situation with the carrot on the fishing rod. If you could get children to play they would learn, if they were educational games, because they would be persuaded to learn. So there's a rather subversive story that says: "Don't think about the violent side of the game. Look at the pleasurable side of games, because that's how we can encourage children to learn" that historically runs through the discourse on games and learning when you start to examine it more closely. And over time, the conversation about play dies down and becomes just a conversation around play and learning. And then we don't even have this discourse that these things aren't enjoyable because we all assume that games are enjoyable. But actually they're not, because if you look at casinos, gambling and all these other spaces, they're spaces where sometimes it's very pleasurable to gamble and sometimes it's very, very painful. And, in fact, gambling can be life-threatening.

And that's why, at least in his initial speech, Huizinga doesn't use the term gambling. Caillois goes along with this because Huizinga wants to recover this idea of play and recover an idea of play. This means that it can't be what the puritanical people who read his literature would think of as uncivilized, things like games of chance. So he does another magic trick. He says: "Well, games are one thing and 'games of chance' are something else". It's not gambling. It's all the things that aren't gambling. So there are all these kinds of tricks being played by academics who want to recover this concept of gambling throughout the 20th century, which led them to have a definition that gambling must be voluntary. Because if it wasn't, there would be war, there would be all these other horrible things. So, great question and I'm very happy to answer others.

- Collateral damage

Thank you for that wonderful question. I think that's a very interesting reflection. Especially for the designers in the room, I teach design to a lot of students here at UC Irvine. And this is a question that many of my students also ask me: what is the morality of design? Or whether something is right? So I guess the first thing I want to say is that, at least in the United States, violence in games has been villainized for a long time. And that also extends to gaming violence in the discourse of countries like China. Now, for example, if you're a Chinese game developer, there's a lot of censorship and concern on the part of the Chinese government that the game you're creating and playing might not be healthy. So there's a kind of resistance from the industry against the government to make games good things. A few years ago, I was approached by the company Tencent to write an article about why games were good for you. And I turned it down because I thought it was a bit suspicious. But I can say with certainty that this is an important thing that is happening in the discourse in China. And about 20 years ago, in North America, this was an important thing that was being discussed about games, until the Supreme Court actually ruled that games can be art. So game designers are artists who have a sense or a right to a sense of freedom of artistic expression in games.

And I say that because I don't think it's so easy for games to make people violent. I want to dismiss that notion to start this conversation because, actually, I think there's a very sophisticated conversation to be had about collateral damage and violence in games and their psychosocial nature. But I want to move away from, I think, a teleological perspective or a pathological perspective, which is really a perspective that wants to relegate games to the status of things that produce violence in players. I don't think that's true. That said, there are problems. The first problem is who gets killed when you're playing a game. Thus, games like Resident Evil 5 are famous for portraying all black people in Africa as zombies or obstacles to be eliminated as you progress through the game. That's certainly a problem. And in games like Dungeons and Dragons, tabletop role-playing games that I play and games in this space that I've designed, many of the monsters in the game, as I wrote in my article The Playful Bestiary, which I co-authored with Sarah Stang, all the monsters in these games are often based on stereotypical understandings of

women and black people. And often the people you're killing in these games are caricatures of people who are already oppressed in the societies we live in. So I want to critique that, because I think that's the kind of critique that Meghna Jayanth, who I quoted earlier, is becoming the white protagonist in games.

By playing these games as a white protagonist, you're creating this collateral damage that often means you're positioning yourself as innately superior to these other people. And I think it's problematic when games really lean into that trope. And I think for a long time the games industry has been very comfortable with that trope. And that's been a big problem. Another thing I'd like to say, and I don't want to say that this series does everything right, but it's a good example of a game that really wants to be critical. And I think critical dialog is always a good thing, when you have games like The Last of Us, which is a game where you play a person who is trying to make a journey to save the world on the other side of the country, you kill a lot of people in that story. And the actual narrative of the game and the way the game graphically represents the violence were deliberately selected by the studio to be a story that makes the player wonder if the violence at the end of the game was really worth it. And I think that's actually one of the amazing things that games can do. In some narratives, you can present games and narratives in a way that makes the player ask critical questions about what they themselves have done in a way that literature, movies and television, and other media haven't been able to do that in such an interesting way. So I think there's a really interesting and somewhat ambivalent story regarding collateral damage in games, and it takes a bit of nuance and knowledge to execute well.

It's very easy to execute it poorly, which especially means leaning towards stereotypes of women and black people as villains in the games we play. A wonderful question.

- Pleasure in games

I think the assumption we all have with the games we play is that games should be enjoyable and that the enjoyment of games is something we should

design for when we release games. Certainly, 100% on a commercial level, this is almost a design ideology.

People don't want to create games that are too difficult, because when games are too difficult, players complain, and when they complain, they don't buy the games they're playing. So enjoyment has been involved on a commercial level for years and years and years and this idea that games should be fun. Gamer Gate, for example, which was a kind of misogynist movement against women doing games journalism in North America was based on the fact that they were giving positive reviews to games that weren't traditionally fun, that told different stories. So that's another place where you see games of pleasure being mixed in and, of course, as I described earlier that with education, games are very much linked to pleasure because often, games are played in the classroom. They are used as a way of saying that learning can be fun. "Let's play!" and, you know, as a child, we wanted to have fun learning. Yes, give me some fun games. I want to play those. For me, the tricky thing about fun in games is not to say that we shouldn't have fun. I really believe that there's always room in the world for fun games. But what I want to do is create a space to really embrace painful games, games that also tell other stories.

For example, there's an abolitionist game that's an RPG, in North America, called by Julia Bonn-Ellingbo, called Steel Away Jordan, and in that game you're a slave. And it's a simulation of what it meant to be a slave on a plantation in the 19th century. You know, like looking for food, trying to escape, maybe, mending your clothes, working in the fields, all these different things you could do. And for most white people who play the game, that experience of playing a slave is really dissonant, difficult and troubling. And I've read many interviews with the author in which she says that this is the comment they make most often about the game, is that white people don't want to play it. They don't want that experience. It's too visceral. And that's the point of the game: to provide an experience that allows someone to understand how difficult it is to be someone else. And I can give you an example that's not about race. Anna Antropy, a transgender game designer whose work I greatly admire, created a game for the iPhone and there's a guillotine on each of the four sides of the phone. And on her guillotine, there's a little person whose

head is underneath it. They're still alive. They're kind of screaming and shouting. And as long as you keep your side of the phone, the guillotine won't fall on their head. But the moment you let go, it will fall. So it's a four-player game. And when you ring, everyone puts their finger on the phone. And the goal is to keep the person alive, which means you're pulling and really trying to keep the phone under control. So what this game really did was break iPhones. And in fact, the aim of this game was to raise questions about what is allowed and what is not allowed in the online store. And, in fact, the game was banned from the Apple Store because it was breaking iPhones. And people wanted their money back because they bought this game that ended up breaking their phones. And who wants that? It's really interesting. It's a protest. It's a question about what's allowed in these gaming spaces and what's not allowed in these gaming spaces. It's actually a very fun game to play because you're pulling out your phone. It's very silly. It's fun. Everyone laughs. But it's very painful for someone. It says something really important about corporate control and ownership. So when we have this narrative that games need to be pleasurable, we lose what I think is actually a very rich space for discussion about games that are painful, that ask us to look at other kinds of feelings that we can have and other experiences that can be invoked by this concept of play. And actually, I think there's a lot of rich design space there, especially transformative design space there, through which we can educate and teach people as well.

- About games that simulate slavery

I have two answers to this question. I think one is based on practice and the other is based on philosophy. So I'll start with philosophy and then move on to practice to show and illustrate how I'm thinking about this. So all my work on games is philosophical. So I'm thinking about play as a big concept and that means I'm asking myself what is play and what is not play? Now, of course, on the one hand, philosophy is a colonial discourse in itself. So I'm poisoning myself a bit when I do this, but as long as we have a concept of Western philosophy, which a lot of white professors and white people use, I want to be able to speak that language and do

the translation work so that those who also speak that language can see the problems and the flaws in some of the existing theories. So, with that caveat, I'm not trying to say that the game is good or bad. I don't think the game is bad and I don't think the game is good. I think that's just the way the game is.

One of my favorite musicians, a guy called Jonathan Richmond, has a song about cold pizza and he says it's not good, it's not bad, it just is. And that's how I feel about the game. That's how it is. So, in the sense that someone can play a slavery simulator and take deep pleasure in the grotesque act of abusing someone who is black, unfortunately, that's because the game just is. We have no control over what it does.

And from a philosophical point of view, I think it's often violent. And I think when we understand how it's often violent, we really understand how a lot of the right-wing cheaters get away with cheating, like winking to myself, "I'm just playing," we should be able to criticize that. You may just be gambling and, yes, maybe you are, but you're gambling against someone and at the expense of others. Every child on a playground knows that. Every child who's ever been on a playground knows that, because we've all been bullied and we've all been the aggressors. Another thing I'd like to say is that there's another black games scholar whose work I really admire. He's a designer and his name is Lindsey Grace. He wrote the book "Black Game Studies". It's really cool. It's an edited collection. I have a chapter in it. And he created a game about 10 or 15 years ago called Big Hugging, the affection game. And in Big Hugging, it's basically a platform game where you have a character and it's a game where you run and you have to jump over various obstacles in order to progress. And the way you jump is by hugging a teddy bear that he created. So every time you hug the bear, you jump over an obstacle. The idea was to create a game that showed how games and affection work together in harmony. I spoke to Lindsey about this game at a conference when he was giving a demonstration and I got to hug the bear. And he said that the most interesting thing happened when people played the game. It's the fact that, most of the time, the bear wasn't hugged. They started abusing it. They put him on their laps and beat him. They started to crush him. They started punching him. They did everything in their power to beat the bear and jump over obstacles. And I think that, from a practical point of view, that's a kind of proof.

It's not necessarily a white supremacist project that's causing people to commit abuse in slavery simulators. But the games are often violent. It's uncontrollable. And that's in line with the white supremacist perspectives that some people bring to the world. And we can't control that, nor can we control the games. I don't think it's a smart idea to think that we can control people in a discourse with the games we play. But I think we can be smart about it. So if it's a slavery simulator and you have a mechanic that allows you to abuse people and you can imagine that some groups of players are going to abuse that mechanic, I think that's the kind of thing that you might question as a designer in the future and might see as problematic. So I guess the question is: are you giving people the tools to play in this really violent way? Is that part of the message you want people to have the potential to make? If not, don't design it. Give them other tools. But if, for example, in Steelway Jordan, those tools are part of the catharsis that you're looking for as an experience for the players. I think artists should have that right and the ability to use those tools to create things, even if the players of those games are a bunch of idiots.

- Games with a decolonial approach and the niche market

That's a great question. So I don't think we're there yet in the design field. I think, little by little, we're seeing some anti-colonial games and I think, especially on an independent level. There are wonderful artists doing great work. There's Elizabeth LePensei, for example, who writes games from an indigenous perspective and they're generally very brilliant. I think there's a desire for that. Ann Dark, a black game designer, I love her work. They have a game where everyone is Kanye West, the different facets of Kanye West. It's actually a very clever game that makes players confront the stereotypes that they're bringing to the game itself. So I think we see that happening in the independent communities and in the artistic communities, and I've mentioned Steelway Jordan many times. Another game designer I really like is Mike Pondsmith. He made Cyberpunk 2020. He's been making black games since the 1980s in a predominantly white setting. And although

his games make some concessions, I think he leans into his vision of what black futures would be and I think that's really interesting and exciting. So I think there are a lot of games out there that are decolonial, that question and make a good critique. But I don't think there's anything that has broken through that bubble and that every player is going to come away with an experience that's sort of life-changing. And, in a way, I think that's fine.

We don't want a world in which ideology is packaged in the media we consume. What I think is most important is that we have a media ecosystem where there are many different types of games that allow people to have many different perspectives on life, race, coloniality and much more. And I think, as gamers and educators, it's our responsibility to go out there and try to get access to as many of those games as possible and share the games that we think are really exciting with the people we care about. I think this is a kind of collectivist, reparative approach. It's not about one person saying this is the right game to play, but about many of us learning the critical tools to analyze what coloniality is in the games we play and then making better recommendations and sharing better tools with other people for understanding media literacy about how this kind of material is inserted into all kinds of products and consumables.

- Games and Violence

There are a few different things going on here. So with Steelway Jordan, the first thing is that the designer is black. So there's a black designer who intended this game to be a game for black audiences and allies. So there is a deliberate design choice about what this game was and what this game was not. And I don't know much about the slavery simulator, but I assume the designer wasn't black. So that's the first thing, and it's a small thing. I believe that white people can create amazing games, but I also think that, in this case, that's not true, especially to talk about the topic of slavery, it's better to have someone who has the kind of historical knowledge about that in their life experience and in their community and family to talk about that issue with someone else. The other part of my answer is that Steelway Jordan is a role-playing game. It's a board role-playing game. It's not a computer

game. And that means you have a game master. You have someone moderating the game and then you have a group of people who are players. So there are a lot of really amazing board role-playing games that critique race. One I mentioned was Cyberpunk 2020. Another one you should check out is called Harlem Unbound, which is about the black renaissance in Harlem in the 1930s and 1940s, but also told through a kind of Lovecraft-like horror zone that is striving to undermine the tropes of HP Lovecraft. So it's a very clever game and a wonderful manual. It's very cool. If you get the chance to buy it, I recommend you do so. But because there's a human moderator in these games, someone sitting there talking to everyone, you really have better mechanics regarding player safety.

So if someone is doing something really problematic, if they're playing the game just to abuse and take pleasure in the abuse of black people in the game, and it turns out that it's not actually a sincere attempt to understand the emotional characteristics and trauma of slavery, the game master can actually stop the game, he can kick the person off the table or the players can have a consensual tool, like a card in the middle of the table that you can touch and say. "Hey, this is getting too serious for me. This is an emotionally difficult space to play in. I don't want to be here anymore." Then you touch the card and everyone stops and kind of relaxes. In fact, these are tools that have been adapted, ironically, from the BDSM scene, and brought into board role-playing games that involve this kind of negotiated consent from several players at once. That doesn't happen in a computer game, and so there's a conversation about the game that, in many cases, really has no moderation.

And I think that's actually a big weakness of digital games, because you don't have that space to discuss what happened in the game. I used to say this all the time, but after playing a game of Mario or Street fighter, you don't stop and shake the other player's hand to talk about what a good game it was and how you learned something from it. You don't have that meeting time. And that's something that can actually be incorporated into every board game you play.

So I think there's a new topic here, which is this: if you're going to play bondage simulator with a group of people or a class, make sure you create some discussion at the beginning of the process, about how it could potentially be a trigger

and what you're teaching, what you can learn from it. And on the other hand, talk about the game itself, how it was felt, what it meant historically, and the emotional experiences that people have during that period. I think these moments can be really powerful, but you need to incorporate them into the gameplay, and no computer will do that properly.

- Challenges

I think I can start by telling you a bit about myself, and I think that might help answer a number of other questions here. So, when I was in middle school and elementary school, I was one of the gifted kids. I was the kind of kid who took the most advanced classes and the best classes. And then, at some point in high school, that just stopped. I really started to struggle with my teachers, I often had a difficult relationship with them. Sometimes they called me a bad kid. I kind of gave up. What was happening to my development, I know this now, is that I'm dyslexic. So when reading literature became more complicated for me, it became really difficult to keep up with the reading we were doing at school on some levels. And another thing that happened was that I grew up in a very white area of New Jersey. So as I got older, the teachers no longer recognized me as the cute kid who was in elementary school with them and with huge black hair, which I don't have anymore. And they began to describe me more as a kind of out-of-control kid. They saw me in a very different way. So some of the teachers, all white, had no interest in educating me and they started to care less. And I actually ended up learning a lot from the games I played outside the classroom.

And that's one of the reasons I wanted to go to higher education and learn that kind of stuff. When I got to college though I flunked out because, again, I was kind of troubled as a young person. And when I came back, I really wanted to make a difference by finding ways in which games can help children learn, because it helped me. That's been my experience with games and education. And I wanted to start there, because I think it demonstrates why I think it's important to do this work,

why I think having a teacher who knows how to implement games in the classroom can be stimulating and really change a life.

Having said that, though, I think in my history, when I went to graduate school and started learning more, I really moved away from education as a school of thought. I did the learning that was "games and learning", to understand how games worked in conjunction with learning in my early stages. But I really made a shift, a hard shift towards critical cultural studies and media studies as my main discipline, because those were the disciplines where people were doing the kind of critique that interested me, where they were analyzing the media and saying, this is racist, sexist and homophobic. And those were really the criticisms I cared about. They were things that fit into my life and my experience. So I really wanted to learn about systems of representation and media systems. So I really dove in there and learned the history through an American study of media perspective really prioritizes things like colonization, things like representation, things that aren't so explicitly, I think, in the realm of education, games and learning and other things. So I've never seen my work as a games activity in education. It's always been in the background, games and learning have always been something I've wanted to participate in and critique.

But in disciplinary terms, it's been very distant from what I do in many different ways. And so it was kind of simmering there as the zeitgeist of something that I wanted to look into a bit more deeply because, just like with Suiane, who invited me, this was something that never appealed to me when I read the literature. That's my history of how things are going. So the first question is: is this a trend? No, I don't think so. I think there are conversations about decolonization and post-colonialism happening in a lot of disciplines at the moment. And that the academics who are working on this that I'm seeing now, when I look at the American job market at least, tend to be the academics that universities are investing heavily in.

So there's a lot of work, a lot of interesting work happening on this topic. And I definitely think that it's this sort of current generation of critical studies that is really attuned to issues around things like post-colonialism and intersectionality as topics of interest.

I think this is a change from the discourse on post-structuralism that preceded it, which dialogued with aspects such as representation, but had a much more flexible attitude towards it and I saw it perhaps as something that could be subversive and, insofar as it played with the tropes of representation and things like that. And the structuralism that came before, which was also interested in representation, but subordinated questions of race, gender and sexuality to questions of class, because it was historically studied by the cultural studies of the Birmingham school. So I think we're at a different moment now, where we're really seeing the fight against blackness as a global problem.

And the lack of representation of perspectives from the global south is also a global problem of representation and discourse at the moment. And I don't think that's a trend. I think that's really at the heart of the conversation that's happening in cultural studies. I think education is definitely becoming aware of this. I know from my colleagues in education that this is a conversation they're having. But I also know that, in many education departments, it's mainly because they're part of the classical social sciences, it's a problem for education professors who are struggling to make it as permanent professors. And so this conversation, as it always does, becomes a conversation about policing by white professors, the kind of publications that criticize these things.

So I see part of the current movement in terms of higher education and tenure as a kind of political terrain involves recognizing perspectives from the margins and that means publishing in places where those perspectives have not historically been valued for tenure, it's blogs, websites, podcasts, all these different sites where you see informal knowledge circulating, right? Because all our communities know this from the start. We don't need a teacher to explain what racism is. But those are usually the places that offer the scholarships. So I think the more higher education institutions can accredit more scholarship to writing as opposed to where it was published, the more we move away from the sort of colonial and sort of carceral paradigm of higher education. And finally, theoretical challenges. Again, I think this is an area where we can all work hard.

For me, it's about thinking about games more broadly than just games, but thinking about games as something interdisciplinary that we can move into different spaces and registers.

But this is just one of the many perspectives that I believe are necessary for a larger movement on decolonizing this topic to succeed. So I think this means that all of us who publish material on the subject and who care about this larger movement should get out there and write and be creative about it.

I think the more we bring in the perspectives that come from the communities we live in and our everyday lives, the more we can start to challenge this kind of colonial effort in higher education and we can make our voices heard as we work towards decolonization. I hope that's answered what I agree is a very, very big and very rich question in a satisfactory way, and I thank you for your question.

- Closing

Thank you so much for the kind words, for having me and for giving me the opportunity to have this incredible, fantastic and meaningful conversation. I'm going to be very honest with you, because when I wrote this material, I didn't think so many people would care about it and it's been an incredible force in my life to talk to people about it and to be taken seriously for something that has actually been criticized a lot in various peer review processes. It's a pleasure to be here with all of you and to have this opportunity.

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