The evolution of the character of Kratos in the God of War series

Levente Nyíri

I

This thesis will discuss the changes regarding the representation of masculinity in video games. Therefore the work is an interdisciplinary study, informed by sociology, gender studies, and popular culture. Societal changes have changed the way we perceive both gender and sex. These changes caused a large array of changes in multiple aspects of society. During the 21st century everyday aspects of human life like, fashion and social norms have all changed, but perhaps the most exciting changes took place in the entertainment industry. Movies, series, and advertisement all became accustomed to new social norms to appease potential consumers. The thesis intends to get a stable interpretation of the modern concepts concerning masculinity while understanding possible criticism of such interpretations. To assist in this process most of the following section's sources will be professional researchers in the field of gender studies, more specifically the issues and advancements in the research of masculinity including its various categories, the understanding and conflicting ideas of the aforementioned categories and how these variations have changed over time.

Furthermore, this thesis will aim at parallel societal changes present in the real world with changes in the video game industry. These changes will be explored through the use of professional researchers as well as journalists who conducted interviews with video game producers. Lastly, in the research section of the thesis, I will conduct a case study on Kratos as mentioned before. To gain a better understanding of this specific case, the change in masculinity will be analysed through key moments and actions in the story. In the past 16 years the God of War franchise has been evolving alongside societal advancements (Santa Monica Studio, 2005-2018). Kratos as a character transformed from a wrathful Spartan general to a caring father whose only intention was to complete his wife's last wish and protect their child. This change however natural it may be, can be compared to societal changes in the real world due to the franchise's long lifespan.

II

Throughout the 21st century masculinity has changed in a drastic way. The change from the toxic side of hegemonic masculinity to the moderate and caring type can be examined through video games. This chapter of the thesis will give an overview of recent social development and the perception of masculinity both in the scientific and public discourses. Over the course of the 21st century the previously accepted negative qualities of masculinity were replaced. The often aggressive and abusive traits are fading, in favour of a moderate and effeminate type of masculinity and as Stefan Horlacher states in his book: "masculinity studies is not a conservative backlash but a social necessity" (Horlacher, 1). According to Raewyn Connell, "masculinities are not equivalent to men; they concern the position of men in a gender order" furthermore Connell argues for the existence of multiple masculinities which Messner addresses in his journal article, "On Patriarchs and Losers" (Connell, n.d).

According to Messner's research in the subject, Connell differentiated between three multiples regarding masculinity. Within these three types, hegemonic masculinity is the most prevalent. Messner also states that, hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity which codifies the collective project of men's domination over women. In this case hegemonic masculinity is defined in relation to emphasized femininity. The aim of hegemonic masculinity is to maintain the dominant status of men over women. This definition is also in relation with marginalized and subordinated masculinity. Messner also implies the definition of subordinated masculinity as less powerful men supporting and adhering to the rules upheld by the hegemonic group. Through this, Messner implies that, it can be assumed that "less powerful men" may support the system upheld by members displaying hegemonic masculinity since they are satisfied with it (Messner, 75-84). According to Connell and Messerschmidt's research, subordinated and marginalized masculinities can be called "complicit masculinities," under the circumstance that they knowingly support the dominance upheld by the hegemonic group. Men within the complicit category receive the benefits of the patriarchy while not enacting any form of masculine dominance (Connell and Messerschmidt, 830-834).

According to Connell and Messerschmidt's research, the concept of hegemonic masculinity was first proposed in reports from a field study of social inequality in Australian high schools and was further supported by Connell's further research on the subject alongside discussions held in 1983 and a debate in 1982. The first major work on hegemonic masculinity was "Gender and Power" in which the concept of

hegemonic masculinity was further solidified. The concept of hegemony came about due to the Gramscian term[1] of the same name. However, the concept of "male sec role" was established earlier in social psychology and sociology, which recognised the social nature of masculinity and the possibility of change in the nature of masculinity.

In the 1970's stereotypical male norms were criticized which led to the critical role theory, which according to Connell, "provided the main conceptual basis for the early antisexist men's movement." The concept itself solidified after the gay liberation movement and was based mainly upon homosexual men's experience with violence and prejudice from straight men. Empirical social research also played a key role in the solidification of the concept, since in the 1970's a growing number of field studies were documenting local gender hierarchies and the localisation of masculinity in schools.

These field studies can be connected to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and the "Wolf Man" case history, which shows how "adult personality was a system under tension, with counter currents repressed but not obliterated" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 832). After the 1980's, hegemonic masculinity was understood as a pattern of the practices which allowed the dominant group's dominance over women to continue. Thus, hegemonic masculinity is distinguished from other forms of masculinity, especially subordinated masculinity. This form of masculinity was not normal in the statistical sense, which means that only a minority of men may enact it, which they do through culture, institutions, and persuasion.

Hegemonic masculinity as a concept was used after its official recognition by sociologists and teachers, while also having influence in criminology. The concept assisted sociologists and law officials to connect certain forms of masculinity with the crimes they are more likely to commit. Furthermore, it was also concluded that men and boys perpetrate more of the conventional and serious crimes than women and girls do. While these findings and studies may all sound like they are criticizing masculinity, some studies prove that the main goal of the research was to understand the nature of masculinity better. According to Connell and Messerschmidt, "the concepts of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities helped in understanding not only men's exposure to risk but also men's difficulties in responding to disability and injury" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 834).

While hegemonic masculinity may prove to be the most influential form according to Connell and Messerschmidt's research, men who are not able to achieve the

---

1 Gramsci used the word hegemony in relation to Marxist political ideology. He viewed hegemony as a power reproduced in cultural life and the media, which was used to manufacture consent and legitimacy. (Heywood, 100-101)

state of hegemonic masculinity but still benefit from the dominant position of the patriarchal order are part of complicit masculinity. This variation of masculinity would imply that some men of the hegemonic group can provide advantages to the men of the complicit group. According to Connell "gender is a way in which social practice is ordered" which is significant when perceiving her opinion of masculinity. The marginalised and subordinated masculinities are the nonhegemonic variations of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 830-834).

Messner recognised that while complicit masculinities may support the system upheld by members of the hegemonic group, members of the complicit group still face discrimination, which is based upon differences in social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and international relations. Due to this outcome of the research about masculinity, scientists agree upon the fact that masculinity is a multiple entity, meaning that it has several different forms. Unfortunately, later studies also show that the social hierarchy between men is the only factor keeping this hypothesis from devolving into senseless individualism (Messner, 74-88).

While Connell and Messerschmidt's research supports Messner's findings, it also acknowledges that while complicit masculinities exist there will be conflict for hegemony. Furthermore, Messerschmidt and Connell, say the following "these concepts (referring to complicit and hegemonic masculinity) were abstract rather than descriptive, defined in terms of the logic of a patriarchal system. They assumed that gender relations were historical, so gender hierarchies were subject to change" (832). The change Connell and Messerschmidt acknowledge here can be tied to both the existence and emergence of complicit masculinities as well as the changes in modern masculinities seen by the civilian community (Connell and Messerschmidt, 830-834).

One of the recent changes which can be tied into Connell and Messerschmidt's account on masculinity is the appearance of "hybrid masculinities." These types emerged after heterosexual men started integrating elements from homosexual identities into their own heterosexual identities. People exhibiting certain homosexual traits while still being heterosexual, usually belong to one of the complicit groups of masculinity. While these men are straight, they describe some elements of their personalities as "gay" which results in the construction of hybrid masculinities, which distance them in subtly diverse ways from the stereotypes associated with masculinity. These men also conceal the privileges associated with white men using "homosexual aesthetics." Hybrid masculinities in this context address contemporary changes in social sciences concerned with masculinity.

According to Connell and Messerschmidt some masculine practices may be incorporated into other masculinities. This research did not result in a conclusive outcome since, Connell and Messerschmidt think that hybrid masculinities are closer to subcultural variations of already existing masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 830-834). Other researchers suggested a theory of "inconclusive masculinity". This theoretical approach argues that the interferences into contemporary masculinity might undermine gender and sexual hierarchies and inequality. According to Bridges, Messner recently hypothesized a "culturally ascendant hybrid masculinity combining "toughness" with "tenderness" in ways that work to obscure power and inequality." The existence of hybrid masculinities is further supported by scholars' understanding of gender and sexuality as co-constructed and unstable (Bridges, 59-67). Another example of hybrid masculinity might come from an unfortunate illness.

There are cases in which people belonging to the hegemonic group move into one of the subordinated groups. In Susie Kilshaw's book about Gulf War syndrome she analyses interviews conducted with Gulf War veterans. In the interviews the veterans usually complain about lack of physical strength and the loss of enthusiasm. Unfortunately for veterans in the United States the body of a soldier is seen as a tool or a weapon which should be in perfect condition. While most veterans give accounts of their pre-war bodies being fit and "superman like" the same veterans feel as though their bodies are deteriorating, they feel as though they are older and less active than they were before. Most soldiers see themselves as the "breadwinners" of their respective families and their bodies were their means of survival in the sense that it was their main tool to gain notoriety and promotions within the army. Due to the trauma caused by their participation in the Gulf war these men feel as though they are weakening which can be attributed as a symptom of PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder. According to Bridges' explanation of hybrid masculinities, the gulf war veterans interviewed by Kilshaw, represent a hybrid masculinity inhabiting some key traits of complicit masculinity. While this change in the veterans' conception of masculinity was not voluntary like in the case of the men of Bridges' interviews, they still embrace some traits not usually associated with hegemonic masculinity (Kilshaw, 172-177).

Fatherhood is another topic that has changed significantly in the west. While the changes explained in the upcoming section are mostly from a western worldview, the modification men go through due to fatherhood is still significant in other parts of the world. In her journal article Jennifer Randles explains that fatherhood has changed in a way in which contemporary ideas of a good fathering figure replaced a stoic fatherly figure often absent from a child's emotional and sometimes even

physical life to an image of a "new man," who is a college educated professional, whilst still being a highly involved and nurturing father capable of expressing his feelings and acting in an egalitarian way in his dealings with women.

This "new fatherhood" has redefined the concepts we most commonly associate with the patriarch of the family, from the "breadwinner" to a man who engages in his parental obligations just as much (in theory) as their female counterpart would (Randles, 516-519). Much like Rainer Emig's research on sentimental masculinity. According to Emig's research, emotional connections men may harbour, are not mutually exclusive with rationality, meaning that sentimentalism does not exclude a stoic and rational demeanour (Emig, 127-129). Research before reinforced the concept of the "new man," as men inhabited the aforementioned stoic archetype of parenting, which resulted in the technically present but functionally absent father.

In his journal article, Ralph LaRossa openly states that "the father's levels of engagement, accessibility, and responsibility were only a fraction of the mother's" (LaRossa, 454). While this relationship type between father and child was common when LaRossa drafted his treatise the concept discussed in Randles' article is the one contemporary sources like Robert Morrell and Linda Richter's journal article promotes. They also discuss cases of non-biological fathers taking over a fatherly role for the child of their significant other (Morrell and Richter, 36-42). The explanations and concepts introduced in this chapter will prove to be instrumental when analysing the God of War franchise's protagonist, Kratos and how his character changed over the nearly 17 years of publications.

The following section provides a case study based upon Kratos who is the main character in the God of War series (Santa Monica Studio, 2005-2018). The inquiry will focus on his personal development and argues that this can be viewed as a reflection of the modern development of masculinity, which includes how hegemonic masculinity changed in the past two decades. According to Stake case studies are the study of the nature of a case and its complexities. Case studies are done to gain an understanding of the selected case in one or even several aspects in order to facilitate the respective analysis.

Stake separated case studies into three categories, with the first one being intrinsic case studies, the second instrumental case studies and the third one being collective case studies. While all three are case studies, Stake points out that they vary depending on how concentrated the case study is on a specific topic. The instrumental and collective case studies treat each case as secondary, but instrumental case studies focus on providing insight into the generalization of a case, which leaves the case to play a supportive role. Collective case studies focus on a multiplicity of cases at once. The

last type of case study is the intrinsic case study. Unlike the previously mentioned two types, intrinsic case studies focus on a single case's complexities and analyse them to gain better understanding of the issue at hand. Unlike the instrumental type of case studies, intrinsic ones delve into a topic due to the fact that their own particularities and ordinariness are the interest of the case itself.

The analysis will rely on the instrumental type of a case study in order to study the particularities of a case based on a character. There are four steps in the issue evolution regarding a specific study. These include, the topical issue, the foreshadowed problem, the issue under development, and the assertion. Not only do these cases need to be identified but developed through the interconnectability of previously established facts and interpretations (Stake 134-156). The object of the study will be the changing masculinity represented within the character and how, throughout the story he changed as a person.

The first game of the series shows an early form of what Kratos the main character, would become in later entries. In the original God of War, Kratos' demeanour is closer to a mythological hero than his later appearances in God of War 2 and God of War 3. While these characters are the same person, the first three games depict a vengeful Kratos on his quest to take his revenge on the god that wronged him. In the first game he is depicted in a manner which does not imply a need for revenge as much as a need for rest from his nightmares. Despite this he still takes the opportunity which provides him with a chance to take revenge on Ares. Chronologically this game is the third in the series and the first game, which establishes his dominance, even over the gods. By defeating Ares and becoming the unofficial god of war, Kratos shows that mortals can defeat gods, this terrified the gods leading to the events of the second and the third game.

While this example is outside the realm of reality, Connell and Messerschmidt's research alluded to something akin to Kratos' example when talking about hegemonic masculinity. Whereas in this case Kratos establishes hegemony over both mortals and even some gods, unlike Connell and Messerschmidt's implications with a definite negative male stereotype, the Kratos of the first game showcases a conflicted character with regrets and trauma. This manifests in the form of several aspects, like sudden hallucinations, which lead to lengthy monologues and other aspects usually associated with people coping with trauma such as alcoholism and aimless hedonism (Connell and Messerschmidt, 830-834).

The sudden change in attitude between the Kratos depicted in the backstory and the game also shows some symptoms of PTSD as depicted in Kilshaw's interviews. More symptoms include the aforementioned indulgence in mindless hedonistic

activities usually attributed to the affected wanting to lessen the effect of their ailments as well as filling a possible void, due to the ailment or a traumatic loss (Kilshaw, 172-177).

Much like it's later counterpart God of War (2005) depicts vast landscapes with highly detailed graphics for its age. The story takes the players from the slums of Athens to Pandora's temple on the back of the titan Chronos, and finishes with a spectacle in the fight between Ares and Kratos as giants overlooking the destroyed city the player once fought in. Dialogue differs from all other God of War games, but it is closer to the second and the third games than the 2018 entry into the series.

In this game Kratos is more melancholic which might be attributed to the desperation he feels during this point of the story, doing the bidding of the gods for a vague promise of redemption. This game's Kratos still has a need for revenge but with a desperate need to get rid of the nightmares, which haunt him. While the game is mostly based on dialogues from Athena and other supporting characters pointing Kratos in the right way, monologues by Kratos are also included. These segments usually include Kratos recollecting some of his memories and swearing revenge on Ares. The original God of War's gameplay is widely different from its 2018 counterpart. The game's genre is a hack and slash which is a genre of video games that usually includes the player character moving around a restricted area fighting enemies by stringing together combos by pushing the right button inputs in the right order during a specific section of time. Unlike its 2018 counterpart, the first game focuses on the Blades of Chaos as its usable weapon, which makes the combat seem almost dance like, while it helps players in stringing combos together and improves the fluidity of combat.

Kratos is also blessed by some of the greatest Greek gods, who give him magic spells and even another useable weapon. Poseidon's Rage, an effect spell dealing high damage to surrounding targets through the use of lighting much akin to a storm on the Aegean Sea received from Poseidon. The other weapons and spells include Medusa's Gaze (The head of the mythical monster Medusa, capable of freezing enemies and turning them into stone as the head fires a beam in the form of a cone and freezes enemies over time), Zeus' Fury (Zeus' lightning bolts which Kratos can use through throwing them towards enemies, dealing single target damage from a long or medium range), Blade of Artemis (A sword given to Kratos by the goddess of the hunt. This sword is much larger than the Blades of Chaos, dealing more damage but being less efficient in dealing with crowds of enemies), and Army of Hades, (The souls of the dead, which can be summoned by Kratos to attack the nearest enemies).

Later entries into the series include more diverse magic with the same basic weapon. However, Kratos' character changes in a wider aspect compared to the gameplay of the series as a whole. While the first three mainline games are stories of revenge, even the first game's title song shows the wider picture of Kratos' story which is εκδίκηση and εξαγορά, revenge and redemption.

The appearance and acceptance of hybrid masculinities, alongside the progress of social justice movements compelled the video game industry to change their character archetypes accordingly. Unfortunately, these changes mostly resulted in failure, with modifications feeling too radical to feel natural. Examples for this include the "Overwatch," "Doom," "The Last of US 2" and even God of War (2018). While the first two games each embraced opposite spectrums with Overwatch being an advocate of hybrid masculinities with the inclusion of characters like Soldier 76, Doom on the other hand increased the violence and masculinity, while mocking the politically correct landscape developing around the world.

God of War (2018) had the privilege that it was part of an already established franchise. Although the leading character was still a murderer who killed gods, with the previously established story, they had the chance to turn the character into something more akin to a normal person, giving the character a new chance at redemption and more than likely a final chance to achieve the happiness many players thought he deserved.

Unlike previous games the aim of God of War (2018) was not to kill some grand god, but to lay a loved one to rest. The game also tackles heavy topics such as accepting the passing of a loved one, learning to love one's child, and living with trauma. Another feature, which improved engagement was the camera unique to this game, which never left the character's side. The game was also done without camera cuts to improve immersion and improve user experience, unlike the previous games which were heavily cinematic, featuring cutscenes, cutaways and including scenes of gigantic monsters battling and a top-down view on the battlefield.

Fortunately for the developers the pre-established story already hinted at possible changes in the character's nature. Throughout the mainline games and the PSP (PlayStation Portable) spinoffs Kratos faced several major character changing moments which led up to God of War 2018, these include the loss of his brother, Deimos, the loss of his family due to Ares' betrayal, killing his best friend Orkos, the ten years of service to the gods, defeating Ares and getting betrayed by the gods, losing his brother and getting killed by Zeus. While these effects were only the negative ones, during his journey before Midgard, Kratos also accepted his past through the

encouragement of Pandora, tried to sacrifice himself for the greater good, and even found love and family once more.

As many experienced when they first tried the game, the solution provided by Cory Barlog included a lot of new philosophies, like the concept of hybrid masculinities present in both Kratos and Sindri, since Kratos turned into a borderline motherly figure protecting his child while ignoring his own well-being and giving advice to his son (Bridges, 59-67). Whereas these developments are somewhat close to the ideas presented by Connell and Messerschmidt, the character still stays true to himself acting somewhat coldly towards his son in the beginning, and showcasing the technically present but functionally absent father role throughout some of the game's key scenes (LaRossa, 451-454).

Kratos' conflict with his own masculinity is present in the games as well as the comics, suggesting something similar to Kilshaw's interviews conducted with soldiers. However, this interpretation of the character is somewhat stuck between a man in the hegemonic group and the "new man" explored by Randles. While repressing his rage, Kratos is weaker and would have perished on his journey were it not for his son who assisted him to fulfil his wife's last request. When seeing the visions of Zeus in Helheim, Kratos also seems to be affected by PTSD, however the symptoms of this illness are more prevalent in other games and is a point of interest in God of War.

The portrayal of Kratos has also changed significantly, since we see an older version of Kratos in the 2018 entry to the series. This version of the character lost some of the previous overly muscular body type in exchange for looking more realistic. The fighting style he uses also changed from the fast playstyle the hack and slash genre requires, to a more considerate tactical playstyle in which, players have to consider weak points and enemy placements. While the combat is still over the top, unlike previous games most of the enemies are not human with notable exceptions being, Baldur, Magni, and Modi. An assist system was also included within the game, with Atreus helping players make decisions in combat as well as shooting enemies with arrows. Even though the combat has changed the conflict for hegemony as a core feature of the represented masculinity is also visible between gods.

The abundance of supporting characters present in the game all represent uniquely modern views. Mimir, while being the "smartest man alive" can also be associated with complicit masculinity and hegemonic masculinity, due to the fact that while he is only present in most of the game as a head, his base knowledge is frighteningly large. Therefore, Mimir can be associated with a physically insignificant but intelligent character showcasing intellectual dominance over other characters through, for example, the knowledge of long dead languages. Sindri and his brother Brok both

inhabit the opposite sides of masculinity compared to each other. While Sindri is strongly associated with the hybrid masculinities of Bridges' research showcasing fear when near combat and disgust when near blood (Bridges, 59-67), Brok is closer to the concept of the "new man", by showing a rough exterior but deeply caring for his brother (Randles, 516-539).

Freya, who is a powerful ally in the game, first introduced as the witch of the woods also shows aspects previously uncharacteristic for female supporting characters. While in the previous games, women were mostly seen as entities who needed to be saved or were regarded as sexual objects, Freya, and Faye both display a certain maturing in God of War as a game franchise. Freya even possesses several aspects, which we would usually associate with a strong leading character. As one of the deuteragonists she displays traits like being intelligent, cunning, and brave. As an older god, Kratos must try harder than gods like Baldur and many future adversaries. This presents a challenge Kratos will have to face in the future in keeping his position as a "new man" retaining his still somewhat hegemonic status while raising his son not as a ruthless general but as a caring father. Much like the first game, landscapes depicted in God of War (2018) are vivid and highly detailed, however, unlike the first game these landscapes are also more natural and contain livelier colours.

While this has to do with technological advancements of the previous 20 years, the Norse landscape depicts a more natural and livelier atmosphere then it's Greek counterpart. The game also includes enormous spectacles such as the world serpent, "Yormungandr" and "The Lake of the Nine" around which the world serpent coils. Kratos also received a visual update. Depicting an older version of the character, the game's developers kept his usual character design while embracing Norse mythology as a source. The shield Kratos dons also bears Norse runes just like his new main weapon, the "Leviathan Axe."

These visual updates serve to differentiate the game from its previous counterparts as well as from those games' genre and playstyle. The game's dialogue also takes on a kinder, and more empathetic style, seeking to redeem Kratos as a character. Early dialogue in the game shows players that the previous games' Kratos is still present but the dialogue developing throughout the story shows his fatherly side developing once more. Distancing himself from his son by calling him 'boy' seemingly refers to his tragic past and wanting to keep his son safe from the dangerous world of gods.

III

In conclusion, the perceivable information shows significant changes in the nature of masculinity both in real life and through the depiction of Kratos, a fictional figure with natural character development, influenced by societal changes in the real life and the director's personal experience with fatherly figures as well as what many aspire to be. With the inclusion of characters such as Sindri and Mimir, the supporting cast of the newer games in the series display more characteristics of the ever-changing landscape of masculinity studies. Both of the aforementioned characters represent a complicit masculinity type, intent on supporting the two main characters of the games. While these characters' inclusion in the story is brief, they still show significant change. Freya, a powerful female figure in the game proved to be a great ally to the protagonists and will probably prove to be an even better antagonist in the future. While these characters promote uniquely current ideas relevant to the modern societal views of researchers and audiences, fragments of these developments can be seen in the older games as well. The new game also provides Kratos with a chance to redeem himself and live a normal life with his son.

Works Cited:

Bridges, Tristan. "A very gay straight? Hybrid Masculinities, Sexual Aesthetics, and the Changing Relationship between Masculinity and Homophobia." *Gender and Society*, vol. 28, no. 1, Sage Publications, Inc., 2014. 58–82, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43669856. Accessed 13 May, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243213503901.

Campbell, Colin. 2015. "The Reconstruction of Lara Croft" Polygon, July 10, 2015. https://www.polygon.com/features/2015/7/10/8925285/the-reconstruction-of-laracroft-rise-of-the-tomb-raider Accessed 13 May, 2022.

Connell, Raewyn. "Masculinities." *Raewyn Connell*, www.raewynconnell.net/p/masculinities_20.html. Accessed 13 May, 2022.

Connell, R. W., and James W. Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender and Society*, vol. 19, no. 6, Sage Publications, Inc., 2005. 829– 59. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640853. Accessed 13 May, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639.

"DOOM ETERNAL'S Unapologetic Western Masculinity." *YouTube*, uploaded by American Krogan, 1 Sept. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JpIZb8tM5k. Accessed 13 May, 2022.

Emig, Rainer. "Sentimental Masculinity: Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771)." *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice*, edited by Stefan Horlacher, Brill, 2015. 127–40, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjwt1m.10. Accessed 16 Apr. 2022.

Gratton, Kyle. "How Mortal Kombat Introduced the M Rating to Video Games." *Screenrant*, Screenrant, 1 Sept. 2021, screenrant.com/mortal-kombat-first-m-rated-game-esrbcontroversy. Accessed 13 May, 2022.

Hentges, Sarah. "Toward #SocialJustice: Creating Social Media Community in Live and Online Classrooms." *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 26, no. 2 (2016): 230–38. https://doi.org/10.5325/trajincschped.26.2.0230. Accessed 17 May, 2022.

Hernandez, Patricia. "The Last of Us 2 Proves Gaming Isn't Used to Seeing Women with Muscles." *Polygon*, 1 July 2020, www.polygon.com/2020/7/1/21309926/the-last-of-uspart-2-abby-body-actor-naughty-dog-ps4-playstation-sony-body-diversity. Accessed 13 May, 2022.

Hoekstra, Kyle. "A Brief History of Lara Croft: Tomb Raider Games in Order." *History Hit*, 17 Nov. 2021, www.historyhit.com/gaming/tomb-raider-games-in-order. Accessed 13 May, 2022.

Horlacher, Stefan. "Configuring Masculinity." *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice*, edited by Stefan Horlacher, Brill, 2015. 1–10. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjwt1m.4. Accessed 16 Apr. 2022.

Hosch, William L. "Mortal Kombat | Video Game Series." *Encyclopedia Britannica.* www.britannica.com/topic/Mortal-Kombat. Accessed 13 May, 2022.

"Hypermasculinity." *European Institute for Gender Equality*, eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1251. Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

Joho, Jess. 2018. "'God of War' depicts the disease and destruction of toxic masculinity" Mashable, April 26, 2018. https://mashable.com/article/god-of-war-fatherhoodpatriarchy-destruction-male-power-fantasy Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

Kilshaw, Susie. "The Disappearing Man: Narratives of Lost Masculinity." *Impotent Warriors: Perspectives on Gulf War Syndrome, Vulnerability and Masculinity*, NED-New edition, 1, Berghahn Books, 2009. 154–82. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qdd0b.11. Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

LaRossa, Ralph. "Fatherhood and Social Change." *Family Relations*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1988. 451–57. https://doi.org/10.2307/584119. Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

Lowood, Henry E. "Doom | Electronic Game." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www. britannica.com/topic/Doom. Accessed 15 Apr. 2022.

Messner, Michael A. "On Patriarchs and Losers: Rethinking Men's Interests." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 48 (2004): 74–88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035593. Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

Morrell, Robert, and Linda Richter. "The Fatherhood Project: Confronting Issues of Masculinity and Sexuality." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 62, 2004. 36–44. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4066676. Accessed 14 Apr. 2022.

Peltola, Marja, and Ann Phoenix. "Hegemonic Masculinities and Constructions of Gender

Differences." *Nuancing Young Masculinities: Helsinki Boys' Intersectional Relationships in New Times*, Helsinki UP, 2022. 51–72, http://www.jstor.org/ stable/j.ctv2gmhhvk.8. Accessed 14 Apr. 2022.

Pinar, William F. "THE 'CRISIS' of WHITE MASCULINITY." *Counterpoints*, vol. 163, 2001. 321–416, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42977756. Accessed 14 Apr. 2022.

Posadas, Jeremy. "Teaching the Cause of Rape Culture: Toxic Masculinity." Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, vol. 33, no. 1, 2017. 177–179. JSTOR, www. jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jfemistudreli.33.1.23. Accessed 28 May 2021. https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.33.1.23.

Randles, Jennifer. "'MANNING UP' TO BE A GOOD FATHER: Hybrid Fatherhood,

Masculinity, and U.S. Responsible Fatherhood Policy." *Gender and Society*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2018. 516–39, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26597096. Accessed 14 Apr. 2022. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243218770364.

Reeser, Todd W. "Concepts of Masculinity and Masculinity Studies." *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice*, edited by Stefan Horlacher, Brill, 2015. 11–38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjwt1m.5. Accessed 16 Apr. 2022.

Roberson, Chris, et al. God of War. Dark Horse Comics, 2019, digital.darkhorse.com/ books/3e471cad9b14461ea0ef48317fa4517b/God-of-war. Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

Roberson, Chris, et al. God of War: Fallen God. Dark Horse Comics, 2021, https://www.darkhorse.com/Comics/3005-158/God-of-War-Fallen-God-1 Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

Santa Monica Studio. God of War. PS2, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2005

Santa Monica Studio. God of War: Ascension. PS2, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2013

Santa Monica Studio. God of War: Chains of Olympus. PS2, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2008

Santa Monica Studio. God of War: Ghost of Sparta. PS2, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2010

Santa Monica Studio. God of War. PS2, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2018

Santa Monica Studio. God of War 2. PS2, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2007

Santa Monica Studio. God of War 3. PS2, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2010

"Spacewar: The First Computer Game." *ThoughtCo*, 5 Mar. 2019, www.thoughtco.com/history-of-spacewar-1992412. Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.

The Official Home of Super Mario™ – History." *Mario through the Years*, Nintendo, mario.nintendo.com/history. Accessed 15 Apr. 2022.

"Vergil's Inferiority | Devil May Cry 5 Analysis." *YouTube*, uploaded by Champion Analysis, 23 July 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Uq9k6B-7h4&t=178s. Accessed 27 Jan. 2022.