Culture Jamming as a Strategy of Survival:
Pop Music, Video Remixes, and Cultural Efficacy

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Abstract

This article aims to critically consider video remixes of US pop songs and their music videos using an intersectional framework. The four remakes examined include a feminist revision and a queer rendition of *Blurred Lines* by Robin Thicke, as well as a chant against gender-based violence and a pro-immigrant remix to the tune of *Despacito* by Luis Fonsi. In examining these remixes, this article argues that the messaging of pop culture and the response of culture jamming has the potential of socialization and education, as a strategy of survival. Through the concepts of hidden curriculum, cultural efficacy, and intersectionality, I suggest ways that video remixes may contribute to community in the face of marginalization.

Bio

Micaela Segal de la Garza is a multilingual educator who focuses on peace education and communication. She enjoys teaching Spanish, language, and journalism courses at a comprehensive public high school in Houston. Other classrooms include the great outdoors where she teaches elementary-aged children at a local nature centre, and the global classroom where she coordinates projects with the Global Campaign for Peace Education and the International Institute on Peace Education. She's a people person who studied her Masters in International Peace, Conflict and Development Studies at Universitat Jaume I in Spain and her undergraduate degree, a triple major in Spanish, Communication and International Studies, at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

As a high school journalism and Spanish teacher in Houston, I have scoured the radio and

YouTube for 'inclusive' and 'non-offensive' cultural artifacts to bring into the classroom. Time

and again, I have found myself ranting -- to myself or the car radio -- about each song that

oppresses the identities of my students or their families by demeaning them, reinforcing

stereotypes against them, or glorifying violence, rape, or superiority against them. My students'

interpretations of these cultural artifacts are wide ranging. In some cases, they have taught me

about the critical, intersectional responses to the often patriarchal, colonial, and oppressive

messages in pop music. In others, my students expose the glaring lack of space for any critical

thought or response, specifically in relation to the lyrics and videos of pop music. A student once

pointed out that an artist may be personally accused of committing gender-based violence, and

yet, often, the messages of gender violence in their music do not endure the same scrutiny.

Another student noticed the trend to be 'woke' or aware of systemic injustices, and that it has not

been applied consistently in the entertainment industry's messaging.

For one set of journalism students in particular, the conversation extended beyond the

impromptu dialogue we had when an 'inappropriate' song played over the loudspeakers, and it

became a subject of their art. As I reviewed their visual art and literature pieces for submission to

a contest, we named and explored other multimodal responses that marginalized people had

created. One student mentioned a consent-focused rewrite of *Baby, It's Cold Outside* by Lydia

Liza and Josiah Lemanski (2016). A few others knew of the feminist remake of *Blurred Lines*

(FullFrontalFreedom, 2013) in support of women's rights and a Texan congressional candidate.

As a consequence, I began to intentionally catalogue English and Spanish video remixes

of pop songs that had intersectional themes or social justice aims, such as the two mentioned by

my students. In parallel, I also wanted to gauge shifts in the wider institution that is pop music. To that end, I sought out and catalogued any mainstream pop artists, music, or videos that intentionally disrupted hegemonic discourses or offered a socially just alternative in content or representation. The hegemonic discourses of pop music provided innumerable teaching and learning moments, which guided the initial inquiry for this research.

Drawing on my experiences as an educator, I returned to university studies to focus on peacebuilding and peace education, during which time I solidified my cataloguing project under the name 'Crit & Create.' Originally, I set out to develop two engagements with music messaging. The first invited and organized roundtables of people with diverse perspectives to critically think and dialogue -- that is, 'Crit' -- about the 'hidden curriculum' of pop music lyrics (Giroux and Penna, 1979). The second opened a digital space that invited creative responses and multimodal art productions to reimagine -- and 'Create' -- a diverse and equitable world. These two approaches represented the mirrored processes of dialogue, as proposed by Paolo Freire, that 'challenge mediating social realities by posing them as problems that can be analysed critically by those who have direct experience of them' (Freire quoted in Rugut and Osman, 2013, p. 27). I follow Freire in recognizing collective conversation as an educative space for all involved, and I weave educational perspectives into my foundations and readings of the media presented here as a shared survival space.

Through 'Crit & Create', I delineated categories and expanded patterns in the remixes I continued to collect. In this paper, I add a deeper level of analysis to the original intention of fostering creativity and collecting creations aimed towards a world that we want to see and that sees us, no matter how marginalized our identity. In the spirit of Zora Neale Hurston's idea that

research is 'formalized curiosity' (1996, p. 143), I analyse close readings of culture jamming and remixes of music videos and their lyrics as a way to explore how they build community through representation and shared social learning, which in turn contributes to the survival of the communities represented. The first part of this paper formalizes the foundations of my lived experience, understanding key concepts such as hidden curriculum, culture jamming, intersectionality, and cultural efficacy. The second part shares my methodology, narrowing down the scope of this article to four video remixes: two each of *Blurred Lines* and *Despacito*. I conclude by discussing these specific feminist, immigrant, queer, and protest remixes, drawing parallels to the community they build while encouraging readers to watch QR-coded videos and consider the hidden curriculum of the originals and remixes. In so doing, I urge us each -- as willing or unwilling consumers of pop music and pop culture -- to fulfil our responsibility to take the next steps toward decolonizing our psychological, physical, productive, and publishing spaces, creating a collective community that counters oppression in the cultural sector.

Key Concepts

As an educator, I frame this collective process of sharing, creating, learning, and community-building in educational terms. I use Philip Jackson's term 'hidden curriculum', just as Henry Giroux and Anthony Penna do (1979, p. 33), to refer to the role of socialization and learning provided by implicit meanings and messages as indicative of the explicit or camouflaged hegemonic discourses that are found in pop music lyrics and pop music videos. Pop culture socializes and teaches us with a type of hidden curriculum that is expressed through what is represented, said, and normalized in pop music. In socializing audiences, it also marginalizes

people in and out of their direct listenership. Fernández Herrería and López López point out that 'this learning of the implicit is called the hidden curriculum, and within that learning is hidden a lot of violence'[1] (Fernández Herrería y López López, 2014, p. 129). Identifying that capacity for undermining social education and, especially when violence is hidden, allows for conscious and conscientious reframing of hegemonic messaging (Giroux and Penna, 1979, p. 23).

Culture jamming is one artistic way to bring these hidden messages to the forefront, by questioning the message or providing an alternative reading. During my graduate work, I examined graffiti on print ads and performances that subverted the messages of consumerism. This extended into culture jamming that I noticed in nearby neighbourhoods -- 'MurderKing' scrawled over 'BurgerKing', for instance, combined with 'if your product was any good you wouldn't need sexism to sell it' -- which resonated with the intentions, process, and productions of the music video remixes I was simultaneously collecting. Thus, I adapt an understanding of culture jamming based on the work of Jennifer A. Sandlin and Jennifer L. Milam (2008), where culture jamming extends beyond the criticism of capitalism. According to Sandlin and Milam, culture jamming is 'the act of resisting and re-creating commercial culture in order to transform society' and 'is embraced by groups and individuals who seek to critique and (re)form how culture is created and enacted in our daily lives' (2008, p. 323). In addition to such critical creation, there is an emphasis on the groups and individuals that simultaneously create beacons to a wider collective and a decolonizing space of re-socialization. Sandlin and Milam propose 'that when viewed as such, culture jamming holds potential to connect learners with one another

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[1] Own translation. The original Spanish reads: 'Éste aprendizaje de lo implícito es lo que se llama currículum oculto y en él se esconde mucha violencia.'

and to connect individual lives to social issues' (2008, p. 250). This broader reading of culture

jamming considers the practice to be a critical public pedagogy (2008, p. 251). All creation

opens a dialogue, a potential conversation, and thus a possibility of relationship and community.

And by invoking the dialogic, I extend Freire's emphasis on the role of dialogue in clarifying and

democratizing social relationships (Freire, 1973). Culture jamming, then, enters into dialogue

with an original work while opening the conversation for additional readings and communal

reframing by a community of viewers and listeners.

Culture jamming is a purposeful and artistic practice, the social impact of which is

clarified through use of Eloisa Nos Aldás' concept of cultural efficacy. An orientation that

centres on intention and social impact, cultural efficacy considers a message's final objective

through an intersectional lens and with the aim of social justice:

> 'Cultural efficacy' can be seen as the goal for those discourses that arise from
> social and collective aims and have social education as their final and unique aim.
> They are born within social change, advocacy or educative programs...every
> creative choice needs to go towards that communicative horizon (transformation),
> and their discourses will have to be examined and evaluated in relation to socio-
> cultural objectives (reframing cultural assumptions) rather than purely
> quantitative ones (2013, p. 99).

As an example, songs and videos with high cultural efficacy may purposefully place

marginalized people in visible roles in the music video, or politically rewrite the expectations for

oppressed groups into the lyrics. Using the above example from my student, the feminist rewrite

of *Baby, It's Cold Outside* has the aim of 'social education' around consent and gendered power

dynamics.

It is also important to define cultural efficacy by what it is not, for it stands in opposition

to cultural efficiency. Nos Aldás' concept of cultural efficiency constitutes quantitative

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objectives. In other words, cultural efficiency is measurable: the amount of money made from a video or the number of YouTube views, shares, or comments. Cultural efficiency focuses on the popularity, quantity, or reach of the message, while cultural efficacy focuses on the socio-cultural objectives and intentions of the message. Often, the very media model of cultural efficiency that focuses on financial success or mass exposure is built to work against or undermine the socio-cultural objectives that define cultural efficacy.

For my purposes, the cultural efficacy of a work is more relevant when considering people who have been marginalized and seek self-determination and creative space in an oppressive sector. The element of Nos Aldás' 'social education' is an invitation for collective re-learning for, by, and with people who are marginalized. If cultural efficacy is 'a criteria to implement a cultural responsibility for any message' and 'part of social change communication strategy', then 'every creative choice' requires a re-socialization with this type of focus on social justice that inherently functions as a space of survival to build community (Nos Aldás, 2013).

Furthermore, cultural efficacy centres readings of a piece's intersectional socio-cultural objectives. I adopt María Caterina La Barbera's definition of intersectionality as analytical categories that 'identify how the intersection of social structures (gender, sexuality, race, nationality, class and dis-ability) generates complex situations of discrimination that are maintained and reproduced at the structural, political and discursive levels' (2017, p. 191). Use of this framework ensures a diverse, inclusive starting point, a common language, and categories for critical analysis. Kimberlé Crenshaw originally coined the term 'intersectionality', and I follow her and her co-authors' work that describes marginalization as something that 'operated within institutionalized discourses that legitimized existing power relations...and at the same

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time...how discourses of resistance (e.g., feminism and antiracism) could themselves function as sites that produced and legitimized marginalization' (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, and Tomlinson, 2013). This complexity and multiplicity invites dialogue with and within marginalized communities regarding the layers of cultural artifacts. As I move into my formalized methods, it is important to re-integrate all of the frameworks and foundations back to the learning community, for the strategy of survival I focus on is the creation of community and shared, inclusive cultural artifacts. Indeed, my original Hurstonian 'formalized curiosity' sprouted from educating, sharing, and learning with and from people who have been marginalized or oppressed through pop music lyrics or videos. It is this ethos that underpins this study and seeks to draw readers into that educational experience.

Finding the Music

To formally collect examples, I developed a research methodology in line with Hurston's conception of 'poking and prying with a purpose' (1996, p. 143). I compiled a preliminary list of creative, critical responses to top pop music songs, focusing on works with high cultural efficacy. My search for videos strictly used YouTube, as it is the most popular video platform. Its format also allows for multiple types of culture jamming: alteration of lyrics, parody of video, and visual representation and inclusion of alternative voices. The choice of publishing platform also stems from YouTube's power structure that allows both the remixes and official music videos to be posted in the same space at the will of artists and creators. Within this search database, keywords such as 'parody', 'resistance', 'remake', 'response', 'version', and 'remix' helped define parameters of results. To promote social justice among the humorous and artistic

interpretations, the second filter applied aimed for cultural efficacy. Keywords reflected the main elements of intersectionality, as named above by La Barbera: 'feminist', 'anti-racism', 'gender inclusive', 'LGBTQ+', 'anti-capitalist', 'dis-ableism', and 'anti-nationalist.' Other keywords reflected general cultural efficacy such as: 'social justice', 'human rights', 'respect', and 'positive.' A third filter named specific artists or song titles, according to each of Billboard's Top 3 Hot Songs from 2013 to 2020 (Billboard, 2020). The choice to analyse remixes of top songs follows the logic of Umberto Eco, who explains that culture jamming's intentions are 'not about interrupting the channel of communication, but instead utilizing the communication itself and the structures of power to appropriate its signs and distort them'[2] (quoted in Cabello Fernández-Delgado, 2006, p. 2). Focusing on the tunes most likely to be found in public spaces and get stuck in our heads -- also known as 'earworms' (Levitin, 2008, p. 151) -- renders those songs an optimal vehicle of appropriation and message alteration.

All three of 2017 and 2013's top songs have notable remixes. Though investigating the reasons for this pattern is beyond the scope of this article, the pattern itself led to a natural narrowing process. In 2017, the top three songs were *The Shape of You* by Ed Sheeran, *Despacito* by Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee ft. Justin Bieber, and *That's What I Like* by Bruno Mars. In 2013, the top songs were *Thrift Shop* by Macklemore & Ryan Lewis featuring Wanz, *Blurred Lines* by Robin Thicke featuring T.I. and Pharrell Williams, and *Radioactive* by Imagine Dragons. Table 1 lists titles, links, and QR codes for all the culturally efficacious YouTube remixes that were found for these 6 songs, as well as the original videos for comparison. In this

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[2] Own translation. The original Spanish reads: 'No se trata de interrumpir el canal de comunicación, sino de utilizar la propias comunicación y las estructuras del poder apropiándose de sus signos y tergiversándolos.'

listing, I invite readers to view and consider these cultural artifacts on their own terms. I also

share and briefly analyse my considerations and justifications of the remixes in terms of their

qualifications as culture jamming and their degrees of cultural efficacy.

Table 1: YouTube remixes of original top 3 songs from 2017 & 2013

Title, Artist, and YouTube link	QR Code	Notes on Culture Jamming (CJ) & Cultural Efficacy (CE)
Shape of You by Ed Sheeran https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGwWNGJdvx8		Original video
Ed Sheeran – Shape of You PARODY! by The Key of Awesome https://youtu.be/4Ie8jbLIyzs		CJ: Imitates video closely, changes lyrics completely, uses lyrics to point out inconsistencies with video's message, shows same harassment but as unattractive and inappropriate CE: Lyrically and visually shows woman as strong in defending herself and denouncing male harassment
The Molecular Shape of You (Ed Sheeran Parody) by A Capella Science https://youtu.be/f8FAJXPBdOg		CJ: Alters lyrics but maintains most rhyming; creates new video to show science concepts CE: Focuses on science education (although not related to social justice) rather than bodies
Despacito by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee ft. Justin Bieber https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJQP7kiw5Fk		Original video
Luis Fonsi – Despacito ft. Daddy Yankee PARODY! by The Key of Awesome https://youtu.be/TVudARY3SD4		CJ: Shows original video clips and comments on visuals in song lyrics CE: Points out cultural appropriation of song featuring Justin Bieber; invites collaboration with Puerto Rico hurricane victims

Luis Fonsi – Despacito feat. Daddy Yankee (Parody) ESE GRINGO by Werevertomorro https://youtu.be/h8Wh18cYKvY		CJ: Imitates general rap style videos but not specifically original; alters lyrics CE: Talks about Trump's racism; denounces Trump's stereotyping of Hispanics, Muslims, Asians, and others; denounces xenophobia
Despacito 'Ni Una Menos' by Natalia Maderna https://youtu.be/pG5Myc8l9z4		CJ: Changes lyrics but follows concepts of original lyrics; reimagines reggaeton as instrumental; maintains casual background; features young daughter dancing in high chair CE: Sings against gender violence and state-sanctioned discrimination; promotes social movement #NiUnaMenos as lyrics created from protest chants
DESPACITO – Luis Fonsi ft. Daddy Yankee by Los Morancos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMusNLY5yT0		CJ: Changes lyrics entirely; maintains rhythm and rhyme CE: Denounces inequality in the justice system based on socio-economic status; satirizes a Spanish political figure's impunity; video's description specifies parodying a specific case of impunity during the sentencing of Iñaki Urdangarín (royal family figure in Spain) in the Nóos case
Alcolitos (O Despacito Galego) by Páramo Pictures https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyyFLbrdaDg		CJ: Changes lyrics but follows much of original rhyme scheme where Gallego and Spanish allow CE: Two singers debate and problematize planting an invasive species for short-term financial gain
That's What I Like by Bruno Mars https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmivT7MJ41M		Original video
Bruno Mars – 'That's What I Like' PARODY by Bart Baker https://youtu.be/xhl_rQDGzzo		CJ: Imitates music video closely, lyrics altered and content opposes original CE: Denounces capitalistic materialist culture by listing out expensive items as unnecessary

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FIRST's What I Like (That's What I Like – Bruno Mars Parody) by l TEAM 4201 https://youtu.be/ZuysidVoa1E		CJ: Imitates video animations, changes lyrics to reflect engineering project CE: Promotes learning by building; encourages education in engineering and building robots
Thrift Shop by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis ft. Wanz https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QK8mJJJvaes		Original video
Macklemore – Thrift Shop – Barklemore – Pet Shop by Petody https://youtu.be/b24E-hZcAIA		CJ: Changes video to focus on adopted dogs; changes lyrics to the voice of a rescue dog that's been adopted CE: Promotes positive human interactions with animals; promotes animal rights
Radioactive by Imagine Dragons https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktvTqknDobU		Original video
Radioactive – Imagine Dragons PARODY (Physically Active) by Travis Young https://youtu.be/_iHUr8Fd1Xg		CJ: Changes lyrics; imitates video themes and scenes CE: Encourages exchanging sedentary lifestyles for active ones
Blurred Lines by Robin Thicke ft. T.I. and Pharrell https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyDUC1LUXSU		Original video
'Defined Lines' Subtitled Version [Feminist Parody – 'Blurred Lines' by Robin Thicke] by Auckland Law Revue https://youtu.be/AMTCN9clcrE		CJ: Changes lyrics completely; imitates video with reverse roles; rewrites animation and hashtags CE: Calls out behaviour of harmful representations of the feminine in music in general and particularly to the original lyrics and video; denounces violence against women from microaggressions to rape; video's description clarifies that 'The Law Revue Girls want to define those supposedly "blurred lines"'
Robin Thicke 'Blurred Lines' Sexy Boys Parody by Mod Carousel https://youtu.be/tKfwCjgiodg		CJ: Imitates nearly all aspects of lyrics and music video, but with spectrum of sexuality

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		CE: Attains goal in description of including spectrum of sexuality as well as presenting both men and women in a positive light; video's description adds that 'most attempts to show female objectification in the media by swapping the genders serve more to ridicule the male body than to highlight the extent to which women get objectified and do everyone a disservice', arguing that they 'made this video specifically to show a spectrum of sexuality as well as present both women and men in a positive light, one where objectifying men is more than alright and where women can be strong and sexy without negative repercussions'
Blurred Lines: The Reply by Rosalind Pearl https://youtu.be/FqQJ7K2Hffw		CJ: Changes video completely; changes words to answer CE: Promotes body autonomy and healthy choices
#WomensRights: A Pro-Choice Parody of Robin Thicke's 'Blurred Lines' by FullFrontalFreedom https://youtu.be/NNX9OT9Z7i8		CJ: Imitates video scenery; references political events and movements of the year; changes lyrics to discuss Texas legislative politics; changes animations to political signs held by dancers CE: Discuss importance of women's health in women's rights; values women's contributions to local governments; video's description affirms it is 'a role-reversing political parody' that is 'inspired by the women of the Texas legislature' and invokes '#StandwithWomen in the fight for rights in Texas, North Carolina, Ohio, and everywhere'
Blurred Vision (Blurred Lines Optometry Parody) by AJ Pastor Productions https://youtu.be/uHKTU-sKGn4		CJ: Imitates video; changes outfits; changes lyrics to promote vision care; change animation hashtag phrases CE: Represents gender diversity with male and female optometrists; highlights health care and self care
Robin Thicke – Blurred Lines by Fair Lawn Senior Center https://youtu.be/rXBhW1IZAFk		CJ: Imitates video scene with backdrop; keeps original lyrics; changes outfits CE: Includes a marginalized sector of the population by giving them a voice and an active role; video description explains that 'if two versions were made of the original video' with one for mature audiences

		only, why not make a version 'BY mature audiences'

Discussion and Dialogue

In this discussion and analysis, I investigate two songs that were publicly discussed for their

'social education' (Nos Aldás, 2013). Robin Thicke's *Blurred Lines* generated controversy

around its references to non-consensual sex, for which it and advertisements featuring the song

were banned from several UK universities and UK television in 2013 (BBC Newsbeat, 2019).

Luis Fonsi's *Despacito* also came into public conversation by becoming YouTube's most

streamed music video of the decade (Monroy Yglesias, 2019). It is credited for the 'Despacito

effect' (Arbona-Ruiz, 2017), which describes the mainstreaming of Latin music in the US (Cobo,

2018). In what follows, I briefly address the hidden curriculum and cultural efficacy (if any) of

the two original songs through an intercultural lens, while drawing on my lived understanding

and experiences. I also briefly enter into dialogue with some of the artists' words and the

public's perspective.

Blurred Lines

A widely accepted reading of *Blurred Lines* finds that the song glorifies non-consensual sex and

thinly veils the underlying message of women's inferiority, both lyrically and visually (BBC

Newsbeat, 2019). One of the video's models and self-identified feminist, Emily Ratajkowski,

maintains that the video and its production were feminist, body positive, and sex positive (Dunn,

Coburn, and Jarvis, 2019). Ratajkowski has also stated that 'I'm glad that people are criticising pop lyrics, because I think that's an important thing to do' (Lynskey, 2013). One of the singers, Pharrell Williams, has since stated that he 'realized that there are men who use that same language when taking advantage of a woman' (BBC Newsbeat, 2019). The lyrics behind the video, widely decried as misogynistic and perpetuating rape culture, include phrases such as 'I hate these blurred lines / I know you want it.'

Despacito

Public reception of *Despacito* varies from a celebration of the international success of a Spanish-language song to a decrying of its deployment of cultural appropriation while adding a white, non-Spanish speaking pop star in the form of Justin Bieber (Sherman, 2017). The original video referenced in Table 1 is the most viewed and official version with Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee, which does not include Justin Bieber. As such, I argue that the video's cultural efficacy is evident in how it features the colourful Puerto Rican 'La Perla' neighbourhood where houses are painted brightly and residents are generally marginalized for their socioeconomic status (Noticel, 2017). I take a feminist lens to *Despacito*, where the overall empowered and sex-positive message still comes from the male gaze, with the song's lyrics seeking to make women 'forget your last name' and commanding that 'if I ask for a kiss, you come give it to me.' Aside from this, the generally equitable lyrics were intentional during the songwriting process, according to Erika Ender who co-authored the lyrics with Fonsi (Moreno, 2017). She states that the song is

purposefully full of metaphors to encourage imagination and open interpretation, which accords

with my own project of re-imagining and finding critical readings of each of these works.

A Feminist Revision: Defining the Lines

The feminist parody of *Blurred* Lines gets directly to the point by starting the song with an order:

'every bigot shut up.' It speaks directly to the issue of rape culture in the original song by

explaining 'if you want to get nasty, just don't harass me.' The artists invoke direct role-reversals

with 'Let me emasculate ya!' and 'How does it feel to get verbally harassed?' which could be

argued has a message as oppressive as the original. The artists clarify that they are seeking

empathy as they, as women, identify that 'we're feeling the frustration, from all the exploitation.'

The word 'feminist' in the title aligns with my intersectional reading that they directly tackle

issues of misogyny, disempowerment, and rape culture. Yet, on all other intersectional accounts

they make no impact, or even have negative cultural efficacy, as the video erases or does not

acknowledge marginalized identities of disability, racial minority status, class, and queer

sexualities. The community built around this remix includes the 5.6 million viewers of the

unsubtitled video (though the subtitled version is linked and coded here for the reader's ease).

Notably, the subtitled version of 200,000 views is under an age-based restriction in YouTube,

despite offering the exact same content as the unsubtitled version. This provides an ironic -- and

probably unintended -- parallel to the official and unrated versions of the original *Blurred Lines*

videos.

A Queer Rendition of Blurred Lines *by Mod Carousel*

Much of the cultural efficacy of this piece is expressed by the artists themselves in the video description: 'It's our opinion that most attempts to show female objectification in the media by swapping the genders serve more to ridicule the male body than to highlight the extent to which women get objectified and do everyone a disservice. We made this video specifically to show a spectrum of sexuality as well as present both women and men in a positive light, one where objectifying men is more than alright and where women can be strong and sexy without negative repercussions.' The inclusion and sex positivity of the visuals exemplifies their position, while the majority of the lyrics remain unchanged except 'he' to 'she', 'plastic' to 'manly', 'girl' to 'boy', 'bitch' to 'dick', and the entirety of the rapped portion. In this parody, Dalisha Phillips raps a narration about asking first and then engaging in a relationship with a man. Despite the genderqueer or non-conforming visual representation, the lyrics remain rather binary both for the single word changes and the rapped narration. Alongside other intersections, the video includes a racially diverse group of artists, which feels even more important given that rap and R&B are rooted in Black culture. There is a lack of, or even negative, cultural efficacy in terms of disability and class as they are absent. The community includes the 5.7 million viewers of the video, such that the cultural efficacy of this work extends to all of its performances by the Seattle-based boylesque troupe.

A Pro-Immigrant Remix

This Spanish remix of *Despacito* sets its sights on a specific gringo, or white male from North America. My initial assumption before watching was that it would be speaking of Justin Bieber, but the duo of Werevertomorro rebukes Donald Trump as president and person. Other than the tune and street party/dancing scenes, the video focuses much more on the remixed message than responding to the original. Visuals and characters support the description of discrimination against -- and strength of -- Latinx communities while delineating Trump's multiple oppressive catchphrases and stereotypes (Reilly, 2016). The lyrics and visuals explicitly bring class, race, religion, and nationality into the conversation. At the same time, they also lean on stereotypes that place Latinos as second-class citizens. The video tends to generalize the Mexican immigrant experience to all Latinx communities, which marginalizes others. There is also some homophobic dance interplay between two singers as the video comes to a close, although some same-sex dance partners are highlighted in the party scenes. The 36 million views boasts a higher view count than any of the other remixes considered in this paper. Likely, this has to do with the artist Werevertumorro's large following, the success of the original tune, and the timeliness of this video in relation to sensationalized presidential language.

A Chant Protesting Gender-Based Violence

One of the remixes with the lowest production value made the most headlines, largely because of its humble authenticity. Contributing to a community in this way is the ultimate goal of culture jamming, as it truly combats oppression in words and collective action. Argentine Natalia Maderna added ukulele to the tune of *Despacito*, and the words were written by a group of workers belonging to the Asociación Trabajadores del Estado labour union in Argentina (Sánchez Hidalgo, 2017). Maderna did not post the video to YouTube, but rather to the ATE website, which explains its relatively low YouTube view count of 500,000. The tune, however, was popularly heard and sung on the streets during marches for women's rights, reproductive rights, and demonstrations denouncing femicide and state involvement in gender-based violence (Sánchez Hidalgo, 2017). In terms of intersectional cultural efficacy, this video and its lyrics have a singular focus. The feminist objectives clearly come through in the lyrics, as the dead are named and the patriarchal system is blamed. The visuals could be read as undermining the highly produced studio spaces of most music videos and satirizing the young dancers who accompany the musician. Yet in the video, Maderna's organic and honest creative choices -- of filming in a lived-in kitchen and playing alongside her young daughter in a high chair -- seem to simply reflect the time available to a creative, working mom in a way that strengthens the video's message and appeal. As for additional intersections, there are slight nods to class when naming the workers' union and gender/sexuality when denouncing patriarchy. Disability, religion, and nationality are not referenced, however.

Closing: Patterns at Play

Parody is an essential source of culture jamming pop music on YouTube. Though parody can certainly invite high cultural efficacy as occurred in some examples, some parodies collected in Table 1 use well-known cultural artifacts that make reference to the original song when those very elements exhibit the least cultural efficacy. Some of the *Blurred Lines* parodies, for instance, maintain the problematic element of the male gaze on the largely unclothed bodies of women in order to reference the original video, even though this element was most in need of critique and challenge. Mod Carousel, particularly, noted this in their video description and addressed it in producing their video.

There was also a general trend toward issues of women's representation, as opposed to other aspects of intersectionality. Multiple videos and lyrics accomplished the goal of both denouncing the unjust or unrepresentative and creating a new intersectional vision as a response. The works by Mod Carousel and Natalia Maderna both used key elements from Thicke's original, but clearly changed the intentions behind the production and used their platform to highlight underrepresented voices, concerns, and identities. Notably, these videos did not come from frequent parody creators such as Weird Al and The Key of Awesome, but rather from specific groups of marginalized people looking for change.

The role of representation in social change is also worth considering, as many of these parodies featured people who looked like original artists. As Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018, p. 22) writes:

> The insistence of marginalized and disenfranchised communities -- women, racial minorities, nonheteronormative communities, the working class -- to be seen has

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been crucial to an understanding and an expansion of rights for these
communities…Of course, not all politics of visibility result in social change; the
point here is that visibility is understood as leading to something, as a part of a
political struggle.

While the effects of the 'politics of visibility' or 'economies of visibility' remain to be seen

(Banet-Weiser, 2018), they reflect the intentions of the individual artists or marginalized

communities. Similar to the cultural efficacy of these remixes, the representation of content in

the messaging of these videos focuses on the communities who seek safety and meaning in these

remakes, regardless of whether or not they attract a wider base.

Culture jamming, as examined in this paper, is a strategy that prioritizes survival. It

demonstrates the practical agency of people and communities who seek to counter hegemonic

cultural assumptions. These critical, relevant, representative, and impactful cultural artifacts use

cultural efficacy and intersectionality to build collective experiences and communities for those

marginalized by mainstream pop culture. In so doing, they continue to expand the repertoire of

culturally available survival discourses that demonstrate the existence and presence of

marginalized communities. The final invitation to unwitting consumers of these hegemonically

oppressive cultural products, then, is to uplift marginal voices in a way that complicates and

counters the problematically mainstream public discourses that these communities and

individuals negotiate through their critical music making.

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