"Expanding on the Almost": Queer World-Building and Institutional Information Worlds

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ABSTRACT

The theories of information poverty and small worlds, both developed by Elfreda Chatman, address how information behaviors and practices are shaped by social norms and insider and outsider dynamics. The application of these theories in the information science literature, to date, has largely focused on individual information behaviors practiced by people who are described as information poor. There is, therefore, opportunity for theoretical development concerning the role of systems and structures in both information poverty and small worlds. Drawing on data from interviews with eleven queer entertainment media creators as well as content from episodes of Emmy award-winning television programs, we use constructivist grounded theory to extend Chatman's theorizing by investigating how both information poverty and small worlds operate and connect on an institutional level.

We present two extensions of small worlds and information poverty: institutional small worlds and queer world-building. Institutional small worlds in this context consist of entertainment media producers and content that possess and reflect epistemically-privileged heteronormative standpoints. Epistemic knowledge created by queer individuals is left out of these small worlds, and participants report experiencing information poverty due to symbolic violence in content that erases and misrepresents their identities. However, participants also engage in entertainment media creation to construct their own rich small worlds. These queer world-building practices reflect participants' epistemic authority and thus challenge normative discourses produced and reified by powerful institutions. Still, queer world-building occurs within institutional

contexts that continue to impoverish queer creators. Despite lacking resources and facing risks, participants continue their practices because creation provides them with rich information outside of normative structures.

The constructs we present may be transferable to other populations and have implications for both researchers and practitioners interested in elucidating ways in which library and information science work can better account for institutional forces and inequities in information practices.

INTRODUCTION

By virtue of living in a society that is structured according to normative conceptions of gender and sexuality, queer people experience information poverty. However, ways that they grapple with impoverished circumstances are richer and more nuanced than Elfreda Chatman's theory of information poverty and subsequent work on the matter suggest. In this paper, we present results from a constructivist grounded theory study of queer entertainment media (EM) creators' practices. We find that though queer people experience information poverty on an institutional level because EM content and industries are highly cis- and heteronormative, they develop informationally rich queer small worlds through their own content creation practices. However, because they are structurally information poor, these queer world-building efforts are constrained by inequities that prevent them from gaining the epistemic privilege necessary to reorient institutionalized normativity with their creative endeavors. This work extends Chatman's theories of information poverty and small worlds to better account for institutional forces that shape these constructs.

TERMINOLOGY

We recognize that "queer" is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of non-normative genders and sexualities. We choose to use the term "queer" in this paper for two reasons: participants referred to themselves as queer during interviews, and queerness serves as a useful theoretical lens through which we can identify and seek to reorient structural normativity in social institutions and Chatman's theoretical frameworks.[1] We also use "trans" in this paper as an umbrella term to describe individuals who are not cisgender, or whose genders do not match what was assigned to them at birth.[2] Cisgender describes individuals who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. We use the terms cisnormativity and heteronormativity throughout this paper. Cisnormativity is the assumption that all individuals are cisgender, while heteronormativity is the assumption that all individuals are heterosexual; these constructs are *institutionalized*, meaning they are embedded in dominant social structures, and they structurally marginalize people who identify outside of their confines.[3] Finally, we use homonormativity to refer to normative constructs that may be

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[1] Annemarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 1997); Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

[2] Susan Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," *Radical History Review* 2008, no. 100 (2008).

[3] Stryker, "Transgender History."

privileged within queer culture and identity; such constructs include whiteness, ableism, and instantiations of cis- and heteronormativity.[4]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information Poverty

Queer people experience gaps in their information environments because information resources, including library catalogs and holdings, information retrieved via search engines and social media, educational materials, and many forms of mass media, center cisgender and heterosexual perspectives and either erase or inaccurately represent queerness.[5] This suggests that queer people experience *information poverty*, or circumstances where their positions outside dominant social discourses prevent them from accessing desired information.[6] Drawing on her work with populations such as the working poor,[7] Chatman identifies four constructs that shape an impoverished life-world: 1) deception, or deliberate attempts to distort one's personal reality; 2) secrecy, or hiding knowledge about one's personal experiences for self-protective reasons; 3) risk-taking, or decisions regarding whether to maintain self-protection or to increase one's knowledge via new information interactions; and 4) situational relevance, or circumstances under which a person experiencing information poverty may risk interacting with information

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[4] Lisa Duggan. The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003).

[5] Emily Drabinski, "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," *The Library Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2013); Sara A. Howard and Steven A. Knowlton, "Browsing Through Bias: The Library of Congress Classification and Subject Headings for African American Studies and LGBTQIA Studies," *Library Trends* 67, no. 1 (2018); Vanessa Kitzie, "'I Pretended to Be a Boy on the Internet': Navigating Affordances and Constraints of Social Networking Sites and Search Engines for LGBTQ+ Identity Work," *First Monday* 23, no. 7 (2018); Jesse Fox and Jennifer J. Moreland, "The Dark Side of Social Networking Sites: An Exploration of the Relational and Psychological Stressors Associated with Facebook Use and Affordances," *Computers in Human Behavior* 45 (2015); Joseph M. Currin et al., "How Gay and Bisexual Men Compensate for the Lack of Meaningful Sex Education in a Socially Conservative State," *Sex Education* 17, no. 6 (2017); Kerry H. Robinson, "'Difficult Citizenship': The Precarious Relationships Between Childhood, Sexuality, and Access to Knowledge," *Sexualities* 15, no. 3-4 (2012).

[6] Elfreda A. Chatman, "The Impoverished Life-World of Outsiders," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 47, no. 3 (1996).

[7] Elfreda A. Chatman, "The Information World of Low-Skilled Workers," *Library and Information Science Research* 9, no. 4 (1987).

from outsiders to fill gaps in their knowledge. Chatman relates these four constructs to factors including social norms and trust.[8]

Scholars continue to use Chatman's information poverty to inform their work with stigmatized populations, including drag performers and members of extreme body modification communities;[9] these studies suggest that information poverty may not be a *constant* or *universal* state, but instead may pertain to certain types of information needs and interactions related to non-normative aspects of a person's life-world (e.g., someone may be impoverished regarding their extreme body modifications, but they may have unfettered access to information that pertains to other facets of their life).

However, Chatman's conception of information poverty is limited because it operates on an individual level;[10] it discusses someone's *life-world*, or individualized everyday experiences,[11] with little attention to how life-worlds intersect with and are shaped by structural forces. This results in a body of information poverty scholarship that focuses almost exclusively on individual practices rather than how those practices are shaped by structural inequities.[12] Information marginalization, a recent extension of information poverty theory, demonstrates that social institutions *construct information poverty* because structural inequities contribute to people's information practices.[13] Chatman's initial four constructs may be reoriented in order to place less emphasis on how people individually behave, and to instead focus on *why they may behave that way* given their wider social contexts.

Small Worlds

In addition to more individualized life-worlds, Chatman's work theorizes *small worlds*, or communities that coalesce around practices shaped by social norms, worldviews, and

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[8] Chatman, "The Impoverished World."

[9] Jessa Lingel and Adam Golub, "In Face on Facebook: Brooklyn's Drag Community and Sociotechnical Practices of Online Communication," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 20, no. 5 (2015); Jessa Lingel and danah boyd, "'Keep It Secret, Keep It Safe': Information Poverty, Information Norms, and Stigma," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 64, no. 5 (2013).

[10] Amelia N. Gibson and John D. Martin III, "Re-Situating Information Poverty: Information Marginalization and Parents of Individuals with Disabilities," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 70, no. 5 (2019).

[11] Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life World* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

[12] Jutta Haider and David Bawden, "Pairing Information with Poverty: Traces of Development Discourse in LIS," *New Library World* 107, no. 9/10 (2006); Gibson and Martin, "Re-Situating Information Poverty."

[13] Gibson and Martin, "Re-Situating Information Poverty."

actors' interactions with information. [14] Examples of small worlds include feminist bookstores, online support groups, and women's prisons. [15] Scholarship acknowledges that small worlds often consist of rich information environments constructed by marginalized people despite their distance from more privileged positions in society; [16] however, theorizing around small worlds has yet to fully account for structural forces that shape their formation and continued existence. [17] Because analyses of small worlds typically neglect structural phenomena, aspects of marginalization that intersect with small worlds are unaccounted for; small worlds may be informationally rich, but the structural instantiations of power, privilege, and marginalization that intersect with them are ignored.

Literature underarticulates connections between information poverty and small worlds. Possibly because both frameworks are very individualized, tensions arise between them; information poverty suggests that members of the marginalized populations Chatman worked with experience significant information deficits, while a small worlds framework suggests they are saturated with information in particular contexts. However, we posit that reorienting Chatman's theories to account for *structural phenomena* helps develop connections between information poverty and small worlds to demonstrate that the frameworks do not contradict each other, but instead work together to explicate how informationally rich small worlds may be structurally disadvantaged when contextualized within larger, more powerful social institutions. A marginalized person may be structurally impoverished (for example, to draw on Chatman's work, they may be incarcerated), but also part of a rich small world (they may live in a rich prison information system). In this paper, we examine the relationship between information poverty and small worlds at a structural level in order to articulate these connections and advance both theories to

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[14] Elfreda A. Chatman, "Channels to a Larger Social World: Older Women Staying in Contact with the Great Society," *Library and Information Science Research* 13 (1991); Elfreda A. Chatman, "Life in a Small World: Applicability of Gratification Theory to Information-Seeking Behavior," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 42, no. 6 (1991); Victoria E. Pendleton, and Elfreda A. Chatman, "Small World Lives: Implications for the Public Library, *Library Trends* 46, no. 2 (1998).

[15] Gary Burnett, Michele Besant, and Elfreda A. Chatman, "Small Worlds: Normative Behavior in Virtual Communities and Feminist Bookselling," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 52, no. 7 (2001); Kaitlin Costello, "Social Relevance Assessments for Virtual Worlds: Interpersonal Source Selection in the Context of Chronic Illness," *Journal of Documentation* 73, no. 6 (2017); Elfreda A. Chatman, "A Theory of Life in the Round," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 50, no. 3 (1999).

[16] Chatman, "A Theory."

[17] Paul T. Jaeger, and Gary Burnett, Information Worlds: Social Context, Technology, and Information Behavior in the Age of the Internet (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010).

account for structural instantiations of power and marginalization. We use queer people's EM creation as a context in which to explore these phenomena.

Entertainment Media and Queerness

EM is not a monolithic category but is instead an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of content, genres, and formats that are widely (though not universally) available, and that audiences interact with and interpret within social contexts. Divisions between entertainment and other types of more overtly "informative" resources are, at best, artificial, and, at worst, limiting or harmful. Underestimating entertainment's functions severely limits our conception of how audiences interact with media content and, more broadly, information. Media that entertains "serves as a tool for cultural storytelling"[18] and "speaks to culture";[19] interactions between EM and its various audiences may spur a variety of experiences that beget a deep analysis of EM content, how individuals interact with that content, and how EM's production and reception are bound to *wider dynamics* related to power and social structures.[20] Queerness provides a useful lens through which to examine EM content and how EM industries are bound to structurally normative discourses given its status as both a marginalized positionality and a theoretical tool for reorienting normativity.[21]

Though various definitions of "queer entertainment media" exist, the label typically refers to "media forms that involve LGBTQ identities, individuals, characters, and themes, as well as media with which LGBTQ-identified people engage."[22] While queer people have always existed in media and current EM content includes more overt queer representation than ever before, the majority of media continues to erase or symbolically annihilate queerness, remaining largely cis- and heteronormative.[23] Contents that depict queer characters continue to present limited conceptions of queerness, particularly if being "queer" is associated with reorienting normativity. For example, a review of the

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[18] Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 3.

[19] Jonathan Gray, *Television Entertainment* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 3.

[20] Julia Himberg, The New Gay for Pay: The Sexual Politics of American Television Production (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2017).

[21] Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology.

[22] Julian A. Rodriguez, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Media: Key Narratives, Future Directions," *Sociology Compass* 13, no. 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12675.

[23] Jamie C. Capuzza and Leland G. Spencer, "Regressing, Progressing, or Transgressing on the Small Screen? Transgender Characters on U.S. Scripted Television Series," *Communication Quarterly* 65 (2017); Dia Thorfinnsdottir and Helle Strandgaard Jensen, "Laugh Away, He is Gay! Heteronormativity and Children's Television in Denmark," *Journal of Children and Media* 11, no. 4 (2017).

literature finds that white, cisgender, and wealthy gay men and women tend to be represented more and in more nuanced ways than queer people of color, less economically advantaged queer people, and queer people who identify with a broader spectrum of gender and sexual orientations.[24] Trans characters are widely erased in media, including that which depicts non-normative sexualities.[25] As a whole, EM that depicts certain queer identities does so very *normatively*: queer people assimilate within normative social structures, and narratives surrounding queerness are largely limited to tropes such as coming out and meeting tragic ends.[26]

Of course, there are exceptions to these wider trends, including recently acclaimed television programs such as FX's *Pose*, which is praised for its nuanced depiction of queer chosen family and of people living with AIDS and which features a cast that almost exclusively consists of trans actors of color, as well as television creator Janet Mock's Netflix development deal in 2019.[27] Overall, however, analyses of queer representation in media demonstrate that audiences continue to face a widely cis-, hetero-, and homonormative content landscape.

EM content may erase or monolithically depict queer identities partly because media industries are both embedded in and producers of institutionalized normativity.[28] Media corporations across the board cater to capitalist discourses—they are concerned primarily with profit margins that are typically met by cultivating a "mass" audience, and producers often assume that mass audiences are comprised of members of dominant (e.g., white, cisgender, straight, rich, able-bodied) groups.[29] Thus, queerness, when it exists, often defers to normative standpoints.

Moreover, *insiders* in media industries such as executives and creatives who work behind-the-scenes to compose, produce, and disseminate media content continue to be homogeneous. Major media corporations were formed by wealthy, heterosexual, cisgender white men, meaning they are infused with values that reflect privileged positionalities.[30] Media industries are hierarchical, and power remains concentrated among white men; queer people in media industries comprise a small minority of

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[24] Bruce E. Drushel, "First But (Nearly) Forgotten: Why You Know Milk but not Kozachenko" in *Queer Media Images*, ed. Jane Campbell and Theresa Carilli (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013): 123-134; Himberg, *The New Gay for Pay*.

[25] Rodriguez, "Lesbian, Gay."

[26] Tison Pugh, "Conservative Narrativity, Queer Politics, and the Humor of Gay Stereotypes in *Modern Family*," *Camera Obscura* 31, no. 3 (2017); Rodriguez, "Lesbian, Gay."

[27] Danielle Seid, "Television is Burning: Revolutionary Queer and Trans Representation on TV," *Flow*, 2019, http://www.flowjournal.org/2019/09/television-is-burning/.

[28] David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012).

[29] Byran Wuest, "A Shelf of One's Own: A Queer Production Studies Approach to LGBT Film Distribution and Categorization," *Journal of Film and Video* 48, no. 5 (2018).

[30] Himberg, *The New Gay for Pay*.

creators, and they often have to work covertly to enact change in media institutions, if they can do so at all.[31] Further, while queer women of color including Lena Waithe and Janet Mock continue to break ground in content creation, the majority of queer people in media industries are cisgender gay white men.[32]

Excluding queer people, especially trans people and queer people of color, from media industries is not divorced from capitalism; in fact, it is inherently bound to capitalism because capitalist discourse and its resultant structures necessarily produce and reify marginalization and exclusion.[33] Capitalism, racism, heteronormativity, and cisnormativity are interlocking forms of oppression that structure social institutions, including media industries.[34] This matrix of domination[35] affects the content and information that stem from institutional contexts: more often than not, content will be normative, even when it appears to represent outsider positionalities.

Entertainment Media, Information Poverty, and Small Worlds

Given the literature reviewed above, we argue that industry-produced EM typically impoverishes queer people because it is produced within and is reflective of structural normativity. However, claiming that EM completely impoverishes queer people contributes to the problematic individualized focus of Chatman's original work. It also focuses narrowly on representation at the expense of other, more dynamic interactions with EM, and it overlooks the practices of queer creators who are *outside* of media industries, but who still make their own content. We posit that we can use queer individuals' EM creation as a means to examine the relationship between information poverty and small worlds on a structural level in order to understand how queer creators construct their own informationally rich small worlds while they are still marginalized by normative social institutions.

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[31] Himberg, *The New Gay for Pay*.

[32] Himberg, *The New Gay for Pay*.

[33] Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018).

[34] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989).

[35] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection."

METHODS

We use constructivist grounded theory to investigate queer individuals' information practices with EM as a phenomenon of interest.[36] Constructivist grounded theory does not aim to describe patterns in the data, but rather to engage in abstraction that leads to theoretical contributions by locating key theoretical constructs related to the study's phenomenon of interest. [37] Grounded theory is effective for both original theory development and for theory expansion.[38] Consistent with constructivism, it does not aim to create a generalizable model; instead, it aims to elucidate constructs and linkages between those constructs. Rather than focus on generalizability, the goal of this type of work is transferability of these constructs and their relationships to other domains. In grounded theory, data collection, analysis, and theoretical sampling occur simultaneously, and the researchers are in constant dialog with the data in order to develop and interrogate overlapping causes, consequences, and conditions behind theoretical constructs. [39] In this study, constructs developed during data collection, analysis, and theoretical sampling expand upon Chatman's information poverty and small worlds frameworks.

Data come from two sources: interviews with queer individuals who create EM, and institutionally created EM content. The first author conducted multiple interviews from February through November 2018 with eleven self-identified queer participants who create EM (see Table 1). Participants were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling, and recruitment ceased when theoretical constructs and categories became saturated.[40] Interviews were conducted in person, over the phone, and via Skype, and participants were compensated with $20. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the first author, who qualitatively coded transcripts using the constant comparison method and multiple rounds of open, axial, and focused coding in order to abstract constructs from descriptive categories.[41] Extensive memoing took place during analysis, and data were further interrogated through negative case analysis. We engaged in peer-

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[36] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014).

[37] Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008); Claire B. Drauker, Donna S. Martsolf, Ross Ratchneewan, and Thomas B. Rusk, "Theoretical Sampling and Category Development in Grounded Theory," *Qualitative Health Research* 17, no. 8 (2007).

[38] Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth, "Qualitative Analysis of Content," in *Applications of Social Science Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*, ed. Barbara M. Wildemuth (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006): 308-319.

[39] Corbin and Strauss, *Basics*; Charmaz, *Constructing*.

[40] Charmaz, *Constructing*.

[41] Charmaz, *Constructing*.

debriefing and member-checking to increase findings' trustworthiness. The study was approved by Rutgers University Arts & Sciences IRB.

Pseudonym	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Pronouns	Age	Race / Ethnicity	Creation(s)
Elaine	Woman	Bisexual/ Queer	She/her	18-25	White	Fanfiction
Janet	Cisgender woman	Bisexual	She/her	18-25	Black/ African American	Blog
Riley	Genderfluid	Gay	She/her or he/him	26-34	White	Fanfiction, crafts
Felix	Male	Gay	He/him	26-34	White/ Jewish	Nonfiction essays
Jake	Cis male	Homosexual	He/him	26-34	Caucasian	Comics
Lea	Female	Queer	She/her	26-34	White	Nonfiction essays, zines
Mockingbird	Agender	Queer	They/ them	26-34	Indian	Visual art, music, performance art
Elyas	Genderqueer	Grey-asexual	They/ them	18-25	Ashkenazi Jewish	Short stories, role-play games
Shirley	Woman	Queer	She/her	18-25	White	Podcasts
Becca	Cis female	Queer	She/her	26-34	White	Zines, tiny letter
Lia	Cisgender female	Bisexual	She/her	18-25	Biracial: white/Asian -Indian	Fanfiction, short stories

Table 1. Participants' self-reported information. Data reported in this table come from a demographic questionnaire that participants completed before their interviews. Note that some participants described themselves in multiple ways throughout interviews (e.g., as trans, queer, and/or by using multiple pronouns).

Theoretical sampling and data triangulation drove EM content analysis, the aim of which was to expand upon and saturate constructs developed from the interview data.[42] While interviews illuminated participants' creation practices—and therefore how they grapple with structural instantiations of information poverty while constructing rich information worlds with their creative projects—content analysis further developed our understanding of structurally impoverishing normativity in media institutions.

The first author examined episodes of Emmy-award winning television programs during content analysis. We choose Emmy-award winning programs because they demonstrate normative values held within our society and, specifically, held within media institutions.[43] It is worth analyzing the standpoints represented in their content to articulate how marginalized positionalities may be impoverished by such normativity. The Television Academy annually presents Emmy awards to programs, performers, and individuals selected by Academy members, who are all industry professionals.[44] Not all television programs are eligible to enter the Emmy race; in order to be nominated, programs and individual performers must pay a sizable fee,[45] then launch an expensive campaign to promote their work and cull voters. Therefore, we analyze Emmy-award winning programs in this paper not because they necessarily represent the most popular television media, but because of their status as award-winners. Awards both indicate what our society values and confer symbolic value onto recipients. Typically, they reflect normative values, meaning that Emmy awards reflect normativity within EM industries and content in the context of our study.[46] Though the Television Academy claims winning programs represent "the pinnacle of prime-time television excellence,"[47] in actuality they represent media insiders who are a) privileged enough to compete in the race, and b) popular among other industry insiders who have the power to vote. While nominee pools for awards seem vast, they are often limited to narrow ranges of possibilities.[48]

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[42] Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (London, England: Sage, 1998).

[43] Manuel A. Gomez, "Outside but Within: The Normative Dimension of the Underworld in the Television Series "Breaking Bad and "Better Call Saul," *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Socio-Legal Studies* 2 (2017); James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

[44] "Infographic: How an Emmy is Won," Television Academy, last modified August 24, 2020, https://www.emmys.com/news/awards-news/infographic-how-emmy-won.

[45] Lynette Rice, "How to Compete for an Emmy," *Entertainment Weekly*, July 11, 2018, https://ew.com/emmys/2018/07/11/emmys-how-to-compete/.

[46] Gomez, "Outside but Within"; English, *The Economy of Prestige*.

[47] "Awards Search," Television Academy, accessed June 29, 2019, https://www.emmys.com/awards/nominations/award-search.

[48] English, *The Economy of Prestige*.

We selected Emmy episodes for analysis based on prior research with this group of participants, the methods of which were published in full in a prior publication.[49] The first author initially asked our participants to recall a piece of media that was salient to their queer identity development; this content could have been helpful, harmful, or both. All but one participant discussed a specific episode of television that made an impression upon them. For the current article, we determined which television programs won an Emmy during the same year and in the same genre as participants' selections; there was no overlap between participants' selections and Emmy-award winning content during the years we examined. The first author examined two episodes of seven Emmy-award winning programs (fourteen total episodes). They analyzed one episode that aired during the year each program won an Emmy, then a second episode that was purposively sampled based on its queer representation; the first author found these episodes through Google searches for terms like "queer representation" in each program (see Table 2).

Title	Original Air Dates	Platform Availability (as of March 2019)	Episodes Analyzed
The West Wing	1999-2006	Netflix	Season 3, Ep. 21, "The Black Vera Wang."
			Season 6, Ep. 10, "Faith-Based Initiative."
Veep	2012-2019	HBO/HBO Now, Amazon Prime	Season 5, Ep. 8, "Camp David."
			Season 5, Ep. 9, "Kissing Your Sister."
Game of Thrones	2011-2019	HBO/HBO Now, Amazon Prime	Season 6, Ep. 9, "Battle of the Bastards."
			Season 6, Ep. 10, "The Winds of Winter."

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[49] Diana Floegel and Kaitlin L. Costello, "Entertainment Media and the Information Practices of Queer Individuals," *Library and Information Science Research* 41, no. 1 (2019).

Title	Original Air Dates	Platform Availability (as of March 2019)	Episodes Analyzed
Frasier	1993-2004	Netflix, Amazon Prime, CBS, Hulu	Season 4, Ep. 3, "The Impossible Dream."
			Season 5, Ep. 14, "The Ski Lodge."
The Handmaid's Tale	2017-Ongoing	Hulu	Season 1, Ep. 10, "Night."
			Season 1, Ep. 3, "Late."
The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel	2017- Ongoing	Amazon Prime	Season 1, Ep. 1, "Pilot."
			Season 1, Ep. 10, "Thank You and Good Night."
Sex and the City	1998-2004	HBO/HBO Go, Amazon Prime	Season 4, Ep. 1, "The Agony and the Ex'tacy."
			Season 4, Ep. 3, "Defining Moments."

Table 2. Emmy award-winning content sample.

The analysis we present in this paper focuses on the Emmy content sample and its relevance to theoretical development around information poverty and small worlds. The first author viewed each episode and wrote extensive memos related to plot and normative themes during the viewing. They qualitatively coded memos to enrich constructs that were developed during interview transcript analysis. We employed negative case analysis and peer-debriefing to increase findings' trustworthiness.[50] As is common in constructivist grounded theory, we present results and discussion in one combined section.[51]

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[50] Corbin and Strass, *Basics*.
[51] Charmaz, *Constructing*.

RESULTS

We offer two constructs that extend and highlight the relationship between small worlds and information poverty frameworks on a structural level: *institutional information worlds* and *queer world-building*. *Institutional information worlds* in this context are comprised of EM content and producers that function inside media industries; these information worlds reflect epistemically privileged positions that often reproduce and reify inequities and subsequently impoverish marginalized queer people. *Queer world-building* refers to practices wherein queer people create media outside of institutionalized industry contexts; participants create to construct their own rich small worlds that are informed by the epistemic authority they possess as insiders in marginalized communities; their experiences and positionalities allow them to both express non-normative standpoints and develop critical takes on dominant ideologies.[52] Though participants' queer world-building results in media creations that challenge normative discourses proliferated by powerful institutions, their practices still occur within institutional contexts that impoverish them on a structural level; this complicates their ability to express their epistemic authority and reorient institutional norms through EM creation.

Institutional Information Worlds

Institutional information worlds are created and reinforced by media producers and content that reflect cis- and heteronormative values. As such, they expand upon the dynamics Chatman identifies between "insiders" and "outsiders" in the context of information poverty, and they demonstrate how participants are structurally impoverished by normative institutions. Mockingbird says, "a lot of the media I see…that's mainstream, a lot of the media that gets funded, a lot of the media that doesn't get cancelled, is one that can appeal to the people who are in power." Participants distrust or are dissatisfied with a great deal of EM content because it is produced by powerful people who are *outside* of queer communities.

Chatman's work as a whole does not characterize insiders and outsiders as fully binary constructs. For example, while people who experience information poverty are framed as "outsiders," members of marginalized small worlds possess "insider" knowledge of the norms and dynamics that structure their communities, and they are skeptical of information that comes from sources that are "outside" of those communities. [53] Perhaps because Chatman's work focuses on individualized circumstances, she does not fully explicate the nuances of these insider/outsider

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[52] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics & Human Nature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanhead, 1983).

[53] Chatman, "The Impoverished Life-World."; Burnett et al., "Small Worlds."

dynamics, nor does she relate these nuances to structural phenomena that construct them.

We find that queer EM creators exemplify how marginalized people are *both* insiders and outsiders. As members of non-normative queer populations, they are structurally marginalized "outsiders" because they do not subscribe to dominant cis- and heteronormative discourses. However, they also create information using their knowledge as "insiders" in various queer contexts. Institutional information worlds exemplify structural instantiations of information poverty that enforce queer people's positions as "outside" normative social institutions.

For example, within an EM institutional information world, the majority of content continues to enact systemic symbolic violence—or the imposition of symbolic systems on groups in order to legitimate conditions of domination—against queer people.[54] This is what participants describe when they articulate how EM imposes normativity on its interactors; because they experience the world through a queer lens, they are especially sensitized to dominant normative ideologies that disservice their existence.[55] Our participants experience information poverty when media institutions construct worlds that privilege normative behaviors and identities. Though participants continue to consume this media in the hopes that it may reflect their experiences, the content they interact with rarely satisfies this desire. Consequently, they report ultimately feeling information-impoverished.

Participants identify two overarching instantiations of symbolic violence in institutionally-produced EM content: erasure and stereotyping. Both phenomena illustrate *normative* values surrounding gender and sexuality. Chatman claims that information worlds are structured according to norms that are particular to their specific contexts;[56] however, her discussions do not engage with institutionalized normative phenomena such as cis- and heteronormativity. Because participants are marginalized, they identify such *institutionalized* norms in EM that leave them impoverished.

For example, an institutional EM information world maintains cis- and heteronormative values by erasing queerness. Erasure often occurs through queerbaiting—a common narrative practice where homoerotic subtext between characters aims to attract queer audiences to a program that lacks explicit queer content.[57] Elaine explains, "Often in media they build really great relationships between two people of the same gender, but they don't pursue it romantically." We find

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[54] Floegel and Costello, "Entertainment Media."

[55] Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[56] Chatman, "Life in a Small World."

[57] Sima Shakeri, "Television Has a 'Bury Your Gays,' Queerbaiting, and LGBTQ Representation Problem," *Huffington Post*, June 30, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/06/30/queerbaiting-bury-your-gays-tv_a_23005000/

queerbaiting in the Emmy-winning *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, where Susie and Midge share scenes that seem more than platonic, but never become intimate, romantic, or sexual. Queerbaiting frustrates Shirley, who engages with content that she expects to be queer but finds "it was only an idea that we're raising in the show, but it's not like the characters were queer." This is also seen in *Maisel*, where Susie makes veiled jokes about having trysts with other women but never identifies as queer, and every other protagonist is in a visible heterosexual relationship.

Similarly, other episodes in the content sample emphasize the cis- and heteronormative discourses that structure an EM institutional information world. *The West Wing* includes no queer characters, and other programs have large ensembles that include only one or two "token" queer characters (tokenism describes efforts to appear inclusive by incorporating a few marginalized people in an otherwise-homogeneous context).[58] No programs sampled represent nonbinary people, and all programs feature overwhelmingly white and able-bodied casts. Though the content sample is small, it aligns with wider trends where television programming reflects white, gender-binary, and heterosexual perspectives.[59] Additionally, the content we examined is available through various streaming services and is therefore "bingeable." These texts tend to proliferate and widely enforce middle-class taste structures and normative values that reflect epistemically privileged positions.[60]

Chatman discusses normative values primarily in the context of small worlds. Incarcerated women, for example, experience "life in the round" in a small world where a seemingly natural order is established through norms that curb behavior and, ultimately, forms a consistent worldview among people in that specific context. [61] However, like Chatman's theorizing around information poverty, her theorizing around normative behaviors in small worlds is highly individualized. In Chatman's work, norms are not institutionalized phenomena but are instead appropriate behaviors in highly specific communities. Our analysis of EM content pushes on Chatman's conception of norms to highlight how they are instantiated in *social structures* and thus constitutive of systemic inequities and resultant symbolic violence and marginalization. Norms do not only govern small worlds—they govern wider social systems and as such, they systemically marginalize people who exist outside of their boundaries.

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[58] *Oxford Dictionaries, s.v.* "tokenism," accessed May 20, 2019, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/tokenism

[59] Geoff Berkshire and Tim Gray, "Emmys: TV Diversity Still Leaves Much Room for Improvement," *Variety*, August 4, 2015, https://variety.com/2015/tv/spotlight/emmy-award-nominee-diversity-1201555648/.

[60] Mareike Jenner, "Binge-Watching: Video-on-Demand, Quality TV and Mainstreaming Fandom," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 20, no. 3 (2017).

[61] Chatman, "A Theory of Life in the Round."

Stereotypes further reinforce the normative worldview propagated by EM institutions. Jake notes that EM is not "getting the queer experience down" because content he interacts with is "either tokenism or completely sexless, and it just didn't really feel genuine or fair to queer people." Participants take particular issue with bisexual representation because, as Lia laments, characters have to "make a choice" or be framed as "slutty." The notion of being forced to make a choice is illustrated by Katherine from *Veep*. After identifying as straight, she enters a queer relationship and is immediately called a lesbian; there is no discussion of bisexuality or pansexuality. *Sex and the City* demonstrates the framing of bisexual characters as promiscuous: Samantha is the only main character who ever has a relationship with another woman, and her friends attribute this to her frequent sexual activity.

Mockingbird raises another stereotype surrounding queer characters: they are "either evil or dead or, surprise… you're both." Their statement about queer death resonates with other participants, who frame physical violence against queer characters as a particularly problematic stereotype that contributes to queer people's marginalization. Though violent EM plotlines may draw attention to the higher rates of violence faced by queer individuals in their everyday lives,[62] EM content often reflects violence at the expense of other queer experiences. On both *Game of Thrones* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example, the only queer characters within the episodes examined (see Table 2) are graphically tortured on screen because of their sexual behaviors.

The Emmy awards symbolize normative social values, meaning that they reinforce these stereotypes and their ties to white, cisgender, heterosexual, affluent, and able-bodied perspectives.[63] Participants note that intersectional queer EM represent-ation is rare, and content analysis of Emmy-winning programs demonstrates this as well.[64] Mockingbird, who is agender, Indian, and disabled, says: "I am not represented in media." In addition to highlighting the preponderance of white, able-bodied, and binary-gendered queer characters in EM, participants note that, when EM does not completely erase queer stories, it limits them by making them similar to heteronormative narratives. For example, Felix does not want to "read about marriages and circuit parties" that are "celebrations of, like, queer capitalism" and "normative, hetero-friendly queerness." As Felix's perspective shows, queerness is multifaceted, and while some queer individuals and identities strive to be as normative as possible, others reject normative identities all together.[65] Media depictions often focus on normative queerness, which is seen as more palatable to mass audiences who producers assume are heterosexual and cisgender. An episode of *The West Wing* that focuses on debates around marriage equality exemplifies

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[62] Capuzza and Spencer, "Regressing."

[63] English, *The Economy of Prestige*.

[64] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection."

[65] Stryker, "Transgender History."

Felix's concerns when the characters frame marriage (a traditionally normative institution) as the most pertinent legal issue surrounding gay relationships.

These findings further exemplify how structural phenomena affect an EM institutional information world: because conceptions of queer identities that align with normative values have become more acceptable within social institutions, depictions of queerness that align with these values are present in EM, while less normative lifestyles are still excluded. This suggests that within an EM institutional information world, queer people may experience gradations of information poverty that reflect spectrums of normativity, given that depictions of normative queer experiences are more available than those of more marginalized identities. Moreover, because awards are inherently infused with symbolic value, Emmy-award winning content demonstrates not only normative positions, but also how normativity is reinforced and rewarded in an inequitable institutional information world. This does not negate the normative dynamics Chatman describes. Instead, it elevates her propositions to account for institutional violences that classify queer people—and especially queer people of color, disabled queer people, nonbinary people, and poor queer people—as "outsiders" on a structural level.

Because of these institutionalized dynamics, participants explain that queer and other marginalized individuals' involvement in EM institutions will not inherently dismantle the normative assumptions in EM content. However, they do discuss individuals in media industries, and they assert that media industry insiders are preponderantly heterosexual and cisgender; this contributes to the symbolic violence displayed in the content they produce. To use Chatman's phrase, industry insiders are the "legitimized others" who have enough power to set boundaries around content and industry practices.[66] Elyas says that EM that's not made "with queer people at the head of the project" often obscures real-life experiences. Straight, cisgender showrunners Amy and Dan Palladino, for example, engage in both queerbaiting and stereotyping when they discuss Susie on *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. They say that the "mysterious" Susie is "not a beauty" and will "never find a husband," but they refuse to call her queer, instead saying that they want "people to read into it what they want to read into it."[67]

As noted in the literature review, EM includes few queer people in powerful positions; this is seen in the demographics of Emmy voters, who reflect the make-up of television industries: mostly white, male, 35-54 years old, and living "in the top 1% most expensive zip codes in the U.S."[68] Because of their socially powerful positions, these

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[66] Chatman, "A Theory of Life in the Round."

[67] Maria Fontoura, "'The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel' Creators on Midge, Joel and Making Peak TV," *Rolling Stone*, September 17, 2018, https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-features/marvelous-mrs-maisel-creators-amy-sherman-palladino-daniel-interview-724732/.

[68] "Editorial Overview," Television Academy, accessed June 29, 2019, https://www.emmys.com/content/editorial-overview.

individuals possess epistemic privilege that in turn shapes normative, impoverishing EM narratives.[69] As Felix says, "there is a straight, like, hetero-capitalist media landscape that is not amenable to things that fall outside of its discursive boundaries." Quoted in the prior paragraph, the Palladinos represent and propagate epistemically privileged positions that exclude marginalized perspectives.

However, as participants note, conceptualizations of how information poverty develops from an EM institutional information world cannot focus solely on individual creators and producers. Within the Emmy content sample, one of three *Frasier* creators and the *Sex and the City* creator are openly gay, yet episodes of those shows analyzed here fuel symbolic violence by making fun of queer sexualities. Holding a powerful position does not confer enough epistemic privilege for queer creators to subvert normative standards should they wish to do so; marginalized individuals in widely privileged contexts must contend with wider power dynamics of those contexts.[70] While they may possess some level of insider status given their executive positions, they are still often outsiders in otherwise normative institutional spaces.[71] "Insider" dynamics in an EM institutional information world are not only actualized through individuals who set normative boundaries that dictate how people should behave; they are also institutionalized discourses that disadvantage and exclude marginalized people. We find that the overall *worldview* promoted by an institutional EM information world continues to be highly cis- and heteronormative, and it consequently impoverishes queer people at large.

Queer World-Building

When an EM information world erases, stereotypes, and enacts violence against queer individuals, it fosters information poverty on an institutional level. To draw on Chatman's original theory, privileged media industry insiders and normative institutionalized discourses prevent queer individuals from accessing identity-related information, as demonstrated by symbolic violence in media content.[72] However, participants do not respond to institutionalized normativity with self-protective behaviors including secrecy and deception. Though they grapple with impoverishing circumstances on a daily basis, poverty does not solely define their information interactions. Participants draw on their epistemic authority, or standpoint, that allows them to both recount marginalized experiences and critique dominant normative ideologies, to construct their own small worlds through EM content creation. Drawing on epistemic authority grants participants

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[69] Marianne Janack, "Standpoint Epistemology Without the 'Standpoint'? An Examination of Epistemic Privilege and Epistemic Authority," *Hypatia* 12, no. 2 (1997).
[70] Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries*.
[71] Himberg, *The New Gay for Pay*.
[72] Chatman, "The Impoverished Life-world."

the ability to create self-defined descriptions of themselves and their worlds through queer world-building.[73] Here, participants are not only impoverished outsiders—they draw on their knowledge as *insiders* in queer communities to create resources that push back against a violently normative EM institutional information world.

For example, participants' creations critique and ameliorate normativity in mainstream EM. For example, though queerness has a rich history in comics (especially underground comics[74]), popular productions from powerhouses like Disney/Marvel glorify heteronormative relationships, erase trans identities, and render gay sex taboo.[75] Jake strives in his comic to address underrepresented queer identities with "characters from across all spectrums of gender, race, and orientation because, frankly, we feel like a lot of the big names aren't really getting it completely right, so we just decided to do it ourselves." Jake also recognizes that content produced for young people often neglects queerness,[76] so his work is a "tween-and-up-title." Similarly, Elaine aims to "fix" queerbaiting with her fanfiction:

> I use fanfiction to make stories and worlds that I already like […] and fix the things that upset me about them […] The stories that could have been more are always could-have-beens. And it's just so eternally frustrating because you see stories, or read books, watch movies, whatever it is you do, and there's always this great almost […] For me, what I try to do when I write […] is to expand on the almost.

Lia, who also writes fanfiction, says that her stories are "definitely a lot overtly gayer" than her source material. Participants such as Elyas are careful to avoid common tropes in their work, while participants such as Elaine aim to recast stereotypes including violence against queer characters:

> If it's actually a good, like, tragic tragedy, like a good tragedy—that's an oxymoron, but I hope you understand what I'm trying to get at, they're just very fulfilling. And even though they make me want to cry, I'm like, "Yesss, they were fully rounded humans as opposed to being just killed for the fun of it."

Here, Elaine demonstrates that queer world-building does not always fully contradict institutional EM; instead, participants draw on their epistemic authority to recognize

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[73] Jaggar, *Feminist Politics*.

[74] Justin Hall, ed., *No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics* (Seattle: Fangraphics, 2012).

[75] Karin A. Martin and Emily Kazyak, "Hetero-Romantic Love and Heterosexiness in Children's G-Rated Films," *Gender & Society* 23, no. 3 (2009).

[76] Dafna Lemish, "'Can't Talk About Sex': Producers of Children's Television Around the World Speak Out," *Sex Education* 11, no. 3 (2011).

harmful aspects of institutional EM information worlds, then *reorient* them to better align with their own queer experiences, knowledge, and desires.[77]

This expands on Chatman's conception of small worlds because it demonstrates that their members are not fully removed from wider social circumstances; participants engage with an institutional EM information world *and* construct queer worlds through content creation. Chatman postulates that members of a small world may not cross its boundaries to obtain information; instead, they will remain insulated.[78] However, our participants demonstrate that they are entrenched in an EM institutional information world and they use information from that world to construct alternative worldviews. Their epistemic authority helps us understand how this occurs: as marginalized people, they have no choice but to engage with institutional information worlds, and they reject or reorient norms that they identify within these worlds through original content creation that reflects their unique knowledges and experiences.

Said queer knowledges often include participants' own interests. Becca makes "my own zines about whatever I was interested in at the moment," while Lea will "write something that feels very meaningful" related to "my very specific niche of interest I cover, like feminism and bikes." Participants use EM creation to develop personally meaningful information[79] that they do not find in impoverishing institutional small worlds. Shirley claims that when content is informed by "a certain politics or community, that's often what can resonate."

Queer world-building further helps participants develop their identities and express their epistemic authority, which are difficult to form within normative worlds that offer limited information about queerness. Riley calls creation a way to "re-envision ourselves," while Lea's work is "a signifier that I'm part of this community." Lia claims that writing "was part of how I discovered that I'm queer," while Felix notes that creative endeavors "allow a place to, like, stage some questions about what we want queerness to be in the U.S. at this moment." In fact, creation can help participants claim authority, as Mockingbird describes:

> Being on stage is the first time that I see the world in first person, I'm not the third person. I never realized I saw the world through third person, but a lot of times when I'm in the world it's being—I sort of feel like I'm on the outskirts […] But being seen, like, when I'm on stage, it's very much like, "Oh yeah, you have to see me. You can't not see me."

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[77] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

[78] Chatman, "A Theory of Life in the Round."

[79] Jenna Hartel, "Managing Documents at home for Serious Leisure: A Case Study of the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking," *Journal of Documentation* 66 (2010).

Creation, then, is both an expression of epistemic authority and a way that participants strengthen and explore their identities in the impoverished circumstances of EM institutions. However, the experiences of members of marginalized groups differ based on intersecting positionalities given that social institutions enforce normativity along a litany of overlapping axes including but not limited to race, class, age, and disability. Because participants recognize that their epistemic authority is not absolute,[80] they often collaborate with other queer people to improve their content. Collaboration also helps participants strengthen community ties. Elaine asks her friends to comment on her fanfiction, while Elyas turns to various individuals to ask about their experiences. Lia, who is cisgender, asks trans members of her writing group to "call me out" and "tell me what I'm doing wrong" when she writes trans characters. Collaboration further contradicts Chatman's assertions about insulated small worlds. It is another context where queer creators seek information from people who exist outside their immediate purview.

Though collaboration can be difficult when, as Jake says, "everybody gets very attached to their own ideas and their own perceptions of how something should be run," it also helps participants strengthen ties to their particular queer communities. Becca says, "having a community of people around you who also want to make things, I feel like that's really helpful. And inspiring, and kind of pushes you to create more." Mockingbird appreciates "that kind of comradery that comes specifically from queer spaces where there's no, like, straight white man trying to tell you why you should do it the alternate way." Collaboration thus partly subverts the hierarchical structures that keep privileged individuals in positions of power throughout media industries,[81] demonstrating that participants queer not only content but also the structures through which content is made.

These collaborative processes expand upon Chatman's work, particularly concerning her ideas about secretive behaviors in impoverished circumstances and legitimized others in small worlds. Collaborative creation contradicts Chatman's proposition that people who experience information poverty a) consider themselves to be devoid of resources that may help them, and b) engage in self-protective behaviors such as secrecy and deception.[82] Instead, participants turn to friends, queer community members, and other people who are connected to their creative practices for assistance and to intentionally expand their worldviews. Moreover, they build relationships with collaborators that are rich and necessarily open to exchanges of ideas, personal information, and vulnerabilities. Participants engage in these practices to build or

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[80] Bat Mai Bar-On, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 81-100.

[81] Lotz, *The Television*.

[82] Chatman, "The Impoverished Life-World."

strengthen queer community ties, and because the stakes of content creation are high: to the best of their abilities, they do not want to engage in the violences found in institutional EM. Further, participants describe horizontally structured *queered* collaborations: their queer world-building practices are not constrained by a selection of legitimized others who set boundaries around what participants might do.[83] This suggests that the distribution of power within small worlds may be more expansive and potentially equitable than Chatman's propositional statements suggest, especially in a queer context. However, while queer world-building allows participants to grapple with impoverishing circumstances and form worlds dictated by their own knowledge and authority, creation is not a holistic solution to information poverty because queer people remain structurally marginalized within social institutions.

Queer World-Building within an Institutional Information World

Although participants construct rich small worlds through EM creation, they still lack cis- and heteronormative epistemic privilege, which causes difficulties with their creative work. Queer world-building is not a neat narrative of subversion,[84] but an expression of epistemic authority that occurs despite a lack of epistemic privilege. Queer world-building occurs within marginalized circumstances, and it is often limited by resources and other privileges that participants—who, on a structural level, are outsiders—cannot access.[85] For example, participants struggle to reconcile EM creation with their need to work and make money; they have difficulty making money from EM, and they work other jobs while trying to create, fostering a need to separate and balance income-generating work with creative work.[86] Becca says that "lack of resources is sometimes hard" when she can't print her zines. Lack of forms of capital, including time and money, also limit participants' endeavors. Lea says that it's difficult to create while "having to do all of the things that make it so I can pay my rent and buy my food." Due to temporal and financial constraints, Riley sometimes has "a great idea," but he finds "there's not a way to get it on the page." Mockingbird and Elaine explicitly relate these tensions to capitalism: Elaine says, "in the capitalist machine that we live in, I only get six hours to me a day," while Mockingbird says, "we're currently dealing with capitalism […] if someone could come up […] and be like, 'Hey, guess what? We've figured out how to destroy capitalism and still keep you fed, and also do art,' that would be the best thing."

Participants' struggle to create under systemic oppression highlights structural aspects of information poverty that Chatman and others underarticulate. For example,

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[83] Chatman, "A Theory of Life in the Round."

[84] Rukmini Pande, *Squee From the Margins: Fandom and Race* (Iowa City, IA: Iowa University Press, 2018).

[85] Chatman, "Channels to a Larger."

[86] Ursula Huws, *Labor in the Global Digital Economy* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2014).

participants are not only impoverished in certain contexts that clearly relate to queer EM.[87] Because they are queer in a cis- and heteronormative society, participants are marginalized within multiple intersecting institutions, and this marginalization seeps into their everyday experiences. While EM industries exemplify an institutional information world in the context of our work, we cannot discuss queer world-building without acknowledging and accounting for inequities that structure multiple intersecting institutional information worlds, chief among them capitalism and its enforcement of systemic discrimination.[88] These systems affect whether and how a queer person can express their epistemic authority through queer world-building. Because queer people are marginalized—and information impoverished—within a litany of institutions, they often lack the privileges necessary to fully overcome information poverty.

Members of the Television Academy, who vote for Emmy awards, have privileges that participants lack. Most Emmy voters and nominees can, for example, afford to pay to enter their content for consideration. Smaller-budget shows, many of which include women, queer people, and people of color on their creative teams and in their content, struggle to challenge more exclusionary larger-budget programs, demonstrating that marginalized people who break into media institutions may still struggle to obtain advantages held by their more privileged peers. For example, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* creator Rachel Bloom and *Broad City* co-creators Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson started social media campaigns to draw Emmy voters' attention to their content. Bloom tweeted: "Hi Emmy voters! #crazyexgirlfriend doesn't have millions of dollars to pour into campaigning. However, please consider us anyway!"[89] Participants have fewer resources to finance and promote their work than even these creators. Thus, queer world-building is not a holistic solution to information poverty because it occurs within impoverishing institutional contexts.

In addition to the lack of tangible resources that emphasize and enforce participants' impoverished circumstances, embodied factors also complicate queer world-building. Illness and disability further marginalize participants such as Elyas, who explains that their ADHD makes it hard to "sit still for five seconds." Jake says that his creativity can be stalled by "ADD, anxiety, and depression" that make it "really hard to focus." Lea shares, "I not too long ago had cancer and still have a good amount of chronic fatigue from it"; this makes it hard for her to create and at the same time keep her day job. Mockingbird speaks more generally, claiming that creation takes "energy." They wonder, "how do you get art to be the priority when there are other things like, you know,

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[87] Lingel & boyd, "Keep it Secret."

[88] Dean, *Democracy*.

[89] Rachel Bloom, Twitter post, May 24, 2019, 3:51 p.m. https://twitter.com/racheldoesstuff/status/1132026453170647040.

eating and your health?" These examples further illustrate how intersecting axes of marginalization curb participants' creative practices.[90]

Due to their queer identities and content, participants experience stigma that further limits their access to privileged contexts. While their "insider" knowledge helps them create queer content, their position *outside* dominant institutions prevents them from obtaining epistemic privilege without significant struggle.[91] This is another way that participants' world-building practices are constrained by dynamics within an EM institutional information world: they have trouble disseminating their work and achieving favorable reception. Elyas thinks that "spreading/disseminating might be a little trickier" than creating because of "the reception you get when you put that out into the world," while Felix asks, "where the fuck would I publish that thing?" when referring to his political writing. Related, participants worry about how their work may be received; to put something out there, Riley says, her work "requires a lot of buy-in from people who have the gate-keeping power." Lea worries that she may encounter trolls when she publishes online. This fear is not unfounded, given that queer people continue to experience high rates of online harassment.[92] The EM sample studied reflects participants' limited access to an institutional information world, as there were few queer creators and little queer content in the sample. This emphasizes queer creators' potential difficulties with dissemination and reception, and further elucidates the importance of considering information poverty on institutional, as well as individual, levels.

Despite these risks, participants continue to engage in queer world-building because creation ultimately provides them with catharsis and enjoyment. Janet says creating is "kind of therapeutic." Though participants do express interest in monetizing their work, most of them create because, as Elaine says, it's "a cathartic thing." Creation helps participants grapple with the ramification of living within impoverished small worlds. It helps Mockingbird with "rage" and "grief"; it's "an act of survival for me, it's an act of resistance" and helps them "get out of bed." This sense of catharsis demonstrates that participants' authority need not be expressed only within capitalist contexts, though ideally creators would experience both catharsis and compensation. Through creation, participants construct their own small worlds that, though still constrained by institutional forces, provide them with rich information outside of normative institutional information worlds.

Overall, instantiations of structural marginalization that affect queer world-building suggest that queer participants do not, as Chatman posits in her information

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[90] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection."

[91] Jaggar, *Feminist Politics*.

[92] Anastasia Powel, Adrian J. Scott, and Nicola Henry, "Digital Harassment and Abuse: Experiences of Sexuality and Gender Minority Adults," *European Journal of Criminology* (2018) https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818788006.

poverty work, only introduce new knowledge into their information worlds selectively and when benefits outweigh risks.[93] They create epistemic material through their EM work that's influence on institutional information worlds may be *curbed* by structural forces that marginalize them, and consequently prevent them from accessing and using the resources they need to share their creations. The small worlds they form via creative practices, collaborations, and materials do not exist in vacuum; they are formed in response to impoverishing institutional information worlds, and they continue to be constrained by the exclusionary normative values and power dynamics that are enacted in those worlds. Queer world-building both responds to, and is ultimately curbed by, information poverty at a structural level.

IMPLICATIONS

The constructs we present in this paper, institutional information worlds and queer world-building, extend Chatman's theories of information poverty and small worlds into institutional contexts. The following summarizes our contribution:

1. Queer people experience information poverty, or information marginalization,[94] on a structural level. EM industries exemplify an institutional information world wherein queer individuals are marginalized outsiders; their standpoints are not typically represented among privileged industry insiders, and content is symbolically violent towards queerness.
2. Participants do not respond to impoverishing institutional information worlds with secretive or deceptive behaviors. On the contrary, they draw on their epistemic authority to create EM content that reflects their marginalized standpoints. These queer world-building activities are often collaborative, and they constitute informationally rich small worlds that reorient impoverishing elements of institutional information worlds and provide satisfaction and catharsis for marginalized queer creators and their audiences.
3. Queer world-building behaviors do not fully subvert or ameliorate information poverty. Because participants' queerness marginalizes them on a structural level, they lack the power and privilege needed to reorient systemic normativity. The small worlds they construct through EM creation are affected by wider institutional inequities that prevent queer epistemic standpoints from proliferating in normative contexts.

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[93] Chatman, "The Impoverished Life-World."
[94] Gibson and Martin, "Re-Situating Information Poverty."

As is always the case with any study, our work is not without limitations. The participant sample is small, and it consists of mostly white and formally-educated individuals. This limits the work's theoretical depth because it limits our conception of queerness—we cannot understand our phenomenon of interest intersectionally, which means that with these data, we cannot discuss how multiple institutional systems of oppression may regulate and shape identity in this context.[95] Participants are concentrated in urban areas on the East Coast, which influences their access to resources, support, and queer communities. The content sample is also small and does not address how Emmy-nominated programs may adjust queer representations over time. Future work could continue theoretical sampling to further develop constructs and to theorize an overall model of queer world-building that better accounts for intersecting institutional forces and oppression. Additional research may also examine how these constructs apply to members of other populations such as patients, social media content creators, and online content moderators.

CONCLUSION

This study enriches our understandings of information poverty and small worlds. While Chatman's work postulates that norms dictate what information is important in impoverished circumstances, we find that participants actively identify and resist normative discourses through queer world-building. Researchers may take note of this finding, which suggests that queer information practices need not be defined by marginalization. Future studies may strive to work with queer populations and elucidate their practices without centering normativity in the process. Practitioners—particularly information and knowledge management professionals—may also benefit from these findings. Considering epistemic authority in addition to epistemic privilege may, for example, usurp normative assumptions regarding authoritative information. Professionals may be able to assist queer creators with their endeavors, and to critically examine how their own institutions construct small worlds that impoverish certain groups of people.

Results demonstrate the continued need to consider institutional contexts alongside perspectives from marginalized populations, both in and beyond information poverty-focused research.[96] Examining information poverty and small worlds institution-ally demonstrates how structural inequities affect information creation and access, as well as how individuals who are underrepresented in these processes recognize and grapple with impoverished circumstances. This points to the salience of centering

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[95] Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3 (1997).
[96] Gibson and Martin, "Re-Situating Information Poverty."

marginalized voices in research in order to include perspectives that are informed by authority rather than by privilege. This is particularly important because queer communities have been harmed by exploitative scientific pursuits.[97] Chatman's work underscores the need to conduct research informed by these "outsiders," and further development of her theories will continue to elucidate the ways in which library and information science work can better account for institutional forces and inequities in information practices.

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[97] Simon LeVay, *Queer Science: The Use and Abuse of Research into Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Laud Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Co., 1975).

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