



Chapter Fourteen

Hospitality at the End of the World

An Ideological Rhetorical Criticism of Tactical Technical Communication in the Prepper Journal

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What is hospitality at the end of the world? Derrida and colleagues (1984) write that “nuclear war is not only fabulous because one can only talk about it, but because [. . .] like all techné—the extraordinary sophistication of these technologies coexists, cooperates in an essential way with sophistry” (p. 24). A potent example of such cooperation between techné and sophistry is the online doomsday prepper community where technical advice about surviving the end of the world as we know it (TEOTWAWKI) when shit hits the fan (SHTF) is blended with extreme right-wing political beliefs and apocalyptic rhetoric. Scholars analyzing a range of prepper artifacts have noted connections between religious apocalypticism and political conservatism (Crowley, 2006), survivalists and white supremacy (Crockford, 2018), and doomsday preppers and modern consumerism (Foster, 2016). Using an ideological rhetorical methodology (Foss, 2018; Wander, 1984), I analyze the tactical technical communication (Kimball, 2006; 2017)—or TTC—found in the Prepper Journal (TPJ) to argue that doomsday preppers use TTC to construct an exclusionary postapocalyptic community where hospitality must be earned through the acquisition of survival resources and technical knowledge.

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1 Pat Henry, a pseudonymic reference to the Revolutionary-era antifeder-
 2 alist Patrick Henry, founded TPJ in January 2013, hoping to provide a more
 3 realistic understanding of the prepper community and how to prep than
 4 the founder believed Nat Geo's hit show *Doomsday Preppers* did. Despite its
 5 name, it is more of a blog than a journal—its editorship is proprietary, the
 6 site is supported by ad revenue and a prepper store, and there is no defined
 7 level of peer review for posted articles. Readership can also quickly respond
 8 through comments on any given post. When the research was undertaken,
 9 there were about 1,795 articles posted with 12 million page views since the
 10 site was created. Most authors and commenters post pseudonyms to maintain
 11 OPSEC (operational security). Using acronyms in prepper culture can be
 12 viewed as an element borrowed from its paramilitary roots and conveys a
 13 sense of urgency that necessitates short and efficient communication practices.

14 This chapter analyzes the connection between TTC, apocalyptic rhetoric,
 15 and hospitality ethics. More specifically, ideological rhetorical criticism is
 16 employed to answer the following research questions: (1) Who does apoca-
 17 lyptic hospitality include, and whom does it exclude from the postapocalyptic
 18 imaginary? (2) What are the ideologies circulating in TTC-focused doomsday
 19 prepper communities? (3) How does TTC contribute to apocalypticism?
 20 Alongside significant technical instruction, articles in TPJ contain deeply
 21 conservative political rhetoric that undergirds apocalyptic hospitality defined
 22 by paranoia, social Darwinism, and radical individualism. Hospitality is
 23 not absent from this community; it is morphed by eschatologies of endism
 24 and electism deriding liberals and anyone outside the cis-hetero-norm as
 25 being too weak to survive the apocalypse while demonizing people of color
 26 and non-Christians as both causes of the end and continuing threats post-
 27 cataclysm. Spliced into the technical instruction of survivalist tactics are
 28 ideologies that convey apocalyptic hospitality that welcomes white, male,
 29 cis-heteronormative, Christian folks at the exclusion of difference. Like Jihadist
 30 TTC (Sarat-St. Peter, 2017), prepper TTC persuades through identification
 31 (Burke, 1969). The cognitive resonance of shared ideological commitments
 32 in a postapocalyptic world is a powerful medium for such identification.
 33 In the next section, I provide a brief multidisciplinary overview of research
 34 on apocalypticism to contextualize the present work.

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37 Apocalyptic Rhetoric and the Ideology of Prepperism

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39 Apocalypticism is an ancient and inevitable human phenomenon (Grove,
 40 2015), but doomsday prepper culture has experienced a dramatic increase

in the last decade, producing a uniquely American subculture (Mills, 2019). The scale and growth of the prepping industry in the United States have far surpassed similar phenomena worldwide, indicating a cultural dimension to prepping attributable to American society. Criminologist Michael Mills (2019) has argued that prepping is “fundamentally sustained by a precautionary logic” (p. 1272) responding to apocalyptic media scare-mongering saturating American culture. While prepper anxieties are “not premised on concerns exclusive to extreme right-wing ideology” (p. 1274), Mills’s fieldwork exploring the rapid growth of prepping activities after the 2008 US election has “indicated that prepping is an overwhelmingly right-wing phenomenon” (p. 342). Similar and complementary perspectives may be found in many other disciplines.

Ideologies of white supremacy, vigilantism, and survivalism are linked by a general paranoia about the future, a distrust of the government, and a belief in radical individualism (Crockford, 2018). These ideologies are circulating more frequently because capitalism has picked up on their popularity and repackaged them for consumers in a phenomenon known as “Apocotainment” (Foster, 2016). Nat Geo’s *Doomsday Preppers* television series is a prominent example of apocotainment that other scholars have analyzed and argued is characterized by apocalyptic masculinity (Kelly, 2016; Kelly, 2020) defined by paramilitarism, violent fantasies, and the rhetorical feminization of liberal collectivism. Hegemonic masculinity is leveraged as a survival tool for cis white men (Casey, 2016), living through a supposedly denigrated and emasculated modern existence.

Conservative politics is strongly motivated by religious apocalypticism (Crowley, 2006), but apocalyptic culture can be bipartisan. For example, concern over an impending Trumpocalypse motivated “liberal preppers” to seek refuge from an impending Trumpocalypse (Riederer, 2018). However, research has found that liberal and conservative preppers are motivated by different instigating scenarios. TPJ commenters have expressed their belief that liberals do not have the stomach or wherewithal to survive an apocalyptic event. Riederer (2018) notably points out that both groups miss the fact that marginalized folks already feel the impacts of apocalyptic events in their communities as they struggle with wealth inequality, severe environmental degradation, and the increasingly authoritarian xenophobic tendencies of supposedly liberal democracies around the world.

What is persuasive about doomsday prepping is that it offers an illusion of control over the chaotic nature of existence. The TTC found in TPJ is filled with this sort of imaginative game where an author posits a scenario and provides instructions on how to prep for that scenario. For

1 example, an article might start by suggesting one risk in the apocalypse is
 2 the flood of folks who did not prepare to come to your door to rob, maim,
 3 and murder you and your family for your supplies. You can prepare for
 4 this scenario by following this checklist to ensure you have proper defenses
 5 against nonpreppers. The need for technical instructions is demonstrated by
 6 the existential risk that not being prepared in the scenario poses. Postapoca-
 7 lyptic imagination (Doyle, 2015) is easily identified in prepper culture, but
 8 there is another current underlying condition of community in play. The
 9 following section explains the performative entanglement between apoca-
 10 lypticism and hospitality ethics that produces prepper TTC in the TPJ and
 11 similar discursive communities.

14 The Apocalyptic Hospitality of Prepper TTC

16 Apocalyptic hospitality may be understood in at least two senses. First,
 17 apocalyptic hospitality is an openness to a bleak future that may never
 18 arrive. There is a skeptically revealed (Quinby, 1999) optimism in the TTC
 19 of preppers who believe they can out-prepare the end of history. Second,
 20 apocalyptic hospitality is a closedness to the stranger at the end of time.
 21 An eschatology of electism pervades prepper discourse as the saved/worthy/
 22 prepped are juxtaposed against the damned/unworthy/unprepared. Hospitality
 23 in the apocalypse becomes instrumental and contractual as scarcity logic sets
 24 in. Ideology is more durable than physicality—anthropogenic ideologies are
 25 more likely to survive TEOTWAWKI than their embodied creators.

26 The performance of doomsday prepping, like the practice of hospi-
 27 tality, is an aporic negotiation between the unconditional unknowability of
 28 the apocalypse and the conditions of apocalypses that guide prepper theory
 29 and culture. Conditions of apocalypses and hospitalities are products of
 30 ideologies produced and reproduced through many textual iterations (e.g.,
 31 novels, laws, movies, scriptures, games, manuals, etc.). The apocalypse, like
 32 nuclear war (an apocalyptic subset), is fabulously textual (Derrida et al.,
 33 1984)—that is to argue that the apocalyptic imaginary is sustained by text
 34 but also sublimely surpasses the limits of symbolic articulation.

35 *Without the rule of law* (WROL) is a common prepper term to describe
 36 an apocalyptic scenario where the security and comfort provided by systems
 37 of governance have been disrupted either temporarily (e.g., civil disorder)
 38 or permanently (e.g., revolution). It is also a conservative fantasy employed
 39 to scare the electorate into obedience. For example, bad-faith attacks on
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“defund-the-police” rhetoric often use enthymematic arguments to associate 1
 anarchic chaos with very reasonable critiques of societal overinvestment in 2
 policing nationwide. “Thin-blue-line” rhetoric is another referent to WROL, 3
 where police are framed as the boundary between order and chaos. This 4
 dynamic mirrors the aporia of hospitality that the philosopher Jacques Der- 5
 rida once articulated as a metonym for ethics. Hosts require the potential 6
 for guests, without whom there can be no hospitality. Police require the 7
 potential for chaos, without which there is no law and order. Doomsday 8
 preppers require the potential for annihilation, without which they cannot 9
 survive the apocalypse. 10

Pointing out the tautology expressed in cultivating an ethic of hos- 11
 pitality, Derrida (2001) has written that “hospitality is culture itself and 12
 not simply one ethic amongst others” instead, “*ethics is hospitality*” (p. 16; 13
italics original). For Derrida, ethics, as a theoretical-practical construct, is 14
 defined by negotiating an aporia between the unconditional, absolute law 15
 of hospitality and the conditional state laws of hospitality. Absolute or 16
 “pure hospitality consists in welcoming whoever arrives before imposing 17
 any conditions” (Derrida, 2005, p. 7)—those conditions will be imposed 18
 as the price of refuge and inclusion in the state apparatus. Such conditions 19
 both constitute and fundamentally betray the principle of hospitality. As 20
 one international relations scholar puts it, “[F]or hospitality to be possible 21
 there must be an inviolable home, but that home must be constituted by 22
 closure *as the very possibility* of openness” (Bulley, 2006, p. 652). Hospitality 23
 is thus spatial and temporal since someone must first occupy a territory to 24
 welcome strangers into. 25

The spatial-temporal feature of hospitality also helps to define what 26
 hospitality is not: charity, conflict resolution, humanitarian aid, and so on. 27
 Bulley (2015) has argued that “hospitality does not take place in just *any* 28
 space; nor does it involve a transgression of *non-meaningful* boundaries” 29
 (Bulley, 2015, p. 189; *italics original*). The end of time(s) is a meaningful 30
 boundary prepperism ideally transgresses through acquiring knowledge 31
 and resources. The TTC of doomsday prepperism is an insufficient hedge 32
 against barely conceivable apocalyptic events resting at the edge of time. 33
 Nonetheless, doomsday prepperism is built on and propagated by com- 34
 munities sharing technical expertise premised on collective eschatological 35
 fantasies about TEOTWAWKI. Prepping attempts to reconcile the promise 36
 of revelation with the futility of survival are contradictory entailments of 37
 apocalyptic rhetoric. I use the word *attempt* because there is no possibility 38
 of reconciliation; it cannot occur just like absolute welcomeness toward the 39
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1 stranger may not be fully reconciled with the exclusionary boundaries that
 2 hospitality necessitates. Whether to welcome or prep, both actions imply
 3 mastery over space, place, and time. In the next section, I apply ideologi-
 4 cal rhetorical criticism of TPJ to answer the following research questions:
 5 (1) Whom does apocalyptic hospitality include, and whom does it exclude
 6 from the postapocalyptic imaginary? (2) What are the ideologies circulat-
 7 ing in TTC-focused doomsday prepper communities? (3) How does TTC
 8 contribute to apocalypticism?

11 An Ideological Criticism of TPJ

13 WHOM DOES APOCALYPTIC HOSPITALITY INCLUDE, AND WHOM DOES
 14 IT EXCLUDE FROM THE POSTAPOCALYPTIC IMAGINARY?

16 Ideological rhetorical criticism (Foss, 2018) can help us to understand
 17 how the affective sublimity of fear helps to constitute doomsday prepper
 18 communities. Such analysis helps reveal the beliefs, values, and assumptions
 19 behind the community that constitutes TPJ because it is an influential
 20 blog that claims to be more representative of the prepper community than
 21 apocotainment artifacts like Nat Geo's Doomsday Preppers series. Rhetoric
 22 as methodological inquiry is vital to revealing ideology because, as McGee
 23 (1980) pointed out, "the falsity of an ideology is specifically rhetorical, for
 24 the illusion of truth and falsity with regard to normative commitments is
 25 the product of persuasion" (p. 4). Prepperism as an ideology is concealed
 26 through the technical commitments to preparation; that is, TPJ authors
 27 and commentators alike can frame prepping as an ideologically neutral act
 28 precisely because of its technical components, which make it more like a
 29 disciplinary endeavor than an ideological one. Prepper identification often
 30 occurs along political-ideological lines that may be expressed as shared
 31 exclusions—those for whom dominant doomsday prepper culture config-
 32 ures as responsible for their expendability and eventual demise. Technical
 33 language then becomes the basis for articulating such exclusions as implied
 34 audiences—who are not considered "prepper" and, therefore whose place
 35 in the postapocalyptic imaginary is unwelcome.

36 Philip Wander's (1984) concept of the third persona clarifies how the
 37 TPJ community defines its inside/outside boundaries. Where the first and
 38 second personas relate to the speaker and their audience, the third persona
 39 is the audience that is left out of the speaker's intention. They may be

targeted and spoken about in a text; they are, however, not spoken to in that text. Morris III's (2002) fourth persona, or more specifically Gibbons's (2021) technologically updated persona 4.0, further theorizes the double audience—one who gets the coded message and another who does not. Search engines, for example, are algorithmic audiences that websites code for; websites operationalize a symbolic order largely unseen by their supposedly chief audience. In the third persona, the critic may find the excluded audience. In the fourth persona, the critic may find the duped audience. In analyzing the third and fourth personas of TPJ, I hope to reveal how ideologies at play in the blog help to construct who is and is not a prepper, which has significant implications for how preppers come to believe who does and does not deserve to survive the apocalypse.

Democrats and liberals are a third persona of prepperism conveyed through tactical technical discourses. There are many articles in TPJ dedicated to the political takes of preppers, and an incredible amount of them exhibit fear of the Obama administration, praise for the Trump administration, and a general disdain for liberals. For example, in an article about the need to retrain any surviving liberals after the apocalypse, John D (2016) has written: "Because you're reading this, you're probably not one of those delicate butterflies. You may ask, 'what does this pussification of young adults have to do with me?' It's simple; in a post-apocalyptic world, you'll have to live among them. They'll be the ones who'll come to you begging, when they realize they have no survival skills" (para. 6). In feminizing liberal culture, D affirms both the identity of preppers as conservative as well as their responsibility as properly masculine subjects to protect and re-train liberals to survive harsh post-apocalyptic realities. When TPJ users are not denigrating liberals as weak and feminine, they paint them as potential enemies that motivate their preparations. In response to one of the few articles welcoming liberal preppers to the site, a commenter named John Parker writes that "liberals are the REASON for prepping."

WHAT ARE THE IDEOLOGIES CIRCULATING IN TTC-FOCUSED DOOMSDAY PREPPER COMMUNITIES?

In an explicitly political article written by Wild Bill urging readers to vote in the 2018 midterm elections, the pseudonymous one-time owner of TPJ wrote that "this election is about our survival [. . .] Please, put on your best prepper 'can do' attitude and walk, run, drive, crawl, hitchhike, paraglide, swim or skateboard to your polling place and do your civic duty" (2018b,

1 para. 6). His framing of the election in such stark terms is not necessarily
 2 unique to preppers. However, the overt electoral call to action based on
 3 survivalism reveals a highly problematic ideology. Characterizing liberals,
 4 and more specifically Democrats, as threats to survival renders them polit-
 5 ical enemies and absolute enemies of humanity (Rasch, 2003) with all the
 6 violence that entails. The feminization of liberals as derisive rhetoric brings
 7 attention to another pernicious ideology at play in prepperism: apocalyptic
 8 masculinity.

9 Women are a third persona of prepperism. As noted earlier, the ideology
 10 of prepperism is coded by apocalyptic masculinity built on paramilitarism,
 11 a disposition toward violence, and feminization of others (Casey, 2016).
 12 Even the founder of TPJ acknowledges that most of his writers and readers
 13 are men. In one article dedicated to convincing prepper spouses to prep,
 14 Pat Henry makes explicit heteronormative and gendered assumptions that
 15 spouses are emotionally driven wives who place too much faith in hope.
 16 Henry (2013b) writes that although he has “tried to convince [his] spouse
 17 of the impending doom [. . .] she did not want to believe that anything is
 18 hopeless.” A reader, Jon R, commented in solidarity with the article’s senti-
 19 ment, declaring that his “wife is reluctant to prep, [. . .] If SHTF tonight,
 20 she’d be a major liability” (para. 8).

21 Prepperism is not just for any man, though either; it is for the mil-
 22 itarized and fit man who takes bodily conditioning and self-defense tactics
 23 seriously. Addressing the reader, TPJ contributor TekNik (2015) writes that
 24 when SHTF, “you’re gonna have to get that lazy ass of yours from off the
 25 sofa” and that “a prepper should have similar physical capabilities as an
 26 active-duty soldier” (para. 2) An anti-fat ableist ideology (Mollow, 2017) is
 27 embedded in this quote and circulating in the TPJ literature more broadly.
 28 Demonstrating this visually, TekNik (2015) includes a meme of a large guy
 29 holding a gun with a top caption that reads “OBSESSED WITH PRE-
 30 PARING FOR APOCALYPSE” and a bottom caption that pithily finishes
 31 “CAN’T CLIMB STAIRS WITHOUT FAINTING” (all caps use from
 32 the source). The reality is that one’s ability to survive an apocalyptic event
 33 has, more than anything, to do with luck than any level of preparedness
 34 or bodily fitness. Fat and disabled folks are another third persona in prepperism—get fit or die when SHTF.

36 Many in the TPJ community cherish the nuclear family ideal, with
 37 several articles dedicated to parenting pre- and post-apocalypse. In a popular
 38 article about prepper parenting, an anonymous (2018b) author argues that
 39 “kids are one of the main reasons why people turn to preparedness, and
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protecting and preserving a family is one of the main reasons why people are tuned into the idea of future-proofing their life” (para. 1). The heteronormative logic here is apparent: it is not enough to survive; you need to breed so that you may remake the world after its end—making queer life another third persona of prepperism. Perhaps even more disturbing is the brand of parenting that prepper ideology instills, as articulated in editor commentary that precedes a reader-submitted opinion piece about the type of disciplinary child-rearing prepperism demands; Wild Bill (2019a) writes that it is “a touchy subject perhaps in a world overrun with P.C. morality” but “the real world is basic to prepping and corporal punishment reflects the realities of the real world” (para. 1). The endorsement of parental violence indicates toxic fatherhood masculinity embedded within prepperism and its ideological defense of the nuclear family.

White-supremacist ideology is prominent in various TPJ scenario-planning articles about potential apocalyptic events. For example, TPJ contributor Keith Pounds (2014) advocates for racial profiling as a survival tactic, writing that “hospitals in the U.S. are under direct threat from Islamist extremist attacks” in part because of “foreign and domestic physicians who have become ‘radicalized’ by Islamist extremist ideologies” (para. 7). Another TPJ author using the name Capt. William E. Simpson (2014) bemoans the apocalyptic threat immigrants pose, writing: “In addition to illegal immigrants pouring into the U.S. over our southern border, a contingent of whom are known to be Jihadists are the people who are flying commercial airliners right into America from countries in Africa where the Ebola virus is raging out of control” (para. 5). In years past, prior to the Obama open-border policy, these Jihadists would have had a far more difficult time gaining access to the American homeland. However, that is no longer the case.

By linking terrorism, immigrants, and disease as existential threats to the “American homeland”—a xenophobic phrase that parrots fascist rhetoric—Simpson demonstrates the racial coding of apocalyptic logic. It is also a prescient example given the massive COVID-19 pandemic that occurred under the self-styled champion of restrictive immigration policies of former President Trump. Although it is the disease that kills, rhetoric codes human beings as diseased vectors of transmission that pose an existential risk to the host populations—an association that makes uncomfortable partners of public health and anti-immigrant discourses circulating in prepperism and American culture more broadly.

In prepper ideology, faith is critical to human endurance and perseverance after the apocalypse. Preppers must attend to their (Christian) spiritual

1 needs in hard times, as exemplified by the TPJ author Red J (2017), who,
 2 comparing the postapocalyptic with the Old Testament, wrote, “Life in a
 3 grid-down situation will become extremely difficult,” so “some believers
 4 will feel like they’ve been abandoned or punished by God” (para. 1) The
 5 Bible enjoys prominence in TPJ as the only religious text mentioned and
 6 quoted from, acting as inspiration, motivation, and a rationale for doomsday
 7 prepping. Another article about homesteading before and after doomsday
 8 exemplifies this point, where Matt Sevald (2015) laments that he does not
 9 believe our current technological society is how we are meant to live; instead,
 10 he argues that “we’re supposed to physically toil for our daily bread,” and
 11 that desk jobs are “killing us as we spend 1/3 of each day doing it” as evi-
 12 denced by deadly medical afflictions such as cancer, which Sevald believes
 13 is “a consequence for us deciding yet again to do things our own (‘easier’)
 14 way” (para. 6). In this frame, prepping is given a transcendent purpose,
 15 while the disease is a divine punishment for our technological dependence
 16 and separation from God’s creation.

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18 HOW DOES TTC CONTRIBUTE TO APOCALYPTICISM?

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20 The fourth persona, or persona 4.0 (Gibbons, 2021), helps expose “the
 21 machine as covert rhetorical audience” (p. 52) or winks, which “arise out
 22 of the bind generated via the internet’s attention economy, with its endless
 23 morass of material, the need for search engines to sort through it, and the
 24 resultant doubled audiences of human and machine” (p. 54). Table 14.1
 25 attempts to reveal at least some persona 4.0 that animates TPJ by approach-
 26 ing the website as a search engine might, by examining the prevalence (or
 27 lack thereof) of search terms within the site to understand the ideological
 28 commitments of the TPJ community. Although keywords were subjectively
 29 chosen and are mere fragments (McGee, 1990) of a much larger textual
 30 cloth and rhetorical ecology (Edbauer, 2005), they are informative in char-
 31 acterizing a TPJ persona 4.0.

32 Articles featuring women often focus on adapting prepperism for
 33 women specifically, as in the case of Walken’s (2021) headline above about
 34 bug-out bags for women. Although there are plenty of articles about choosing
 35 an appropriate bug-out bag, most do not mention identity characteristics
 36 such as gender as a factor. Prepper ideology does not assume women’s par-
 37 ticipation; instead, prepperism must be translated for anyone who is not
 38 a cis-gender man. Other gender-focused TPJ articles are concerned with
 39 defining family roles in the postapocalyptic imaginary; for example, Henry
 40 (2014a) asks and answers:

Table 14.1. Search Keyword Frequency in TPJ

| Keyword | # | Headline Example |
|--------------|------|---|
| Prepper | 1721 | Backups and Alternatives—A Preppers Mantra (Parris, 2019) |
| Men | 1710 | The 5 Wise Men of Prepping (M, 2016) |
| War | 1332 | How to Survive Civil War 2020 (Anonymous, 2018a) |
| Family | 1055 | 8 Helpful Tips for Introducing the Prepper Lifestyle to Your Family (Anonymous, 2020) |
| Gun | 617 | Shotgun for Prepper: Be Ready for Home Defense, Riots, and Looters (Anonymous, 2018c) |
| America | 494 | Prepping—Is America Ready? (Johnson, 2020) |
| Weapon | 471 | The Weapon of Next-to-Last Resort (Bill, 2018a) |
| Military | 351 | A Second Civil War Is Not What You Have to Worry About (Henry, 2020b) |
| Tactical | 255 | The Tactical Mindset! (Wilson, 2016) |
| Killing | 147 | Survival Tools You Can Make out of Scrap (Tara, 2018) |
| Women | 142 | Best Bug Out Backpacks for Women (Walken, 2021) |
| Terrorist | 126 | Is the U.S. Government Building the Terrorist They Need? (Henry, 2015) |
| Violence | 126 | When the Music Stops—How America's Cities May Explode in Violence (Bracken, 2013) |
| Apocalypse | 96 | Apocalypse Training 101: Learn How to Survive the End of the World (Henry, 2016) |
| Fitness | 81 | Prepper Conditioning: Total Body Fitness for When SHTF (Thift, 2016) |
| Revolution | 64 | Are We Spinning out of Control? (Bill, 2019b) |
| Obama | 42 | Open Border, Ebola & ISIS: A Perfect Storm for America? (Simpson, 2014) |
| Bible | 36 | The Bible, Preparedness, and the 2nd Amendment (Anonymous, 2016) |
| Liberal | 32 | The Rise of Liberal Preppers—Welcome to the Party! (Henry, 2017) |
| Trump | 29 | Are You Ready to Be Called a Domestic Terrorist? (Henry, 2021) |
| Democrat | 26 | Democrats, Republicans, and NRA Work Together on Gun Confiscation (Henry, 2013a) |
| Elections | 22 | Do the Results of the Election Have You Prepping for Doomsday? (Henry, 2020a) |
| Conservative | 20 | Cupcakes and Conservatives (D, 2016) |
| Gender | 18 | Putting Women in Their Place When the SHTF (Henry, 2014a) |
| Republican | 17 | Now That the Dark Ages Are Returning (Bill, 2018c) |

Source: Created by the author.

1 What is a woman's place? I don't write or think about them in
 2 those roles though because like I said, I don't really ever want
 3 to see that future for them. [. . .] It doesn't mean I don't believe
 4 they are capable, but I know that wouldn't be their preference.
 5 [. . .] This has nothing to do with Political Correctness or gender
 6 equality and I am not trying to change traditional roles of men
 7 and women. I have a very conservative view of marriage and
 8 family and most things in life. (para. 9)

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 10 The passage checks many of the keyword terms used in table 14.1—conservative,
 11 gender, men, women, and family—that reveal an ideological commitment to
 12 the nuclear family (Cloud, 1998) in the TPJ community. Bolstering this claim
 13 is the fact that *family* is contained in about 59% of all TPJ articles. Although
 14 that does not necessarily mean all those articles are exclusively focused on the
 15 family, the construct is important in prepper culture.

16 TPJ's persona 4.0 is preoccupied with violence, weapons, and war-
 17 fare—painting a decidedly bleak postapocalyptic portrait of life after
 18 catastrophic events. Much of the tactical advice found on the pages that
 19 return these search terms are given under the assumption of a return to
 20 a Hobbesian existence where brutality becomes a condition of survival.
 21 Pondering what constitutes a tactical mindset, TPJ author Wilson (2016)
 22 writes that “political correctness does not enter into it; we are talking about
 23 your life and death not banning super-size sodas or gay marriage.” Wilson's
 24 existential framing reveals an ethic of expediency (Katz, 1992)—it is life
 25 and death, so we do not have time to debate tactical engagement. The pithy
 26 cultural asides also reveal a conservative ideological framing embedded in
 27 the author's conception of a tactical mindset. How might the stranger be
 28 met in such a violent postapocalyptic imaginary?

29 Prepperism demonstrates that hostility is as much a hospitality as
 30 any greeting at the threshold of the entrance (held space, place, and time).
 31 Greeting with a gun or a handshake is still a greeting (imprisonment is still
 32 hosting). Phenomenologically, the perversion of a thing must still be that
 33 thing; otherwise, the perversion would be unintelligible. Apocalyptic hospi-
 34 tality in this context is then figured as a preparedness to meet the stranger
 35 with violence because when SHTF, as TPJ contributor Tara writes, “[l]ooting
 36 is everywhere, and so are the killings. Law and order are noticeably absent.
 37 People can do whatever they please and going out is akin to suicide.” The
 38 rest of Tara's article constitutes a prime example of prepper TTC, specifically
 39 on bricolage (Kimball, 2006). Common household materials may easily
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be turned into weaponry, like combining dried chili pepper and water to make a blinding pepper spray, turning a paracord bracelet into a bullwhip, and a flamethrower built out of a fire extinguisher. The irony of turning a safety device into a weapon that causes the specific type of devastation (fire) the original device was built to snuff out is a telling perversion; in the postapocalyptic imaginary, to be safe is to contain the potential for violence.

Finally, there is a politics to prepperism. That is, the TPJ community is not apolitical. Elections matter significantly to some of the most prominent contributors—including the founder of TPJ, Pat Henry. Part of the blog's work appears to be preppers' political activation. From broad criticisms of Obama that parrot conservative rhetoric about partisan issues such as guns and immigration to the gleeful and inauthentic welcoming of liberal preppers in the wake of Trump's election to the US presidency. Beyond the 2020 election, the TPJ founder's most recent work appears to be attempting to help preppers make sense of a post-Trump and post-COVID world. COVID was indeed apocalyptic in many senses of the term; for example, the devastation it wrought has also revealed systemic weaknesses tearing at the fabric of American society, such as massive income inequality and a severe lack of accessible quality healthcare nationally. For preppers, it was apocalyptic in these senses but likely in another as well; it revealed that apocalypses could be slow rather than fast and can generatively rebuild life rather than just entropically consuming it.

Conclusion

Multiple intersecting third and fourth personas exist at work in the TTC of TPJ. Hospitality toward the third persona is, at best neglectful but may easily be characterized as hostile. Prepperism as an ideology tends to configure anyone who is not a cis gender, white, fit, conservative male as a nonsurvivor that must be convinced, converted, or cast out from the postapocalyptic imaginary. Hospitality at the end of the world, like absolute or pure hospitality, may never be known because it requires a condition beyond symbolic imagination. However, that does not stop mediated representations of apocalyptic hospitality that indicate and contribute to many anthropogenic and ongoing apocalypses in the status quo. Apocalyptic hospitality is practiced in various forms today—the perversion of the welcome, the holding of the stranger at gunpoint, the hostage taking, and resource plundering of nationalistic survivalism operating on a global scale.

Prepperism may seem niche, but the eschatologies of endism and electism promoted in the TPJ reveal broader right-wing ideological trends that posit white Christian cis-men as victims of a changing world. Ethics is conveyed in prepper TTC, which often emphasizes the mutual exclusivity of preserving your own life and a stranger's life. Others in prepperism are either threats to be eliminated or burdens to shed. In synthesizing hospitality ethics with an ideological rhetorical analysis of prepper TTC, this chapter meaningfully contributes to several disciplines, such as technical communication and political rhetoric. Prepperism tends to enmity, and so then, too, do the objects of prepper instruction. Once institutions are decimated, no strategies are found, only tactical survival, where every decision could be your last.

There is a deadly gravitas in prepper TTC like that of jihadist TTC (Sarat-St. Peter, 2017). That may seem rather dramatic, but ideological fantasies about postapocalyptic survival are dramatic; living for the end is dramatic. However, it is also revealing in the most apocalyptic of senses. Stripped of societal mores and norms against murder and mayhem, the belief among mostly male-identifying preppers in the TPJ community appears to be that violent chaos will likely ensue in the apocalypse, which is a belief, whether correct or not, that is indicative of an inhospitable outlook that condones the hostile greeting. What happens when the apocalypse disappoints? When people who shouldn't survive do and when institutions thought to be destroyed endure? Post-COVID and post-Capitol insurrection, members of the TPJ are only now beginning to struggle with those questions—making it a fruitful area for future inquiry.

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