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The Evolution of International Security Studies and the Everyday: Suggestions from the Buffyverse[1]

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Abstract

Security Studies is again reflecting on its origins and debating how best to study in/security. In this paper we interrogate the contemporary evolutionary narrative about (international) security studies [(I)SS]. We unpack the myth's components and argue that it restricts the empirical focus of (I)SS, limits its analytical insights, and constrains the sorts of interlocutors with whom (I)SS engages. We then argue that these limitations can at least partially be remedied by examining the performance of identities and in/securities in everyday life. Through an analysis of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* – which both stand in for, and are, the everyday in our analysis – we trace elements of the evolutionary myth in the Buffyverse. We then argue that the Buffyverse offers a complex understanding of (identities and) in/security as a terrain of everyday theorising, negotiation, and contestation – what we call the 'entanglement' of in/security discourses – that provides insights fruitful for the study of in/security. In conclusion we briefly draw out the implications of our analysis for potential directions in (I)SS scholarship.

Introduction

Giles: It's terribly simple. The good guys are stalwart and true. The bad guys are

easily distinguished by their pointy horns or black hats.

Buffy: Liar. (B2.7) [2]

The publication of Buzan and Hansen's *The Evolution of International Security Studies*

(2009) and engagements with it in *Security Dialogue* (2010) highlight that (international)

security studies – (I)SS[3] – is again, or still, reflecting on its origins and debating how best to

study its central concept. For Buzan and Hansen, as for others, the story of (I)SS as a sub-

discipline – a story we argue below is myth[4] – is told chronologically through an evolutionary

metaphor. Most frequently, scholars tell this story to students via textbooks,[5] but it is also a

story that security studies scholars tell themselves. Beginning with a narrow understanding of

security as about the threat, use and control of military, and especially nuclear, force in

Strategic Studies in the Cold War, the (I)SS story emphasises a shift over time from empirical

and theoretical simplicity to empirical and theoretical complexity and these changes as the

'widening and deepening' (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: chapter 7) of both the sub-discipline of

(I)SS and the security agendas of policy practitioners. However, academic analyses are not

the only sites at which security is portrayed through this evolutionary metaphor. Many

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[2] We designate episodes of *Buffy* (B) and *Angel* (A) by giving the season and then the episode within it. For episode synopses, see Wikipedia (nd). For academic analyses of the Buffyverse, and the wider Whedonverse, see *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association* (online), previously *The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies*.
[3] We use (I)SS to encompass 'security studies' (North America), 'international security studies' (Europe), and the various forms of critical/Critical security studies.
[4] Stuart Croft recognises and critiques the constructed and mythical nature of this evolutionary narrative, arguing that '[t]here has not been an "evolution" in the sense that theories have become more sophisticated and robust' (2008: 502).
[5] E.g., Booth, 2005a; Sheehan, 2005; Dannreuther, 2007; Williams, 2008; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2010.

elements of this story can be found in a seemingly unlikely place: the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spinoff *Angel*, collectively the 'Buffyverse'.[6]

The Buffyverse is also a fruitful site for examining the multifaceted and complex theorisations of in/security that we find in everyday life in the 'real world'. At first glance this may seem counterintuitive. After all, *Buffy* and *Angel* are television series, located within the genres of fantasy and science fiction (SF), among others, and so generally assumed to be both merely entertainment and 'other worldly'. Nonetheless, we argue that the Buffyverse is directly relevant to the study of in/security for several reasons. First, 'popular culture comprises the primary sites, practices and frames through which people make sense of the world' (Rowley, 2010: 14; Weber, 2008). Popular cultural texts are produced out of the common-sense cultural resources of a given society. The deployment of such resources ensures that narratives and representations are intelligible and plausible within both popular culture and society more broadly (Weldes, 1999a: 119). Thus, popular culture *is* the 'real world', providing us with meanings, including about world politics. Second, the continuous nature of the storylines in the Buffyverse, which developed over 12 seasons,[7] provides masses of data for analysis and critique. Third, the central motif in the Buffyverse is, precisely, in/security: the shows' basic premises, plotlines, and narrative arcs all focus on characters' identities, insecurities, and attempts to produce security. Finally, in part through its fantasy and SF elements, the Buffyverse estranges, exposing the taken-for-granted nature of commonly held assumptions and providing a space for 'radical doubt and questioning' (Davies, 1990: 4) within which we might re-assess our conceptualisations of identities, threats, and in/securities.

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[6] We limit our discussion of the Buffyverse to the televised episodes of *Buffy* and *Angel*. The Buffyverse includes a vast array of other materials.

[7] 12 seasons comprises 254 episodes or approximately 175 hours of television, as compared with, say, a two-hour film.

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section, we examine the myth of (I)SS's evolution. We discuss the components of this myth, including contemporary (I)SS conversations about in/security. In the second section, we show how the various components of the myth can be identified in the Buffyverse. The Buffyverse also demonstrates that identity and in/security are social constructions and mutually constituted. In the third section, we argue that the Buffyverse offers a complex – even positively messy – understanding of in/security as a discursive terrain on which identities and in/securities are constantly theorised, negotiated, and contested in everyday life – what we call the 'entanglement' of discourses of identity and in/security. The conclusion draws out some implications of examining such messy everyday entanglements for potential directions in (I)SS scholarship.

Security Studies' Evolutionary Myth

'I suddenly find myself needing to know the plural of apocalypse.' (Riley, B4.12)

The (I)SS myth has several components (see Figure 1). The first of these is a powerful evolutionary metaphor (Shah, 2010: 632-3) that allows a specific, contestable understanding to appear natural and uncontestable. Metaphors create equivalencies, helping us to understand one thing in terms of another (Shapiro, 1985-86: 194-5); in this case, the evolutionary metaphor invokes a biological framework to account for and make sense of changes in (I)SS scholarship. Its effect is to produce and naturalise a narrative that, by privileging some facts while marginalising others, simplifies (I)SS into a coherent account with a beginning, middle and end (or current) state. It distils a 'shapeless past' (Jenkins, 1995: 150) into a

chronological account of a shift from theoretical and empirical simplicity to theoretical and empirical complexity and constructs the 'truth' of (I)SS as one of progressive phases: its widening, deepening, and fragmentation/complexification. Moreover, this chronological structure means that, even where scholars do not explicitly argue that real world events drive changes in (I)SS, this periodisation constructs an implicit understanding of theory as both distinct, and following, from 'external' security practices. The evolutionary metaphor further reinforces this distinction in suggesting that organisms, in this case (I)SS, are separate from their environments, the 'real world' of security practice (Shah, 2010). This evolutionary narrative is mythical in the sense that 'IR myths are *apparent truths*, usually expressed as slogans, that IR traditions rely upon in order to appear to be true. The "truth" or "falsity" of an IR myth is beside the point' (Weber, 2001: xvi, emphasis in the original). (I)SS's common-sense truth/slogan is that, through widening and deepening, (I)SS has evolved into a higher, more complex organism (body of knowledge).

Figure 1: The (I)SS Myth

	Components of the evolutionary myth	Related academic practices
1	Evolutionary metaphor	Creation of a coherent narrative of organic development from simplicity to complexity
2	U.S./Western context	Ethnocentrism; universalisation of the particular
3	Widening	Expansion of relevant security issues
4	Deepening	Expansion of referent objects of in/security
5	Fragmentation/complexification	Proliferation of theoretical approaches
6	Modes of (dis)engagement	'Security dialogue'/division of labour/superiority
7	Conversational practices and interlocutors	Academic insularity (academics as speakers and audience); elitism (use of elite security practitioners to validate academic theorising; elite security practitioners as audience); everyday security practitioners absent as either speakers or audience.

The myth's second component is that salient security issues are those found in a post-war U.S./Western context. Even if the narrative is contextualised with brief preliminaries about Westphalian models of IR (Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Kolodziej, 2005) or the interwar period (Walt, 1991; Baldwin, 1995), (I)SS's origin lies in the shift from 'defence' to 'security' after WWII (e.g., the 1945 formation of the United Nations Security Council in 1945; the 1947 U.S. National Security Act). With the onset of the Cold War and the construction of Soviet

and international communist enemies, Strategic Studies emerges, focussing on external (communist) threats, the (Western) state as the referent object of security, a bipolar (East-West) balance of power, a stark distinction between the domestic and the international, and on military, and especially nuclear, threats. Security, in this ethnocentric context, is about the 'use, threat and control of force' (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 12; Walt, 1991: 212; Kolodziej, 2005: 22-23) to ensure (Western) state survival in the face of these objective external threats. Once Strategic Studies is firmly established and the Soviet nuclear threat embedded within it, it enters what some consider the sub-discipline's 'Golden Age' (Waever and Buzan, 2010: 468) of simplicity, when (I)SS was 'simultaneously productive, influential and relatively coherent' (467). This aspect of the narrative universalises the particular, taking the perceived situation of the United States and its Western allies at one point in time and generalising it as an accurate model of the situation faced by all states at all times (see Hoffmann, 1977; Smith, 2000).

The third component of the myth concerns (I)SS's 'widening' (Sheehan, 2005: 3; Dannreuther, 2007: 3) or 'broadening' (Krause and Williams, 1996, *passim*; Christie, 2010: 177). Widening refers to two related changes, both of which expand what can legitimately be seen as a threat to security. Initially, what constitutes a threat requiring a *military* response is expanded. Such threats come to include not just the (potential) use of conventional or nuclear weapons by other states, but also such problems as 'resource scarcities' (Ullman, 1983: 140). Second, threats requiring *non-military* responses become security issues. Examples include 'catastrophic natural disasters' (138), environmental degradation and change (Matthews, 1989), population growth, and migration (Weiner, 1992/3). In the 1990s, human security advocates continued (I)SS's widening by including epidemics, trafficking, access to food

supplies, denial of civil and political rights, and inter-ethnic conflict, among others, as security threats (e.g., Paris, 2001).

The myth's fourth component, the 'deepening' of (I)SS (Booth, 2005b: 14; Fierke, 2007: 1; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2010: 7), refers to transformations in the referent object of security, revealing the inadequacy of a state-centric approach. Some scholars thus look 'up' to regional, international and/or global security, focussing on the transnational nature of threats (e.g., interdependence, Keohane and Nye, 1977) and arguing that only states acting in concert (e.g., regimes, Krasner, 1983) can address these. Others focus on the regional, international or global as the object to be secured (e.g., Bay, 1987; Lake and Morgan, 1997). A more fundamental challenge comes from deepeners who look 'down' to human security. On this argument, the individual should be the common-sense referent object of security (e.g., Buzan, 1983). This set of critiques challenges the domestic/international divide in that the state itself is recognised as a threat to the security of individuals and sub-state groups (e.g., Ayoob, 1984).

The proliferation of approaches to in/security is the fifth component. (I)SS 'fragmented' into multiple approaches – beyond the usual variants of realism and liberalism (such as neo-realism, offensive and defensive realism, neo-liberal institutionalism, liberal internationalism) – adding, among others, securitisation theory, and feminist, post-structural, and Critical security studies. These newer approaches offer alternative conceptualisations of in/security based on competing epistemological and methodological assumptions. They are generally seen as providing critical and/or constructivist analyses of both threats and the referent objects of in/security, highlighting in particular the mutual constitution of threats and identities (e.g., Shepherd and Weldes, 2007).

Various modes of scholarly engagement between and disengagement between these approaches comprise the sixth component of the myth. Some see these approaches as in 'dialogue' with one another (Dannreuther, 2007: 210; Fierke, 2007: 2).[8] This 'conversation' (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 262) revolves around theories' privileged threats and in/securities, and their referent object(s) of security, as well as the epistemological and methodological assumptions best suited to study in/security. But this conversation has produced only limited modes of engagement between approaches, which results, in part, from a limited understanding of who does, or should, participate in the security dialogue.

One mode of *dis*engagement is a retreat from dialogue in favour of a vision of (I)SS as most productively pursued through 'camps' (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 262), a theoretical 'division of labour' (Waever and Buzan, 2010: 480; Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 257), thus representing (I)SS as a 'theoretical menu for choice' (Williams, 2008: 11). On this view, security scholars can and should pursue their theoretical and empirical interests as they see fit, within their separate traditions, without worrying about what others are doing (e.g., Miller, 2010: 645). Some scholars understand these positions to be so radically divergent as to preclude – and render unnecessary – further dialogue. Hence, some theoretical approaches are simply 'mutually exclusive' (Williams, 2008: 10), 'incommensurable' (Biersteker, 2010: 605), or 'irreconcilable' (Sheehan, 2005: 4). Yet another, contrasting form of *en*gagement raises the possibility of 'eclectic synthesis' (Williams, 2008: 10). Biersteker, for instance, argues that 'we should look for syntheses, for order out of disorder, and pursue … "the unity of opposites"' (2010: 604).

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[8] For discussions of 'dialogue' in IR more generally, see *Millennium*, 2011, 39(3).

A final option, which can derive from each of these forms of dis/engagement, is a position of theoretical superiority in which one's own approach is proffered as *the* correct way to study in/security. This is position is not limited to one particular approach (nor are we immune). Indeed, some authors have argued that this 'broadening and deepening' of 'security' means that the term loses its analytical purchase (Walt, 1991: 213; Baldwin, 1997; Morgan, 2000: 40; Kolodziej, 2005: 2). As a result of the 'fuzzy boundaries, contention, methodological quandaries and so on' caused by widening and deepening, Morgan, for instance, wants to re-entrench a 'traditionalist' approach to (I)SS in which security just *is* about 'survival and physical safety' to be achieved through the 'deliberate use of force by states' (2000: 40). Similarly, Critical security scholars have articulated theoretical superiority over both realist and anti-foundational approaches (see, e.g., Booth, 2005c; Sheehan, 2005: chapter 10).

Each of these modes of dis/engagement takes place between limited sets of interlocutors (the myth's seventh, less overt, component). For example, one might be excused for thinking that Russett and Arnold's article 'Who talks, and who's listening?' (2010) concerns conversations between academics and other security practitioners, but it instead concerns 'networks of communication' among (English-language) (I)SS journals and academics (cf. Kristensen, 2012). Biersteker argues that '[p]erspectives emanating from the centers of world politics should be corroborated with, informed of, and corrected by the views of scholars from the peripheries' (2010: 603), again privileging (Western) academic views of in/security. In his Critical security studies text, in a section headed 'Real people in real places', Booth discusses the implications that academic theories have for 'real' others – e.g., 'the people(s) of the Balkans, women in East Africa' (2005c: 274) – but does not consider how 'real people in real places' might be theorising in/security. If we ask 'who speaks' in these engagements, the

'partners' (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 264) in the (I)SS conversation are academics and the in/security theorisations discussed are academic ones.

Security scholars do, of course, sometimes engage with elite policy makers (Biersteker, 2010; C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006: 472-473). Elite security practices are usually brought into (I)SS to validate, falsify, or demonstrate the relative superiority or inferiority of particular academic approaches. Kolodziej uses policy practices to 'evaluate contending schools of thought' in terms of 'how close they come to capturing the [elite security] actors themselves' (2005: 3). Similarly, Dannreuther argues that '[t]heories prove their utility by the extent to which they variously illuminate the [policy] issues under examination' (2007: 210). The focus remains on academic theory and theorising, to be validated, or not, by elite practices.

Restricting the engagement in this way reproduces the radical (constructed) distinction between the 'academic' and the 'real'. Moreover, scholars ignore *everyday* in/security practitioners – by which we mean individuals and groups from the 'margins, silences and bottom rungs' (Enloe, 1996) of world politics – as both speakers and audience.[9] Everyday security practitioners are inescapably immersed in theorising identity and in/security – as are elite practitioners (cf Weldes, 2006; Rowley and Weldes, 2008). As Weber says, 'if politics happens anywhere, it happens in the everyday, in all sorts of "high" and "low" ways' (2008: 138). If we look at, listen to, and explore 'the world as non-experts see it and make it and use it, rather than as expert IR scholars imagine it is or ought to be' (138), we hear more complex and nuanced conversations about in/security, with important implications for (I)SS. We return to this discussion of everyday theorisations of in/security, and the complex critique that the Buffyverse offers, in the third section of the paper. But first we unpack how elements of

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[9] In contrast, see, e.g., Coleman, 2009; Koopman 2011.

the evolutionary myth appear in the Buffyverse in order to set the scene for the critique that follows.

Reading the Evolutionary Myth in the Buffyverse

'I'd call that a radical interpretation of the text.' (Oz, B3.16)

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003) is set in the fictional town of Sunnydale, California, the location of a 'Hellmouth', 'a centre of mystical energy' (B1.1) that attracts and nourishes evil and provides a point of contact between Earth and Hell(s). A cross-genre combination of fantasy, SF, soap opera, sitcom, horror, and teen drama, the show follows the adventures of Buffy Summers (the Slayer) and her friends (the Scoobies)[10] as they battle various supernatural and human enemies. At the end of season three of *Buffy*, Angel – a vampire with a soul and Buffy's former lover – moves to Los Angeles, opens a supernatural detective agency, and continues battling evil in the new show, *Angel* (2001-2005).

Buffy, like the (I)SS myth, begins with a conventional, simplistic conception of in/security. The first two seasons are rife with one-off 'monsters of the week': threats which are given, objective and external. Humans are the self-evident, unproblematised referent objects of security. The unmistakably evil monsters always attack Buffy, or other innocent humans, first, although they need not do so to be considered imminent threats. Threats are defined in terms of capabilities and the intention to use those capabilities is assumed. Threats are decisively dealt with by Buffy through the use of force; just as in realism, relative force is

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[10] Principle characters in *Buffy* include Willow, Xander, Oz, Cordelia, and Anya. Angel's co-workers include Doyle, Cordelia, Wesley, Gunn, and Fred.

what matters. Realism's stark distinction between domestic and international is embodied in vampires' inability to enter domestic spaces without explicit human invitation.

The balance of power is also starkly evident in the first season of *Buffy*. Although there are frequent battles with vampires and other 'monsters of the week', it is the over-arching and ongoing war with the Master (an extra-strong vampire) and his (regular) vampire minions that preoccupies Buffy, as he tries to acquire the power not just to kill a few humans but to bring about an apocalypse (cf. Strategic Studies' early preoccupation with Soviet nuclear force). More overt traces of Strategic Studies' WWII/early Cold War foundations – the myth's second component – are found in the Buffyverse as well. The origins of the Initiative – the modern, high-tech military unit that experiments on and attempts to 'weaponise' vampires and demons – are shown in 'Why We fight' (A5.13). Largely through flashbacks, we learn that Angel was forced into 'patriotic' service in 1943 by U.S. military officers operating under the auspices of the newly-created 'Demon Research Initiative'. His mission – to rescue a submarine containing three powerful vampires on whom the Nazis had been conducting research – allegorises the Manhattan Project and the development of the U.S.'s nuclear capability.[11]

The Buffyverse can also be read as widening its conception of in/security. Over the seasons of *Buffy* and *Angel*, threats and insecurities proliferate. As with (I)SS, threats provoking the use of physical force expand. In addition to vampires, the Slayer fights an increasingly diverse range of demons, witches, sorcerers, werewolves, shape-shifters, reanimated corpses, cyborgs, gods, and the U.S. military. At the same time, more threats appear that, while not

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[11] In 'Are You Now or Have You Ever Been' (A2.2), we see flashbacks to Angel's life in LA during the 1950s, when he lived, for a brief period, in the Hyperion hotel. This episode cleverly locates its contemporary demon storyline in the broader context of the mass U.S. hysteria around Communism and the insecurity felt by the U.S. population during the McCarthy era.

requiring the use of force, are nonetheless considered salient in/securities. For example, access to food – i.e., blood – is a chronic insecurity for vampires (e.g., B2.8). Economic insecurity is a concern in the Summers household after Buffy's mother dies (B6.4, B6.5, B6.12) and is ongoing for Angel's detective agency. Similarly, homelessness is a recurring source of insecurity for teenagers in LA (A1.20, A2.12, A2.14).

The Buffyverse's conception of in/security deepens, too. First, although in slayer mythology slayers fights vampires and other evils alone (B1.1), Buffy increasingly relies on Giles (her Watcher) and the Scoobies, thus performing a liberal internationalist notion of collective security. Teamwork is central to fighting the manifold evils at the Hellmouth (see especially B2.14, B3.22, B4.21, B5.22, B7.22). Second, the notion of in/security is deepened through the globalisation of threats. In the first four seasons of *Buffy* and the first three of *Angel*, threats, even apocalypses, are generally quite local, but in later seasons the threats become more far-reaching. The major threat in season five of *Buffy* is the potential opening of a gateway to hell dimensions, which threatens the whole of humanity. In *Angel*'s season four, Jasmine, an entity with mind-altering powers, uses global media structures to brainwash humanity. Third, state-centrism's inadequacy is highlighted through the increased vulnerability of domestic space. No threats enter Buffy's home during season one, but over time the domestic/international boundary becomes porous: intrusive threats include a killer mummy (B2.4), a killer robot (B2.11), killer eggs (B2.12), a killer face mask (B3.2), and killer ghosts (A1.5).

The proliferation of (I)SS approaches is also evident in the Buffyverse. Magic spells, whether uttered intentionally or unintentionally, are akin to securitising speech acts.[12] These spells result in effects both expected, as when Willow casts a spell to reinstate the barrier preventing vampires from entering the Summers house (B2.17) and – frequently – unexpected, as when Xander fails to make classmate Cordelia fall in love with him, instead intoxicating all Sunnydale females (including vampires) *except* Cordelia (B2.16). Human security is pervasive and is best seen in the two series' sub-state focus and their predominant concern for the in/security of individuals. Feminist's attention to gendered insecurities like female circumcision/FGM appear in 'She' (A1.13). In this episode, female demon refugees ask Angel for help in escaping from male demons, who fear the sexual power of their female counterparts and routinely perform excisions of the female demons' 'ko' (an erogenous organ in the spine) in order to maintain male control over them into adulthood. Critical security studies' emancipatory focus is also depicted: Buffy frees humans from a lifetime of slave labour in a demon dimension (B3.1), Anne opens a homeless shelter in LA (A2.12, A2.14), and Fred (the only member of Angel's team not brainwashed by Jasmine) fights to free the others, even as she acknowledges that they seem happy under Jasmine's spell (A4.19).

As our analysis so far shows, many elements of the (I)SS myth appear in the Buffyverse: it highlights the cold war origins of (I)SS, it widens and deepens, and it proliferates approaches to in/security. At the same time, however, the Buffyverse is more complex. The social construction of identity and in/security is not only made explicit to the audience (analogous to [I]SS scholars), but is also self-reflexively accepted by the characters (our everyday security practitioners). During a Sociology seminar at U.C. Sunnydale, Willow explains social constructivism: 'social phenomena don't have unproblematic objective existences. They have

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[12] In 'Superstar' (B4.17) Giles tells Xander not to 'speak Latin in front of the books' after Xander accidentally sets fire to one by saying 'you can't just go "librum incendere" and expect…'. For many other examples, see B2.16, B3.9, B4.9, B4.21, B6.1, A1.22, A3.4, A3.17, A4.6.

to be interpreted and given meanings by those who encounter them' (B6.5). But the social construction of identity and in/security emerges much earlier than this overt discussion in season 6. Through the characters' experiences in the early seasons, characters and audiences alike gradually comprehend that in/securities are constitutively linked to identity. As the Master says: 'We are defined by the things we fear' ('Nightmares', B1.10; see also B1.8, B1.11). The intimate connections between identity and in/security emerge forcefully in episodes in which demons harness and amplify characters' already-existing identity insecurities. In 'Fear Itself' (B4.4), each character's most deeply held insecurity is revealed as that which threatens their identity. Similarly, in 'The Yoko Factor' (B4.20), the vampire Spike attempts to undermine the Scoobies' strength by playing them off against each other. Their ability to function effectively (achieve security) as a team is thus exposed as dependent on their identity security within that team.

In another divergence from the myth (with, we argue below, profound implications), the Buffyverse also expands who talks and who listens, in terms of both legitimate data sources and conversational partners. Parallel to academic practices, the Scoobies frequently use canonical texts (such as ancient chronicles and codices) and scientific and modern technological methods (such as computer software and chemistry experiments) in their research. However, for both the Scoobies and Angel's gang, knowledge is recognised as both incomplete and opaque, and its status is fundamentally questioned. Characters are sceptical, even sometimes cynical, about information that derives from official sources and authority figures, such as the Watchers' Council (e.g., B5.12). The Scoobies also listen more widely to those who have been directly affected by events and actively seek to bring them into discussions as everyday security practitioners (e.g., B3.21, B3.22, B4.10, A2.3, A3.5). (We return to these claims in more detail in the final section of the paper, below.)

Taking seriously the social construction of identities and in/securities, and their mutual constitution, highlights their mundane nature as well as the everyday contexts in which, and actors by whom, they are theorised. In the next section, therefore, we argue that the Buffyverse provides useful challenges to (I)SS. In *Buffy* and *Angel*, *everyday* identities and in/securities, to which (I)SS does not pay analytical attention, are theorised, negotiated, and contested. Moreover, theoretical proliferation in the Buffyverse leads not to fragmentation but rather to the *entanglement* of diverse discourses of identity and in/security, and of diverse approaches to in/security, in the everyday.

The Buffyverse Does In/security

'[N]othing's simple. I'm constantly trying to work it out, who to hate or love … who to trust … the more I know, the more confused I get.' (Buffy, B2.7)

Rather than viewing 'security' as a concept that needs to be defined, broadened, deepened, and so on, we understand security as diffusely present on the broader discursive field, as a terrain on which multiple identities are performed and relationships played out. Viewing security – or, more accurately, in/security – as a discursive terrain allows us to take seriously the claim that it is an essentially contested concept. Because of its complex and appraisive nature, in/security 'inevitably involves *endless* disputes about [its] proper use on the part of [its] users' (Gallie, 1955-56: 169, emphasis added). Crucial, then, is not establishing the concept's true meaning, but recognising and interrogating its profound multiplicity and contestability. Understanding in/security as that which is theorised on an everyday discursive

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terrain allows us to see that everyday security practitioners operate with multiple, and essentially complex, understandings of identity and in/security – well illustrated in the Buffyverse.

Identity and in/security are fundamentally messy. As we show in this section, in *Buffy* and *Angel* we find multiple identities and in/securities, multiple relationships between them, and multiple discourses and approaches. We demonstrate how in/securities treated as analytically distinct in (I)SS are always already empirically entangled in everyday security practices. Whether, in their daily lives, everyday security practitioners understand insecurities as complementary, competing, or contradictory, whether they prioritise one form of insecurity over another, and how they negotiate the relations among insecurities, depends empirically on the ways in which they *theorise* these (whether conscious of this theorising or not).

The Everyday Entanglement of Identities and In/securities

> Willow: Well, they do seem to fall into the 'good guy' camp. I mean
>
>   they are anti-demon. [Sees the expression of Anya, an ex-vengeance
>
>   demon.] Probably pro ex-demon.
>
> Anya: Maybe. I choose to feel threatened. (B4.13)

The Buffyverse expressly integrates, and indeed privileges, everyday identities and in/securities. Fitting-in and coming-of-age anxieties – all rooted in identity– abound, and are seen as of equal importance to in/securities emanating from vampires, demons and other putatively external and possibly apocalyptic threats (which in the Buffyverse also occur

routinely). Moreover, identity insecurities are not only teenage concerns: adult characters continue to grapple with identity issues – anxieties about sexual identity, relationships, academic proficiency and career prospects – on a regular basis. Giles, Buffy's Watcher, experiences intertwined parental anxieties: he both fears that Buffy no longer needs him and worries that Buffy's reliance on him retards her development (B6.7).

A variety of relationships between identity and in/security emerge in the Buffyverse. Above, we highlighted insecurity about one's own identity. Conversely, certainty about others' identities also has security implications. At the outset of *Buffy*, a community with clearly demarcated boundaries and essentialised identities – insiders (humans) and outsiders (vampires and demons) – is established, with rules governing how insiders and outsiders can be treated. Vampires and demons can be slain with impunity; humans are by definition worthy of protection and cannot be killed, no matter how heinous their crimes (Molloy, 2003).

However, these identities become destabilised very early on so that insiders and outsiders can no longer be so easily distinguished. Vampires can be 'good' (e.g., Angel, Spike, Harmony), demons can be unthreatening (e.g., Clem, Lorne), and humans are not always what they seem. Many have hybrid identities, such as Oz (a werewolf for three nights a month), Anya (a former vengeance demon), Doyle (half-human, half-Bracken demon), and Willow (who develops increasingly powerful witchcraft). Angel's long-term enemy in LA, the law firm Wolfram and Hart, serves the city's most powerful demons although it is staffed and run by humans (e.g., A1.1). In 'The Ring' (A1.16), we see 'humans consorting with demons; humans helping demons; demons helping humans; demons helping other demons. We also have humans … fighting each other' (Molloy, 2003: 116). Indeed, identities become so

entangled that the early opposition between human and vampire/demon in *Buffy* has been completely turned on its head by the end of *Angel*: in the final season, Angel and his co-workers accept the senior partners' offer to take over the LA branch of Wolfram and Hart. The Buffyverse thus problematises and destabilises the boundaries of the 'we' (Stern 2006, Weldes 1999b) to be secured.

Furthermore, denizens of the Buffyverse recognise, if sometimes belatedly, that operating on the basis of essentialised identities does not necessarily produce security. A striking illustration occurs early in *Angel* when, acting on an implicit essentialising assumption, he kills a demon he believes to be pursuing a pregnant woman, only to discover that the demon was her champion, and that Angel's own actions have put her unborn child in mortal danger (A2.1). A longer-term example involves Faith, another Slayer. After accidentally killing a human (B3.14), Faith begins to use her power both aggressively and self-interestedly and comes to be seen by the Watchers' Council and some of the Scoobies as essentially evil. By kidnapping Willow and attempting to kill both Buffy and Angel, she indeed assists the season's major threat, the Mayor of Sunnydale, in his attempted ascension to full demonhood. The 'problem' of Faith is handled by the Watchers' Council: she is captured, sedated and transported ready for shipment to England for trial, but escapes before rendition can be completed. This brutal treatment exacerbates Faith's isolation from the Scoobies and pushes her towards the Mayor, thus increasing rather than alleviating the Scoobies' and Sunnydale's insecurity.

Whether characters reflect explicitly on the relationship between identity and insecurity or not, characters with whom we identity ('us') can become threats ('them'). In 'Gingerbread' (B3.11) the threat is ostensibly witches who have killed two young children. In the face of

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their suspicion of witches, and in an attempt to protect their children from witchcraft, a group of mothers, including Buffy's mother Joyce and Willow's mother Sheila, form MOO – 'Mothers Opposed to the Occult' – and end up trying to burn Buffy and Willow at the stake. MOO's approach is to 'establish a predictable, systematic world in order to control it' (Breton and McMaster, 2001), thus paradoxically creating a world in which Sunnydale parents are willing to kill their children to protect them. In direct contrast, after Angel has killed the pregnant woman's champion, he is distraught: 'That it didn't occur to [Angel and friends] … that a demon could be anything but trouble weighs on Angel's conscience almost as much as the realisation that he had killed' someone protecting the vulnerable (Molloy, 2003: 116).[13] Even with the best of intentions, sometimes 'we' are 'them'.

Having established the dense entanglement of identities and in/securities, in the next sub-section, we explore how characters within the Buffyverse theorise on the terrain of in/security, and how they conceptualise and debate identities, behaviours, and threats. We illustrate the diversity of approaches and discourses upon which they draw and examine some of the many occasions when Buffy and the Scoobies, and Angel and his co-workers, disagree – both amongst themselves and with other (elite and everyday) security practitioners – about how to negotiate the terrain of in/security in their everyday lives.

Everyday Security Practitioners and Their Entangled Approaches to In/Security

Cordelia:	I personally don't think it's possible to come up with a crazier plan.
Oz:	We attack the Mayor with hummus. (B3.22)

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[13] An even more convoluted example of this can be seen in season five of *Angel*, when Gunn's fears about his position at Wolfram and Hart set off a sequence of events which culminate in Fred's unintended murder.

If we see in/security as a terrain of theorisation, negotiation and contestation, it becomes clear that security is, at best, only ever a temporary and localised performance. Unlike (I)SS, which often implicitly treats the achievement of 'security' as the desired end state (cf. Stern 2006) – such as the stability of Mutual Assured Destruction or bipolarity – Buffyverse characters are used to living with insecurity every day, treating it as a familiar, permanent, even humdrum backdrop to their lives. Buffy refuses to miss out on the Homecoming dance, for instance, just because yet another catastrophe looms: 'If the apocalypse comes,' she tells Giles, 'beep me' (B1.5). In a later episode, when Buffy's sister is abducted by a demon, she says resignedly: 'So. Dawn's in trouble. Must be Tuesday' (B6.7). Insecurity is both mundane and unavoidable; the Buffyverse is about how to produce temporary forms of security with respect to very specific identity-in/security complexes. At best, there is 'not safe, but safer' (Koopman, 2011: 277) for a little while.

Everyday security practitioners do not theorise or act consistently according to a single theoretical framework, either over time or at any point in time. Buffyverse characters' approaches to generating security vary according to context and their diverse theorisations of concrete identities and in/securities, which are sometimes constructivist, sometimes liberal, sometimes realist, sometimes feminist (etc.). On the American holiday of Thanksgiving, the Scoobies debate the ethics of allowing native American spirits to carry out retaliatory violence on leaders of the white settler community (B4.8). Willow deploys a postcolonial discourse in the spirits' defence, citing historical grievances as an explanation and justification for their actions. The others, in contrast, would rather treat them, in classic realist terms, as simply an externally given evil/threat to be eliminated. In this case the realist argument wins and, in the end, they kill the spirits. However, on a normative level Willow's

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arguments remain persuasive and viewers are left to ponder the legitimacy of the Scoobies' decisions and actions (Wilcox, 2011).

In season five, Buffy and Giles disagree about whether to kill Dawn (Buffy's sister, magically created by monks and introduced out of the blue at the beginning of the season). Given that Dawn's death will close a portal between Earth and several hell dimensions, preventing demons of those dimensions from coming to Earth, Giles is prepared to kill Dawn; he can treat her instrumentally because she is not 'real' (B5.21, B5.22). Giles is also willing to (and does eventually) kill Ben, the human 'host' for the evil god Glory, who is attempting to find and use the key (Dawn) to open the portal so that she can return to her home dimension. Buffy, in contrast, opposes killing Ben because he is an innocent human. Furthermore, despite being aware of Dawn's abrupt and recent creation, because she has been implanted with memories of growing up with Dawn and views her as 'really' her sister, Buffy invokes an ethic of care and chooses to sacrifice her own life in order to save Dawn, as well as humanity (B5.22). However, after Buffy has been resurrected by her friends, she acknowledges that she would now be prepared to kill Dawn if she had to make the choice again (B7.17). As these examples highlight, everyday security practitioners in the Buffyverse view discourses of insecurity as intersecting with – rather than as necessarily privileged over – other essentially contested concepts, such as justice, liberty, equality, development, and democracy. They also come to different conclusions about the relative merits of different approaches in different circumstances and self-reflexively acknowledge that identities, and thus insecurities, are dynamic and that experiences alter their perspectives.

Expressly competing discourses of, and approaches to, in/security are most apparent when the Scoobies encounter the Initiative (*Buffy*, season four). This covert U.S. military

organisation's mission is to capture, research, control, and eliminate 'Hostile Sub-Terrestrial' threats (i.e., demons and vampires, B4.11) through 'xenomorphic behaviour modification' (B4.13). In 'Doomed' (B4.11), we see the Scoobies and the Initiative pursue – separately – the same Vahrall demon, using very different methods based on divergent epistemologies. Initiative commandoes are briefed by scientists on the demon's physical characteristics – size, weight, special hazards – that are based on those of any, generic, Vahrall, with no attention to *this specific* individual. They use scientific techniques to track it, following its pheromone signature. The soldiers do not know where it is going, but they do know where it has been. In direct contrast, Buffy and her friends use very different sources of information, including less 'reliable' texts, to determine what *this specific* demon is looking for, what it intends to do, and where it is going, although they have no way of tracking its movements.

Interestingly, both epistemologies arrive – quite literally – at the same place, when both search-parties meet at the Hellmouth and find the demon making a sacrifice designed to instigate an(other) apocalypse. In pursuing and locating the threat, at least, neither approach is superior to the other. Crucially, though, while the soldiers might have been equally capable of locating and killing the demon, their approach limits their ability to prevent the apocalypse – because they are unaware of the significance of the demon's actions. Buffy, in contrast, has researched the ritual and is able both to kill the demon and to prevent the apocalypse (albeit not without relying on some military equipment). The Initiative's 'unknown unknown' is known to Buffy – for whom almost all situations are treated as 'known unknowns' – because she retains a radical scepticism of knowledge claims and methods more generally. Nonetheless, without commando assistance, Buffy could not have prevented this apocalypse.

These divergent epistemologies are reiterated when Buffy decides to join forces with the Initiative (B4.13). She attends a military briefing about 'sub-T 67119', identified as 'demon class, Polgara species', which the commandoes have been ordered to capture. Again, the troops are informed of characteristics such as its 'distinct protein marker' and its unique defensive capacities. As Forrest – one of the commandoes – has earlier stated, 'They're just animals, man, plain and simple' (B4.7). However, during the briefing, Buffy raises questions concerning the demon's motivations:

Buffy: What do they want? Why are they here? Sacrifices, treasure, or are
             they just getting rampagey?

Dr Angleman: They're not sentient, just destructive, I believe.

Prof. Walsh: They do have keen eyesight, however.

The Initiative's understandings of demons again focus on capabilities, treating them as essentialised objects rather than subjects with their own intentions, beliefs, and desires.

Buffy later observes that questions are 'an Initiative faux pas', contrasting the hierarchical command structure of the Initiative with the Scoobies' deliberative and participatory approach, as well as problematising the supposed unquestioned authority of 'expert', scientific knowledge. In the Buffyverse, the sources of information upon which characters are prepared to draw include folklore, fairytales, and nursery rhymes, prophecies, oracles, and visions, as well as on their own and others' first-hand observations and experiences. Buffy, Angel, and other characters also make use of informal networks, rumours, gossip and, occasionally, paid informants. Diverse people's (and demons') knowledges are taken

seriously, and their life experiences given validity, but nothing is excluded as worthless purely because of the method by which it was obtained (cf. Feyerabend, 1975).

Indeed, Buffy, the Scoobies, Angel, and his co-workers seek out, listen to, and assist people whose insecurities cannot be or have not been acknowledged as legitimate concerns by regular authorities (e.g., the police; see A1.1, A1.4, B2.18, B7.4). Similarly, Buffy is explicitly attentive and attuned to disruptions to the rhythms of the everyday, whether she is identifying vampires by their out-of-date fashion sense (B1.1) or diagnosing her new college roommate as a demon based on the roommate's obsessive behaviours, irritating habits, and toenail clippings that grow (B4.2). Conversely, Buffyverse characters are often acutely aware of the dangers of *not* listening, of designating some actors and their concerns as not worthy of attention, as when a Sunnydale High student literally becomes invisible after being ignored by her classmates (B1.11). In 'Earshot' (B3.18), after acquiring an 'aspect' of a demon she has killed, Buffy can hear everyone's thoughts and discovers that someone wants to kill everyone in the school. In order to track down the potential murderer, the Scoobies must treat as credible each insecurity that Buffy is able to identify from the jumble of thoughts she has overheard.

The significance of the critique offered by the Buffyverse is best highlighted by contrasting the examples above with season seven of *Buffy*, in which Buffy and her friends revert to simplistic ways of conceptualising the world and threats to their security. Written and screened after September 2001, this season's 'big bad' is the First Evil – pure evil – who plans to release thousands of Turokhan, *über*-powerful vampires holed up in caverns beneath the Hellmouth. The Scoobies, along with twenty or so potential slayers (girls who have the potential to be activated as slayers upon Buffy's death) must protect the town as per usual.

However, in this season, opportunities for diverse practitioners to participate in discussion are radically closed down in favour of a hierarchical model in which an expert (an experienced slayer) is the leader and only a small number of elite practitioners are authorised to speak. Democratic debate is shown to be inefficient and ineffective, negotiation and contestation are argued to be dangerous, and the discourses which dominate are militarised and realist in nature (B7.19). Indeed, at one point, Buffy leaves her friends and allies to fight alone (B7.20). Although the hierarchical and militarised approach upon which the characters have based many of their arguments is ultimately undermined in the final episode (B7.22), the narrative arc's lasting effect is a severe shrinking of the terrain upon which in/security is able to be theorised and performed. In effect, this season reproduces much of the in/security logic of the Bush Administration's 'war on terror'. It is worth noting that Buffyverse fans have critiqued various aspects of this season's episodes and narrative arc extensively online (see, e.g., www.buffy-boards.com, www.buffyvampireslayer.org), inadvertently lending further support to the claim that, on the whole, the Buffyverse provides a space for such interrogation and reflexivity.

Conclusions: Suggestions for Future Research

Giles: [L]et's not jump to any conclusions.

Buffy: I didn't jump. I took a tiny step and there conclusions were. (B5.15)

When we examine in/security in the Buffyverse, some distinctive features emerge. In contrast to (I)SS's theoretical fragmentation, the Buffyverse highlights discursive entanglement; where (I)SS privileges academic understandings, the Buffyverse illustrates the everyday nature of in/security theorising; and where (I)SS narrowly focuses on elite practitioners, the Buffyverse demonstrates that we all engage in in/security practices, however far from the conventional centres of political power we appear to be situated. Thus, far from being a frivolous exercise, analysing the Buffyverse has significant implications for how and what we research as scholars of in/security. Instead of attempting to demonstrate which theory best explains the world, we should be looking at how *all* of these theoretical approaches – realist, neoliberal, institutionalist, feminist, post-structural, Critical, and so on – are being deployed on a everyday basis by everyday people. This means re-conceiving the relationship between theory (theorising, theorists) and practice (practising, practitioners), and acknowledging that everyone, not just academics and policy elites, does security. Theorising is both a form of practice and an inescapable component of practice. As scholars, we therefore need to stop talking about, and very occasionally at (a very small, elite proportion of) the world and start listening to its inhabitants, in order to discover the wealth of what we do not know about how in/securities are theorised and, crucially, how these are theorised through everyday practices.

This, in turn, means accepting the messiness of everyday in/security discourses and practices and investigating these *as* contested[14] and entangled, rather than attempting to tease out or abstract some unified and over-arching 'theory of security'. It means admitting that security is done in spaces we scholars of (I)SS (and IR more broadly) often ignore, or downplay: the bedroom, the playground, the coffee shop, the cinema, the swimming pool, the construction

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[14] McSweeney argues that the claim that 'security' is essentially contested is itself a 'widespread myth' (1999: 83).

site, and the office are just some examples (Enloe, 1996). Instead of relegating the analysis of popular culture and everyday life to cultural studies, women's studies, or anthropology, (I)SS needs to take seriously – and on their own terms – the approaches and concepts that scholars in these disciplines have developed, and learn how to research in/security in new, entangled ways. In order to capture snapshots of these entanglements within everyday life by everyday security practitioners, it means diversifying our research methods. Discursive and visual analytical tools, and ethnographic and participant-observation techniques, all offer clear strengths to the researcher interested in mundane practices, everyday theorisations, and in their entanglement.

Finally, pedagogical implications derive from our argument: we must consider how we teach and represent 'security' and 'security studies', and recognise the limitations of presenting neatly packaged accounts of how (I)SS has become established as a sub-discipline (even if we do provide occasional caveats about omissions, elisions, and simplifications). Acknowledging that the world is messy and cannot be easily or unproblematically parsed for analysis – that we lose as much as, if not more than, we gain through employing rigid categorisations, abstractions and generalisations – is perhaps the most valuable lesson we can impart to the next generation of scholars as they embark upon their own studies. As Buffy says about everyday life: 'If you could hear what they're feeling. The confusion, the loneliness... It looks quiet down there. It's not. It's deafening' (B3.18).

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