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"Welcome to the generation of fuckbois":

Postfeminist masculinities and gender discourses in the social media era

M.A. Thesis
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Abstract

This thesis addresses contemporary representations of gender in media with a focus on figures of masculinity. While online media are the primary objects of focus in this thesis, the two chosen case studies reflect the interplay of on- and offline spaces and, in doing so, characterize gender relations of the current age. This thesis discusses two of many possible cases of mediated gendered figures, though their significance lies in both the worldwide popularity of each case and the purported applicability of the involved figures (both male and female) to broad audiences. The fuckboy, the first case, utilizes social media communication to construct intimate relationships, whereas the Instagram Husband, the second case, demonstrates intimacy that has been interrupted by social media. These two figures characterize mostly young white heterosexual men from Western (specifically Anglo-American) backgrounds, and thus this background informs the thesis. The theoretical background begins with description of how gender is constructed and performed, and then Rosalind Gill's (2007a) sensibility of postfeminist media culture is explained. Historical figures of popular mediated masculinity are presented to demonstrate how old ideologies are re-contextualized to fit contemporary scripts. Among these scripts are the recent rise in popular feminism and popular misogyny, which are both particularly relevant online (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Gill, 2016). This thesis aims to address how social and digital media usage informs gender constructions through analysis of the fuckboy and the Instagram Husband.

Keywords: postfeminism, fuckboy, Instagram Husband, social media, masculinity

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1 Introduction

In the final months of his tenure, the 44th President of the United States of America penned an essay in a popular magazine declaring himself a feminist and promoting the importance of feminism for American society (Obama, 2016). Conversely, the next man to hold that office was elected after having been caught on record boasting about using his power as a celebrity to sexually assault women (Fahrenthold, 2016). Recently, Fox News published an expose of Suzanne Venker's (2017) book on love and marriage that suggest that married 'alpha' women are now infringing on their husbands' natural right of dominance in male-female relationships. Meanwhile, on January 21, 2017, an estimated[1] 4.5 million people joined the Women's March on Washington and its almost 700 sister marches around the world to demonstrate for women's rights and intersectional feminism (Pressman & Chenoweth, 2017). Victories for men's rights groups and feminist groups alike seem to occur with equal frequency, thus ensuring the debate rages further.

As evidenced by the above examples, gender politics and the quest for nondiscriminatory equality are very much still relevant and debated in Western culture and worldwide. Embedded in this online and offline conversation are notions of women's reproductive rights like access to contraceptives and legal abortions, gender bias in professional settings, transgender rights including the ability to use public restrooms, and the legal ramifications for acts of sexual assault. More specifically, online misogyny and its effects have come under scrutiny, with some examples being the legal grey area of rape threats in computer-mediated communication (overwhelmingly aimed at women), whether sending unsolicited images of male genitalia (known as "dick pics") is equivalent to sexual harassment or illegal exposure, and the consequences for those who disseminate revenge

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[1] An independent report (Pressman & Chenoweth, 2017) estimated between 3.5 and 5.5 million attendees worldwide, with a "best guess" of approximately 4.5 million people.

porn, which entails private intimate images that are displayed publicly as an act of shaming. In fact, much of the discussion regarding gender politics today exists solely within and because of media (Gill 2016), and this trend likely will not dwindle any time soon.

In the early days of online communication, "cyberfeminists" had high hopes for the egalitarian potential of the internet to ensure progressive steps toward gender equality, which have almost assuredly now been dashed. As Alice Marwick (2013b) and Emma A. Jane (2016) have argued, the online world is antagonistic to women, but it also provides opportunities to engage with other women in a community of support. Clearly, social media and the online world do not exist in a space entirely outside of offline norms and interactions. Indeed, social media allow users to craft their own self-presentation using various tools that depend on the affordances of each individual platform. As online culture gathers, influences, and again reflects the norms of the offline realm, so too does offline culture complete the same course of events with online culture. This interaction requires the evaluation of both offline and online spaces when discussing current phenomena. As social media reflect offline influences, such social interactions are mediated, re-mediated, and reinscribed through social media. The often archival and sometimes ephemeral mediated descriptions of such social roles open new areas for critique, thus necessitating that offline interpretations are again influenced by online types, and vice versa. This tangled web provides an offline foundation and vocabulary to online interactions, and an online basis for offline interactions, though each space transforms communication in its own way. While online media are the primary objects of focus in this thesis, the two chosen case studies reflect this interplay of on- and offline spaces and, in doing so, characterize gender relations of the current age. This thesis discusses two of many possible cases of mediated gendered figures, though their significance lies in both the worldwide popularity of each case and the purported applicability of the involved figures (both male and female) to broad audiences in (primarily Anglo-American) society.

Figure 1 Screengrab from the viral Fuckboy video.
Note. Reprinted from Jerry Studios. (2016, December 21). FUCCBOI (Official music video) [Video file].
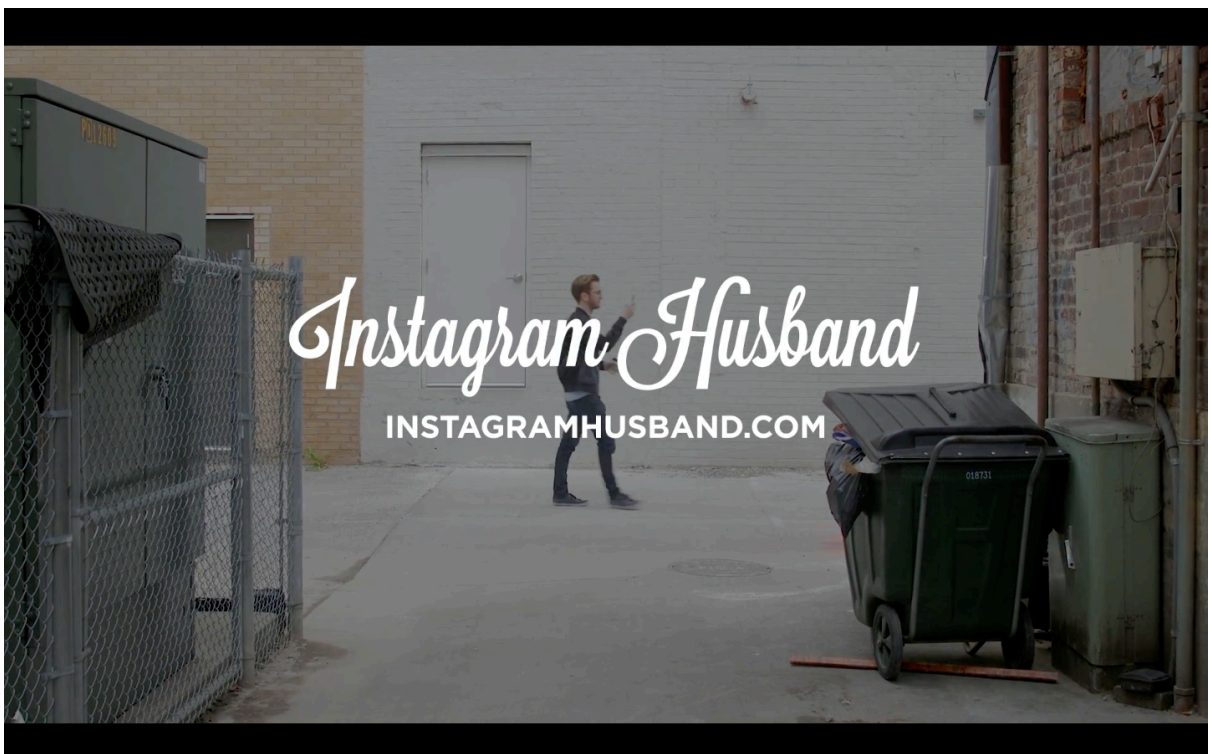Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCk9UjfjWHc

Figure 2 Screengrab from the viral Instagram Husband video.
Note. Reprinted from The Mystery Hour. (2015, December 8). Instagram Husband [Video file]. Retrieved from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFzKi-o4rHw

Both cases in this thesis are representative of a young, white, heterosexual (and heteronormative) masculinity in the English-speaking world. The fuckboy (see Figure 1), the first case of analysis, is an identification for a young man who engages in social media practices of hypermasculinity and misogyny when interacting with women. The fuckboy seems to seek sex above all else, and despite the level of derision this figure faces in online contexts, he is still seen as an attractive and inevitable misstep in the on- and offline dating lives of young women. The Instagram Husband (see Figure 2), the second case, is depicted as a doting husband who sacrifices his spare time to assist in the triviality of photographing his wife (or general female significant other). The wives of Instagram Husbands tend to enjoy fame to varying degrees, and many of them utilize social media to influence and progress their careers. Instagram Husbands are persistently applauded online for their selfless assistance, and their need for recognition in this pursuit is of interest to this research. Both of these figures occupy spaces in what Rosalind Gill (2009a) has called the practice of mediated intimacy, or "the ways in which different kinds of intimate relationality are constructed in different media sites" (p. 346). The fuckboy utilizes social media communication to construct intimate relationships, whereas the Instagram Husband demonstrates intimacy that has been interrupted by social media. These two figures characterize mostly young white heterosexual men from Western (specifically Anglo-American) backgrounds, and thus this background informs the thesis. This focus is not intended to be dis-inclusionary, merely I believe it is a side effect of hegemonic masculinity that these traits are idealized in today's world. The chapter on fuckboys regards some aspect of racial tension in this arena.

In the case of both the fuckboy and the Instagram Husband, the gender roles that are presented exemplify tendencies of postfeminist media culture, which Gill (2007a; 2007b) has crafted as a sensibility to characterize gender expressions in contemporary media. While media have shown tendencies of "post"-feminism since the decline of the second wave of

feminism in the 1980s, it is very clear that recent developments in technology have had massive influence on the specific manifestations of this broad sensibility. The fuckboy and Instagram Husband are two expressions of masculinity that have been constructed through social and digital media usage and reflected offline. In this way, neither could exist or have garnered such widespread popularity without both online and offline influences, and the relevance of these figures spans both realms as well. The offline actions of the men and women in both of these cases are dependent on their online behaviors: the fuckboy is described by his social media actions; the Instagram Husband appears to desire disconnectivity, which is itself a conscious and telling choice in today's Western world. Throughout the paper, I refer to these cases as 'figures' much in the same way as Rosalind Gill (2009b) and Imogen Tyler (2008), which acts to express their historical and cultural relevance in relation to how they are represented in a publically mediated manner.

Since the dominance of social networking sites compounded only around the year 2005 (boyd and Ellison, 2008), this thesis aims to update existing scholarship on postfeminist media culture within the 2017 context of social media domination in the English-speaking world, as these online spaces have now become commonplace and deeply entrenched in society. The West barrels forward into technological progress, with television commercials that target in-home voice-activated internet search devices, mobile applications to track and assist with bodily functions, and self-driving cars, it is clear that the future is here. While many have hoped for more gender equality in the 21st century, there still exist many tensions. There is a push for men to reclaim their rightful dominance over women (Peretti, 2004; Castillo, 2017), and it has also been argued that "society is not producing men who meet the desires of generations of women who thought they could have it all" (Moore, 2017); gender tensions are seemingly at an all-time high, and there is no shortage of on- or offline outlets for expressing opinions on the matter.

Within these tensions and progressions, it is important to administer a gentle reminder to include other gendered populations in consideration for the future, or at the very least, ensure that feminism remains associated with a reach for equality rather than dominance. As many feminist organizations have adopted intersectionality to their platforms, it has been suggested to remember and address present-day gender politics as a bricolage, not a binary. To improve such relations for the better, each aspect of the bricolage must be considered and critiqued to improve the whole. I have found that analyses of gender concerns have overwhelmingly focused on the position of the feminine. As a feminist, this is comprehensible to me, but the emergence of masculinity studies around the close of the 20th century has shown that evaluations of masculinity can be equally as beneficial for a better understanding of overall gender politics; I strongly believe this also remains true for other gender identifications. However, since the Western world has only quite recently been more accepting of non-binary gender roles, with the accompanying media visibilities growing, I found it more telling to focus on the binary-related figures of gender in contemporary media with the hopes of utilizing the results of this analysis to further unravel longstanding tensions.

The gender canon persists in many societies as primarily male versus female, and the two case studies in this thesis are representative of this broad trend. Because of this, the cases in this text are approached from the binary in which they reside. I believe it is a necessary step toward gender inclusion to view how the binary still interacts today with the hopes of using knowledge of relevant trends, which are more historical than may be immediately apparent, to affect a more equality-driven society. With this, I aim to add one piece to the whole of contemporary gender scholarship. For this reason, I have chosen to address the aforementioned figures of masculinity in contemporary online media. This task is confronted with the intention to utilize these resources and their refraction of online and offline gender norms, tensions, and experiences to develop an understanding of how masculinity is posited

in the gender debate of the 21st century and how the recent massive transformations in communicative functions have encouraged new and old tensions. Through this process, this thesis provides insights into how historical ideas have taken shape through innovative technologies and seemingly novel experiences, and this paper further unravels the dominant gender discourses in digital and social media.

The next chapter presents the theoretical framework for this work. This chapter begins with a general discussion of the sociological presentation of the self in social situations, which is further expounded with Judith Butler's (1988; 1990) conceptions of gender as performative, as one aspect of a whole of self-presentation, and the historical and situational dependence of gender norms. Next, I trace a brief history of masculinity in media in the early- and mid-20th century, leading up to the rise of postfeminist media culture, the beginning of which is noted as the 1980s. Postfeminist media culture as Gill's sensibility is explained in depth to present the wide-ranging and contradictory facets of gender presentations in media within the last 30-40 years. As noted above, many of the characteristics of postfeminist media culture concern the manifestations of women in media, which is important but does not demonstrate a comprehensive view of all gender relations. Next, I trace a brief history of masculine figures in postfeminist media, starting with the 'New Man' of the late 1980s and early 1990s and his counterpart, the 'New Lad' of the 1990s lad magazine trend. To illuminate certain similarities of postfeminist masculinities, I then describe the metrosexual of the early 2000s and his counterpart, the retrosexual, of the time shortly thereafter. This progression acts to explicate the tensions within media-defined masculinity characters, often described as reactionary or akin to backlash, which construct the foundation for the contradictions of today's masculinity and gender politics. To further assist with this construction, I address Gill's 2016 article in which she tackles claims of "post-postfeminism," which have suggested that postfeminism as a sensibility is no longer

applicable to describe present-day media due to increased visibilities of new and old feminisms in recent years. This trend of "feminist" as a commodified buzzword proves essential to the expressions of gender in the two chosen cases.

The third chapter briefly describes the methods applied in this thesis. Foucauldian discourse analysis is detailed in this chapter, and the reasoning for the application of this method is also defined. The data collection process is briefly presented here as well. Chapters 4 and 5 represent the cases of study: the fuckboy and the Instagram Husband.

Chapter 4 expresses the many characterizations of the fuckboy, which vary greatly but all describe young men who use social networking sites to either initiate or progress casual heterosexual entanglements. While there are very few men who proudly adorn the title, this figure has been a growing part of online discussions of intimacy throughout the last decade. Much of the existing fuckboy narrative is centered on female empowerment by expressing wide-reaching superiority over fuckboys. Nevertheless, it is also considered empowering to knowingly engage with a fuckboy, so long as the choice is made based on individual circumstances and desires. Fuckboys are known to be somewhat duplicitous, and thus much of the fuckboy data explain how to unmask a fuckboy in disguise and what courses of action to take beyond this point. This paper's analysis of the fuckboy focuses on why this figure is viewed as a natural and inevitable aspect of contemporary dating life, particularly when most characteristics of fuckboys revolve around their behavior on social networking sites. I describe the male and female positions in the discourse of the fuckboy figure that are both grounded in historical and current gendered scripts.

The case of the Instagram Husband has a clearer origin and definition, particularly because the term was coined from a video of the same name by a comedy group called The Mystery Hour (2015). Their video went viral, with 6.2 million views on YouTube at the time of this writing, and the name has caught on in broader media outlets. The continued use of the

phrase has resulted in slight adaptations to its meaning throughout the time since the initial video, though it generally refers to a man who is coerced into taking photographs of his wife, girlfriend, or (female) partner so that she may post these photos on her Instagram page. The Instagram Husband conversation now applauds any man who takes a photo of a woman in his life while suggesting that these men are victims of their circumstances. This chapter addresses concepts of social media use and microcelebrity to determine the positions of both the men and women in the Instagram Husband relationship. I also speak to the notion of toxic masculinity in regard to the plight of this manly figure. Finally, the last chapter is a conclusion of the thesis with a discussion of limitations and areas for future research.

The overall aims of these case analyses are to show how renewed feminisms and misogynies manifest in mediated presentations of gender and are expressed through the contradictions of postfeminist media culture. Additionally, this thesis is interested in what influence the influx of digital and social media has had on mediated gender norms. This thesis also has the side effect of validating the continued relevance of Gill's postfeminist media culture as a sensibility for viewing today's mediated world.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Gender as Performance

Gender represents a juncture between public and private, political and personal. Tensions of sex and gender can be found embedded in every aspect of society, and in recent years, it has become one of the most visible areas of conversation in the public sphere. Indeed, as the public sphere has transformed to celebrate intimacy and discourses of traditionally private matters (Rose, 2010), it has been repeatedly noted that discussions of gender now appear almost entirely in media (Gill, 2016). Despite seemingly endless conflicts of beliefs, it is now widely accepted that gender is rather a sociological performative act than a biological certainty. The opposing viewpoint of gender, which claims a natural closed binary (male/female), is crafted along the heteronormative notion of two sexes (man/woman) to which genders correspond. The rejection of this viewpoint is extensive and has been exacerbated by scientific evidence, such as deviations from binary sex-determining chromosomes, hermaphroditism, and the acceptance of gender dysphoria as a recognized disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (commonly known as the DSM), the classification book of the American Psychiatric Association (2013). Furthermore, intersexuality, transsexuality, gender neutrality, and other gender identifications continue to gain visibility and acceptance in mainstream media. While a non-binary consideration of gender is significant and, as many believe, the path towards a progressive future, this thesis primarily concentrates on contemporary and historical considerations of gender within the male/female binary to address the chosen figures that firmly exist within this binary. Additional gender visibilities in media currently represent an important area of research and will become even more so as these discourses continue to develop over time, but these discussions are beyond the scope of deliberation for the present research.

Erving Goffman's (1956) famed work regarding the calculated and varying

presentations of the self in different social situations was the first of its kind to evaluate individual social interactions and the patterns therein. His theories are widely recognized and include the notion that persons perform to different roles depending on innumerable factors, though particularly the location, surrounding people, and the intended purpose of the interaction. For a basic example, a professional setting includes a set of behavioral norms to which participants adhere in their own capacity; even the lack of adherence to these codes as well refers to a role – perhaps, for instance, the "anti-professional."

Judith Butler (1988; 1990) further specified Goffman's notions in terms of constructed gendered identities, which is still commonly accepted in the field. Butler's writing posits gender as both one aspect of self-presentation for each situation, due to gendered codes of social interactions, as well as its own perpetual performance. Gender must be persistently communicated while performing occurs in, and is affected by, each time and place. In this way, as Butler said, "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (1988, p. 519, emphasis in original). Through this repetition, a gender performer (indeed, a person) constructs an identity that adopts the appearance of reality; the performance is one that the performers and audiences alike "come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (Butler, 1988, p. 520). In this way, Butler argued, gender acts less like a static noun and more so an ever-adjusting action (Butler, 1990). However, these acts cannot be arbitrary, as gender is a set of temporally based cultural signs based in historical notions but perpetually adapted by time, situation, and actors. One must utilize the body in order to "materialize oneself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility," while also keeping in mind that "one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors" (Butler, 1988, pp. 521-2). This process must be done in such a way that what is perceived in the way of gender

by others is recognizably aligned with cultural and temporal norms. Gender is considered alongside other signs of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and culture that shape overall identity (Butler, 1990, pp. 4-5). To construct gender poorly, or to not adhere to the cultural signs, can be considered taboo and may result in social sanction (Butler, 1988, p. 520).

With gender as performative and expressions of gender varying in different spaces, it stands to reason that mediated gender performances are also necessitated on the sociopolitical time and space in which they exist. In the post-World War II era, for instance, the idealized version of manhood was a middle-class husband and father, emblematic of the American Dream with a house surrounded by a white picket fence (Ehrenreich, 1983). With the advent of *Playboy* magazine in 1953, a new style of masculinity was crafted. At the time, men were just starting to be targeted by advertising as consumers, which, when combined with the new presentation of the anti-monogamy man, "opened up a space of libidinous fun and lascivious consumption" (Gill, 2007b, p. 206). This bachelor-style masculinity allowed men to appreciate activities that were, at the time, considered more feminine, such as fine art, high culture, and gourmet dining. For these 'playboys' to ensure they were seen as heterosexual, the magazine became synonymous with the overt sexual objectification of women. Barbara Ehrenreich (1983) said of the 1953 launch of *Playboy*:

> When, in the first issue, [creator and editor in chief Hugh] Hefner talked about staying in his apartment, listening to music and discussing Picasso, there was the Marilyn Monroe centerfold to let you know there was nothing queer about these urbane and indoor pleasures. And when the articles railed against the responsibilities of marriage, there were the nude torsos to reassure you that the alternative was still within the bounds of heterosexuality. (p. 51)

The vast popularity of *Playboy* continued through the remainder of the century, perhaps both because and in spite of feminism, which persisted alongside the *Playboy* reign. As femininity

continued to be problematized, so too, finally, did masculinity at the dawn of what is now known as *post*feminism.

2.2 Postfeminist Media Culture

As second-wave feminism dwindled into the 1980s, so then rose a new canon of gender with corresponding mediated representations. These representations and their contradictions persist today, transforming in tandem and in tension with one another. The term "postfeminism" has been often used to illustrate this era of mediated gender representations from the 1980s to the present. Much of the existing literature has used postfeminism to describe an overall theme of changing gender representations, though the term has a controversial past. Gill (2007b) explained that disputes regarding the nature of postfeminism have stemmed from three primary claims, such that postfeminism has been described as an alteration in epistemology, a historical change, and a backlash against feminism (p. 249). In this thesis, however, I call upon Gill's widely recognized construction that considers postfeminism as a sensibility, or a lens through which to view the objects of study, which are contemporary media objects and culture. Utilizing this path then allows postfeminism to be considered alongside both neoliberalism and feminism rather than as a separate entity (Gill, 2007a, p. 163). Gill (2007a) outlined nine interacting features of postfeminist media culture, which are summarized below.

- Feminism and anti-feminism: This foremost aspect regards what it means to be "post"-feminist. The prefix refers to the contradictions of pre-feminist, feminist, and anti-feminist perspectives that simultaneously flow through contemporary media discourse. This aspect also implies the prevalence of feminist discussions in the mainstream media arena, which is a shift brought about by the mid-20th century's second-wave feminism. However, with this presence of feminism in media come

naysayers, thus ensuring the broad understanding of "a feminism that is part of common sense yet also feared, hated, and fiercely repudiated" (Gill, 2007a, p. 161). And with this concept existing in conjuncture with neoliberal ideals comes a tension between politicized issues and individualistic choice (see below). This tension then results in the *de*politicizing of women's issues, or the trend of using the concept of feminist empowerment to act in manners that are potentially problematic to feminism as a political structure.

• Femininity as a bodily property: Since the dawn of postfeminist media culture, there has been an "obsessive preoccupation" with the female body (Gill, 2007a, p. 149). Within this culture, femininity must be proven through the physical form rather than constructed through societal, structural, or psychological means. Furthermore, the female body is presented as always in transformation, and the process of attaining or maintaining a youthful and sexy appearance is the perpetual work of women. This process requires surveillance and discipline (see below) to ensure that women perpetually progress toward increasingly unrealistic beauty standards. As a young and sexy body is considered the standard to which women are held and the means of attaining their feminine power, there is always the possibility of failure, particularly because youth, by nature, is fleeting.

• Sexualization of culture: An obsession with female bodies has also produced an increasing eroticization of such bodies in public and mediated spaces; the same is true of men's bodies, but to a much lesser degree. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable increase in discourses on sex and sexuality. The unraveling of the taboo nature of such topics has arguably contributed to positive societal changes, for instance, a dropping rate of teen pregnancy in the United States due to comprehensive sex education (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). However, these

discourses on sex are not presented equally. As Gill pointed out, magazines for young men have discussed sex "through a vocabulary of youthful, unselfconscious pleasure-seeking," while for young women, sex is shown as "requiring constant attention, discipline, self-surveillance, and emotional labor" (2007a, pp. 150-1).

• Sex object to sexual subject: As mentioned previously regarding *Playboy* magazine, women were once shown as sexual objects, characterized by passivity and as recipients of the male gaze. Nowadays, however, this objectifying male gaze and its power have been inverted, such that it is taken on by women in the form of a "self-policing, narcissistic gaze," which may represent "a higher or deeper form of exploitation" because this self-discipline is inherently linked to women's subjectification (Gill, 2007a, pp. 151-2). Women are shown (and show themselves) as actively sexual beings who have chosen this course through their own individuality. Interestingly, though, women who are seemingly entitled to this sexual subjectivity must fit into the prescribed standard of beauty: embodying confident youthfulness, sexiness, and beauty. The alternatives to this sexual subjectification are non-sexuality or prudishness, which are roles available to older, bigger, and less confident women.

• Individualism, choice, and empowerment: Intrinsically tied into neoliberalism is the postfeminist focus on individualism, choice, and empowerment. These ideas act in such a way that experiences and ideologies are personalized, thus ensuring they are depoliticized. Then, while using feminist language and notions of empowerment, feminist concerns in society and politics are refuted as solitary happenstances of individualism and choice. While this focus may encourage a can-do attitude for personal improvement, it also wholly removes social, political, structural, or cultural responsibility from all situations. It is essential to understand that this narrative of individualistic choice is itself constructed in the sociocultural and sociopolitical realm

– if all choices are freely made from individual aspirations, desires, and tastes, then there is no explanation for the overwhelming consistency in the standards and executions of beauty. Despite the dialog of autonomy, media and social norms prove to be essential influencers of sociocultural scripts.

- Self-surveillance and discipline: Interrelated with all of the above is the focus on self-surveillance. In postfeminist media culture, women in particular are encouraged (perhaps required) to monitor and manage all aspects of the self, including grooming, clothing, attitude, the body's figure, and all aspects of femininity. Gill (2007a) noted three particularities of the present time in regard to self-discipline, which are the vast increase in the depth of suggested self-surveillance, the expansion of such surveillance to new areas of life and behavior, and the necessity to focus on psychological aspects of the self. The self is an area of constant work, and the work of women in this regard is meant to seem like fun or pampering, rather than a socially dictated effort.

- Makeover paradigm: This issue refers to the trend of self-improvement, but speaks more specifically to when someone (generally a woman) is so out of touch with who they could be, according to life and beauty standards, that an intervention must take place to revitalize the self. This generally occurs through the advice of professionals in the field, be it love, fashion, beauty, or otherwise. This trend has foremost appeared on reality television shows, which often begin by shaming someone's current life and later applauding their conformity to predefined standards. Interestingly, the individual choice and empowerment of conformity is applauded, despite that fact that the uniqueness in this context appears to have occurred before the makeover intervention; alas, such inconsistency is one of postfeminist media culture's many contradictions.

• Reasserton of sexual difference: In opposition to feminism's quest for equality and Butler's conceptions of constructed gender, postfeminism's reassertion of natural and biological differences between the sexes has become a key feature of gender discussions in media in recent years. This focus stems in part from scientific developments including evolutionary psychology and genetics research, but it is also a straightforward means of explaining how men and women differ without exploring beyond simple surface explanations. Media act as transmitters of these gendered differences, which is often done through expressing behaviors and trends as inevitable or unchangeable, thereby cementing existing gender power relations under the pretext of nature.

• Irony and knowingness: According to Gill, irony is frequently used in postfeminist media as a means of expressing a belief while simultaneously distancing the belief from the speaker. Irony is employed in advertisements, articles, videos, and more, particularly in an atmosphere where being "cool" tends to correlate to a lack of emotional depth. In postfeminist media culture, irony has been used as a means of expressing generally undesirable sentiments, especially anti-feminist, in such a way that they can be excused as non-serious. This approach renders criticism increasingly difficult, as opposition to the irony may be considered as uptight or unreasonable. However, to consider that these sentiments are not just for laughs, or that anyone may take these media depictions seriously, then there is a vast pool of influential media, both online and offline, that is "chillingly misogynist" (Gill, 2007a, p. 160).

As is evident from the above features of postfeminist media culture, much of the focus is on iterations of femininity and feminism, both in media and in Gill's construction of the sensibility. The above points demonstrate how such a focus exacerbates both archaic and progressive ideologies of gender. In response, I assert that a critical eye must also be placed

on contemporary visions of masculinity in order to approach a more complete evaluation of the status of gender in today's media culture, which necessarily exists alongside societal and political developments. In the later part of the 20th century, as masculinity became a topic of research interest itself, rather than the point to which all "others" were compared, so too followed intrigue regarding mediated masculinities. As such, research regarding the position of men in media both historically and contemporaneously has been relatively limited to recent decades. However, during those postfeminist years, many archetypical figures of masculinity have appeared in media, some with more influence and a longer reign, others just as momentary fads. The next section presents four of the most prominent male figures from the postfeminist era of media culture which were chosen for their influence and widespread popularity.

2.3 Postfeminist Masculinities

In the 1980s, a feminist reach for new representations of masculinity grew from the changing sociopolitical atmosphere, where traditional gender roles were being tested and transformed into a seemingly more egalitarian setup (Gill, 2007b). As commercialized interests began to target men and feminism grew a stronger voice, the New Man emerged. This archetype was characterized as "sensitive, caring, and nonsexist," but also as "affluent, narcissistic, and preoccupied with fashion and consumption" (Gill, 2007b, p. 205). The New Man was unafraid of his emotions, and his prevalence in media through the 1980s was thought to signal a move towards the feminist quest of encouraging the acceptability of more feminine pursuits in men. Most significantly, though, the New Man was accused of being inauthentic, particularly in contrast to the New Lad, which Gill suggested as being a reaction against the New Man, feminism, or both (2007b, p. 211). New Man was thought to embody the characteristics of men that were romantically appealing to women, though it was said that it

was simple enough for New Lad to emulate New Mannish behavior in order to romantically associate with a desired woman (Gill, 2003), thereby contributing to claims of New Man's inauthenticity. One influential point in the transition from New Man to New Lad discourses was the prevalence of printed obituaries for the New Man in the 1990s, most of which also announced the birth of the New Lad, thus erasing any doubt about the correlation between these two figures (Gill, 2003; Gill, 2007b). As a softer, more effeminate canon of masculinity gained visibility in 1980s media, the media of the 1990s evoked reactionary opposition; the tension of femininity and masculinity in these figures was brought about by a backlash against societal gains by women and femininity. According to Gill (2003; 2007a; 2007b; 2009b; 2014), the New Lad of the 1990s, on the other hand, claimed to be the antithesis of the New Man, as an "honest, open, and authentic" type of guy (2007b, p. 211). New Lad was presented as emblematic of what men actually were like and "an unashamed celebration of true or authentic masculinity, liberated from the shackles of 'political correctness'" (Gill, 2007a, p. 158).

The emphasis here was particularly on the reassertion of sexual difference: that 'real men' did not want to go shopping or engage with women other than for sex, nor did they have massively muscular bodies and heroic courage. The purportedly authentic New Lad was an avid beer drinker and lazy, and the associated magazines ('lad mags') were marketed to "the man who believes he can do anything if only he wasn't hungover" (Loaded, as cited in Gill, 2009b, p. 7). Lad culture appeared across many media, but it took a strong hold in television, radio, literature, and magazines; regardless of the format, New Lad seemingly held nothing back, particularly the sexualized and "enthusiastically predatory" manner in which women were discussed and depicted (Gill, 2007b, p. 209).

In terms of postfeminism, New Lad addressed feminism while simultaneously vilifying it, which suggested that this honest masculinity expressed the true views of men, specifically

"men who should know better" (Gill, 2007b, p. 209). These ideas were presented with heavy irony, as the knowingness of the New Lad was essential to its characterization, and the irony allowed lad culture to interact with feminist and anti-feminist ideas by presenting sexist and objectifying sentiments as non-serious.

In addition to problematic depictions of women, the New Lad narrative was woven into a complex web of race and class tensions, which irony was employed to diminish. Lad mags appealed to a white working class stereotype of masculinity and, in doing so, projected a negative image of middle-class customs. Alcoholic beverages, sports, women, and sex were especially prevalent in lad discourse. Often, those who worked for the largest lad mags would tout their "working class credentials" and dismiss their higher education backgrounds, yet "they were quick to fall back on middle-class defenses of themselves as intelligent, skilled professionals whenever the magazine was accused of sexism," racism, or homophobia (Gill, 2009b, p. 8). The performative nature of this figure shows how clearly Butler's gender construction claims are applicable: even this purportedly authentic representation of real or natural men is the result of a performance, as was the New Man of the prior decade.

Following shortly after the crux of the New Lad era was another media-based figure of masculinity, the metrosexual: a city-dwelling younger man who was not afraid of his feminine side. During the metrosexual's reign of popular and consumer culture in the mid-1990s through 2004, this figure was characterized as a 21st century urban male trendsetter with a taste for aesthetics who was unafraid to embrace a more feminine side, particularly while shopping and or in concern for his appearance (Flocker, 2003). The word "sexual" in this case connotes something more akin to a gender than a sexual preference or type of sexuality; however, metrosexuals were generally considered to be heterosexual men. The metrosexual had an appreciation for fashion, self-care, fine dining, and culture (Anderson, 2008; Helene Shugart, 2008). Furthermore, young men in the United States reportedly

considered the metrosexual to be a type of man to whom women would be attracted (Pompper, 2010). Interestingly, these descriptors are all largely the same attributes of the New Man, and both the New Man and metrosexual figures share these interests with the early *Playboy* target reader. The glaring difference between these two postfeminist masculinities and the early *Playboy* is the lack of fierce sexual objectification of women, and this change is thought to be a result of second-wave feminism. The metrosexual trend was strong in media everywhere, yet some still believe this figure was less of a refraction of real life and, instead, simply an advertising strategy (Anderson, 2008).

This evaluation of potential inauthenticity in the metrosexual mirrors that of the New Man, and the course of events bears similarities as well. Starting in 2004, the metrosexual found himself confronted by a new foe: the retrosexual. The retrosexual discourse essentially described a longing for a historical sense of manhood, akin to 'returning to men's roots,' in such a way that has been deemed to represent genuine masculinity as the converse of the metrosexual. Katherine Noel Anderson (2008) described the portrayal of this figure as "the cliché strong, virile, hairy, uncouth, homophobic, misogynist man who is a cross between classic icons of the marauding frat boy, the caveman, the football linebacker, and the regular Joe" (2008, p. 5). The retrosexual is linked to a marked renouncement of technology in all of its forms (Peretti, 2004; McKay 2010). While the reasoning for this technophobia is not explicitly denoted, retrosexuals were said to not understand how to use an iPod and rather "build shrines to early 1980s technology…praying for the resurrection of laserdiscs and Xerox" with the sole excuse being "it's retro" (Peretti, 2004).

Several sources (e.g., Lipke & Thomas, 2010; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016) have attributed the popularity of the retrosexual and "toxic masculinity" to the financial crisis of 2008 and the resulting economic anxiety, such that as working men felt the effects of the

recession, their masculinity felt threatened. While these feelings may have been a factor, an article about retrosexuality told a different yet familiar tale:

> Once, men were simply men. But then feminists decided they were chauvinist pigs who didn't spend enough time doing the dishes. So along came the guilt-ridden New Man, swiftly followed by sensitive, moisturizing Metrosexual Man. Of course, women soon missed the whiff of testosterone and were calling for the return of Real Men. (Daily Mail, 2008)

The same article provided a summarized set of very specific behavioral instructions, such as maintaining an uncluttered mind by having only three categories, namely sex, football, and beer. While advocating independent decision-making capabilities for 'real men,' the instructions contradictorily become further specific: a retrosexual maintains three feet of space between his car and the car in front; the correct speed for a retrosexual is 5% above the posted limit; a retrosexual avoids remembering names of other men, but nicknames are permitted on a situation-by-situation basis (Daily Mail Online, 2008). While a retrosexual is "allowed" to be somewhat respectful to women, it again seems as if it is a façade to trick them, especially in pursuit of sex.

Instructions for retrosexuals' dealings with women are as follows:

- Pay on a date, and pay with cash.

- Open doors for women and give pregnant women a seat on a bus because this is chivalrous.

- Cook nothing more complex than prepackaged food. Cooking is a woman's job, but men carve the meat; perfectly.

- Let women talk, but only pretend to listen – they cannot tell the difference.

- Have sex with women, but without emotion.

- Ladies want commitment, real men do not. If a lady mentions commitment, real men leave immediately.

- Televised sports are more important than all women. (Daily Mail Online, 2008).

As both the retrosexual and the New Lad represented similar reactions against feminism and feminine-like masculine figures in media, they each seemed to be emblematic of the same quest for patriarchal dominance, merely manifested in mildly different temporal contexts. The tension of the acceptance of more feminine attributes in men seemed to repeatedly provoke a stronger backlash in another faction of hypermasculinity. The New Lad and retrosexual occupy two strategies of reinstating traditional masculinity in media with the express purpose of preserving sociopolitical patriarchal dominance. The contradictions inherent in postfeminist media culture's presentations of genders rendered it possible for such dominance to continue alongside representations and an acceptance of feminism.

During her research on the metro- and retrosexual figures, Anderson (2008) found a transformation of hegemonic masculinity that aligned with the "popular acceptance and extreme rejection" of the metrosexual figure (p. 2). The resulting retrosexual is a testament to those determinations. However, as evidenced by the tensions of the New Man and New Lad, in addition to very recent developments of new femininities and misogynies, I argue that the inherent contradictions of postfeminist media culture, when reflected into discourses of male figures, manifest in temporally coexisting expressions of a softer and more feminine-like man and a more toxically masculine rhetoric of what "real men" should look like. The aggressively masculine figures tend to gain visibility and popularity as reactions to the more feminized versions. These contradictions have taken place throughout the era of postfeminism, and there are hints of these tensions throughout media of the 20th century. The parts of this dichotomy exist in tandem and propel each other forward to meld into temporally based variations. Two of the most prevalent of these masculinity figures in contemporary

media are the fuckboy and the Instagram Husband, which are presented in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

Gill (2009b; 2014) has advocated for masculinity in postfeminist media to be considered as a sensibility in the same manner as postfeminist media culture in general. Gill (2014) proposed this masculinity sensibility to address how different expressions of masculinity can be present in popular texts at the same time and how these versions influence one another to craft an overall atmosphere of contemporary masculinity. In this way, it is possible to consider media representations of masculinity in conjuncture with experiences of actual men in the world and to acknowledge the direct links between culture, media, and men. Whereas Gill crafted this sensibility based on the New Lad and this figure's evolution through media, I prefer to view mediated masculinity more broadly in order to encompass the contradictions and tensions among temporally coexisting figures. This also allows for societal developments to be taken into consideration without extensive manipulation of the 1980s laddishness, but still maintains attention to the significant aspects the New Lad to craft the atmosphere of masculinity in media. In the same manner as Gill (2009b) and Tyler (2008), I use the term "figure" in regard to these masculinities to express how historical and cultural influences are manipulated into public representations that is "always expressive of an underlying crisis or anxiety" (Tyler, 2008, p. 18).

2.4 Post-Postfeminism

Postfeminist media culture has experienced the ebbs and flows of time, resulting in the appearance and disappearance of many phenomena. As a sensibility for analysis, postfeminist media culture has recently been questioned for its continued validity due to a resurgence of media attention, discussion, and support of feminism. Celebrities, both male and female, have now broadly and unabashedly proclaimed themselves to be feminists, and "feminist" has now

become a profitable buzzword, which means that a political movement has been

commodified (Sarah Banet-Weiser, 2015; Gill, 2016). Both the 44th President of the United

States and Beyoncé, the celebrity queen of the moment, have proclaimed themselves to be

feminists, and combined with an increase of feminist campaigns and attention to women's

representation in business and politics (among others), there is certainly a development of

interest in feminist discourses, particularly in media (Gill, 2016).

As previously noted, feminism had been vilified in such a way that the "post" in

postfeminism refers to an understanding of feminism that is simultaneously assumed and

dismissed. The tensions between feminist, pre-feminist, and anti-feminist dialogues that

coexist and interact in popular media seem, superficially, somewhat incompatible with the

recent resurgence of feminist visibilities in which claiming oneself to be a feminist has

become profitable as well as "stylish, successful, and youthfully hip" (Gill, 2016, p. 610). In

this way, the shift of recent media back towards claims of feminism seems to be a turn

towards something like post-postfeminism. In repudiation of these claims, Gill (2016)

explained how these new feminist discourses are more closely related to postfeminism than

previous waves of feminism, particularly in the focus on individuality and choice as the

primary determiner of female empowerment.

The current period is marked by a purported new generation of feminism, which has

little connection with the sociopolitical activism of past feminisms. As Gill (2016) noted, this

feminism is almost synonymous with merely being a woman; however, it can seemingly be

ascribed only to those who are perceived as youthful and stylish. This observation bears

significant resemblance to conceptions of femininity as a bodily property that is available

only to young, sexy, and fit women. Furthermore, today's feminism places a strong

importance on individual choice and empowerment. In particular, instances of sexism or

misogyny are seen as isolated incidents that can be quelled with effort to "work on the self"

rather than affect change from the consequences of a system of inequality, thereby having the effect of depoliticizing personal experiences (Gill, 2016, p. 617). Gill noted the deep contradiction here in which "feminism" begins to lose its meaning: its use is celebrated, "yet in a way that does not necessarily pose any kind of challenge to existing social relations," which Gill found problematic (2016, p. 619). While new feminisms have little political foundation and tend more towards a commodified understanding, these visibilities are not entirely baseless. They are specifically important when considered in conjuncture with the similar rise in popular misogynies, further clouding the contradictions of present-day media culture. Gill explained the current moment:

> The situation seems too complicated for such singular narratives [of linear progress or regress]: for every uplifting account of feminist activism, there is another of misogyny; for every feminist "win," an out-pouring of hate, ranging from sexual harassment to death threats against those involved; for every instance of feminist solidarity, another of vicious trolling. (2016, p. 613)

Sarah Banet-Weiser (2015), who deemed these new tensions "popular feminism" and "popular misogyny," has expanded on the interplay of these notions. These new misogynies have not yet been extensively studied, but they likely are manifested in today's world differently than previous trends of misogyny, such as how new feminism has adopted and adapted previous iterations. One significant point is how popular misogyny is presented as a *normative reaction,* to which Banet-Weiser (2015) warned, "Popular feminism is more and more proudly waving its flag as feminist, while popular misogyny disguises itself as 'ethics' or 'equality.'" Importantly, she considered the rise of popular misogyny to have been at least partially influenced by technological advances. The proliferation of mobile internet technologies has resulted in more plentiful online spaces with more participants and

opportunities to engage. The next section addresses these developments in terms of online spaces, social networking sites, and digital media as they relate to gender expressions.

2.5 Gender in Social Media

While it was suggested at the dawn of the digital era that online spaces could amount to the great equalizer of many types of inequalities (Marwick, 2013b), as Web 2.0 and its practices came to govern online media, various other priorities seemed to overtake the prospect of purely democratic usages of the internet. Web 2.0 is the common name for online culture and its usages after some years of transformation from what is now called Web 1.0. Web 2.0 is characterized by the expansion of practices in online spaces, the shift to user-generated content, the proliferation of social networking sites (that can facilitate user-generated content), usage of "the cloud," the push for online-facilitated business, and the emergence of increased media visibility of average people, particularly on the internet (Hosch, 2017).

Technology's rapid advancements in the past quarter of a century have crafted vast new interactions and abilities, many of which are still not fully understood. The online spaces that have been created are seemingly infinite, and all have their own ever-shifting atmospheres and exchanges. Such spaces have changed human interaction and altered how we as humans view ourselves; these spaces allow people to "invent unique methods of telling stories, forming identities, and remembering" (Flanagan, 2000, p. 75). There are online platforms for photo sharing, private conversations with people across the world, very public pronouncements of intimate news, and viewings of Earth as if watching from outer space. Such possibilities are novel in their specifics, but generally, the online world is extraordinarily shaped by the offline world; gender identity is no exception. As Julia Cook and Reza Hasmath (2014) noted, computer-mediated communication has the potential to "reflect and reinforce gender relations observed in [face-to-face] interaction and facilitate

performances of gender that contest a binary understanding" (p. 978). These observations are in no way novel, but the multitude of possibilities and the scale on which these notions can occur now online are staggering, and the potential repercussions in both the on- and offline arenas are important to consider. Alice Marwick's (2013b) conception of online gender agreed with Cook and Hasmath, as she said, "Gender is produced and re-produced in social media both by software and the user interaction that takes place online" (p. 3). Addressing the dashed hopes of cyber-feminists of years past, Marwick contended that the internet has not provided the desired societal advances of gender thinking due to several reasons, including social media's concern to maintain authentic online identities that correspond to offline constructions, the pervasiveness of structural heterosexism online, and technological advancements, particularly into Web 2.0. In this way, in certain environments both offline and online, traditionally masculine or feminine behaviors are encouraged or discouraged for men and women, thus perpetuating structural issues from the offline world in the online sphere (ibid). Even further, Marwick concurred with Banet-Weiser's (2015) assertion that internet technologies not only maintain, but indeed produce, gender as it is known today (2013b, p. 8).

Social media are especially influential in this regard, particularly for their identity-related aspects. There are a multitude of ways in which gender can be expressed online, in social networking sites, and on mobile applications (apps). While the most significant of these manners of gender and identity expression are textual stylings, photographs, and videos, each piece of digital information is available to be used to interpret someone's identity (Marwick, 2013c). In addition, just as offline identity is not one singular attribute at a time, so too does online identity manifest in a unification of many factors, including age, location, race, income, or personal background (ibid).

The ability for the layperson to create content that is accessible to all internet users, interact with others online, and thus shape online spaces through this creation and communication (such as in the free culture that has been eschewed by the likes of YouTube and Twitter) has been suggested as the cornerstone of contemporary media culture. However, despite its utopic presentation, "at its best, this culture of memes, mashups, and creative political activism allows for civic engagement and fun creative acts. But while this culture may resist dominant paradigms of economics, ownership, or intellectual property, it often hews to conventionally sexist tropes" (Marwick, 2013b, p. 12). In this way, sexism has become normalized online, and while online spaces are conducive to facilitating the conjoining of likeminded individuals or groups, internet technologies have undoubtedly contributed to the contradictions of popular feminism and popular misogyny online today.

3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis was employed to conduct this research. This methodology is based on Michel Foucault's (1978) conceptualizations of discourse, particularly in terms of how discourse in entrenched in power, truth, and knowledge. While Foucault himself did not craft a specific methodology, his ideas have been extensively interpreted and adapted to fit social research. This methodology begins with Foucault's evaluation of discourses. Discourses should be thought of in conjuncture with social practices. These practices interact with one another and thus guide social norms and actions. In this way, discourses have power over human action, reaction, and interaction, and also represent power on all levels. Sara Mills (1997) further qualified the notion of discourse: "A discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances or sentences, statements that are enacted within a social context, which are determined by that social context and which contribute to the way that social context continues its existence" (p. 11). Rather than being concerned with what is definitively considered truth, the acknowledgement of the power of discourses in social contexts offers the means of interpreting society through how discourses shape ideologies and structures of power (Gill, 2009a).

Discourses shift over time but generally remain comprehensible to their immediate predecessors. Because discourses shape perceptions of reality, society, and identity (Mills, 1997), their traces logically are visible through at least the duration of a generation, which is particularly relevant to existing generational distinctions (or "waves") of feminism (Gill, 2016) and, more generally, notions of womanhood and femininity. Mills utilized examples of Victorian notions of acceptable femininity and, separately, the Women's Movement of the 20th century to illustrate historical discourses of gender. In terms of the Victorian era, womanhood was associated with humility, sympathy, and selflessness, the associated gestures and behaviors of which were socially and institutionally sanctioned as the discourse

of femininity or "the parameters within which middle-class women could work out their own sense of identity" (Mills, 1997, p. 62). In all discourses, the parameters for acceptable behaviors are often legitimized through broader institutions, such as religious groups or governmental bodies. Institutional recognition of discourses is significant as a very clear association to power dynamics and results in the normalization of certain social actions. In terms of the later Women's Movement, as Mills noted, institutional power also came to incorporate media representations, especially the impact of displaying stereotypes.

Regarding critical discourse analysis, the aim is to identify the patterns in discourses to classify systems of power, determine how such power is ascribed through certain practices, and recognize normative ideas to ultimately address or affect social change (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). The initial challenge of discourse analysis for research lies in the interactions of the specific discourses themselves. In each mode of representation, various discourses exist and struggle to assert their own authority as a primary truth; texts (and other semiotic representations, such as videos) assist in the construction of discourses and also act as the location of power struggles (Mills, 1997; Gill, 2009a; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

As both Mills (1997) and Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) acknowledged, the point of departure for discourse analysis is the striking similarities among utterances or actions within a certain arena when indeed, hypothetically, there are infinite possibilities that could stem from individuals in any situation. However, despite these seemingly limitless options, conspicuous resemblances of social actions or statements persist, which is due to how discourses shape society and identity through dictating appropriate behaviors.

From the data acquired, a researcher must address the given patterns and interpret how these patterns interact with what is overall encouraged or discouraged by relevant discourses within the appropriate social context (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Within critical discourse analysis, five commonalities should be practiced and visible and are summarized as follows:

1. The shaping of processes and structures in society or culture is partially linguistic-discursive; this includes written, verbal, and image-based material.

2. Discourse is constitutive of society and constituted by other societal systems.

3. Objects of study must be analyzed within their corresponding social environment.

4. Discourse functions ideologically.

5. The analysis of discourse must produce critical research to address existing systems of power (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 61-64).

Wodak and Meyer (2009) emphasized the importance of utilizing discourse analysis to interpret and understand the myriad effects of new media, particularly because, recently, "concepts of space and time have changed, and these changes interact in dialectical ways with new modes and genres of communication" (p. 11). To this end, utilizing discourse analysis with all types of textual or intertextual objects is essential because such representations are based on real-world actions of real-life people (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This thesis adopts a "critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5) with the understanding that such knowledge constitutes discourses that construct contemporarily acceptable expressions of gender, specifically in relation to online media in the Anglo-American world.

This analysis is feminist insofar as it addresses power relations within contemporary discourses of masculinity and femininity with the purpose of exposing systemic gender inequalities; such inequalities point to a continued need for feminism in an era characterized by postfeminism. Furthermore, this thesis explores the evolution of online communications of gender that both perpetuate and reconfigure traditional notions of misogyny and heterosexism.

For the purpose of this thesis, several styles of media were considered for analysis. Sources were primarily gathered through simple web searches of the titles of the target cases

(i.e., "fuckboy" and its spelling variations and "Instagram Husband"). The suggestions were addressed in order of appearance in the search results, particularly because this approach denotes some amount of popularity hierarchy; since the widespread visibility of these two figures is essential for their societal relevance as discourses of masculinity, this course of action was appropriate. The majority of results were journalistic or blog-like written articles. The identification of several initial sources among these resulted in further expanding the data pool through the hyperlinks in these articles to references or suggested pages. Additionally, several videos were essential to the research for this thesis. These videos were viewed through YouTube, and thus, by nature of the platform, each viewed video featured links to related suggestions on the webpage, thereby offering additional data sources. Relevant sources were collected and vetted until data saturation, or when sources seemed to provide no new information. Further and more specific information about the data sources and pattern of data collection is discussed in the chapter for each respective case study.

4 Fuckboy

4.1 The Generation of Fuckboys

"Welcome to the generation of fuckbois," envisioned a *Thought Catalog* article (Ruchetto, 2015) as it invited readers into discussion of this "new species" of 21st century man. Putting aside the unlikely event of a *homo fuckboi* discovery, this text offers valuable depictions of how heterosexual dating culture is addressed in present-day media. These discussions further point to broader notions of the current state of gender politics in Western (and particularly Anglo-American) society. The term "fuckboy" (alternatively spelled "fuckboi" or "fuccboi") has been suggested to be the first sexualized insult for men (akin to "slut" or "whore" for women), and most analyses point to this figure as an irresponsible, misogynistic, and sex-obsessed man with a lack of social skills. The contemporaneous nature of fuckboy is evidenced by the heavy reliance on social and digital media practices to describe his inherent characterization (see Figure 3). Interestingly, though, the fuckboy is presented an inescapable, natural, and even somehow desirable fellow in dating life: "This type of guy clearly has an allure since so many women continually fall for him" (Escandon, 2017).

While these exposés on young adult masculinity offer everything from identifying characteristics of the fuckboy (Terblanche, 2015; Escandon, 2017) to appropriate responses to fuckboy behavior (Spagnolo & Gerstein, 2015; Lakshmin, 2016) and angered responses to the term's lexical evolution (Brown, 2015), it is difficult to pin down an exact definition of the term. This difficulty is also related to the vastness of the discourse. Regardless, the newly minted slur for young men seems only to be growing in popularity and mystique.

This chapter presents the evolution of the term "fuckboy" as it has been used to characterize a figure of contemporary masculinity. I aim to situate the overall themes of fuckboy masculinity in the context of the aforementioned postfeminist media culture sensibility and the renewed visibilities of feminism and misogyny. In particular, I investigate

the mediated depictions of the fuckboy as it reacts to and interacts with the femininity and masculinity embedded in prior mediated discourses of masculinity and dating in terms of how both men and women are portrayed and what behaviors are deemed acceptable and why.
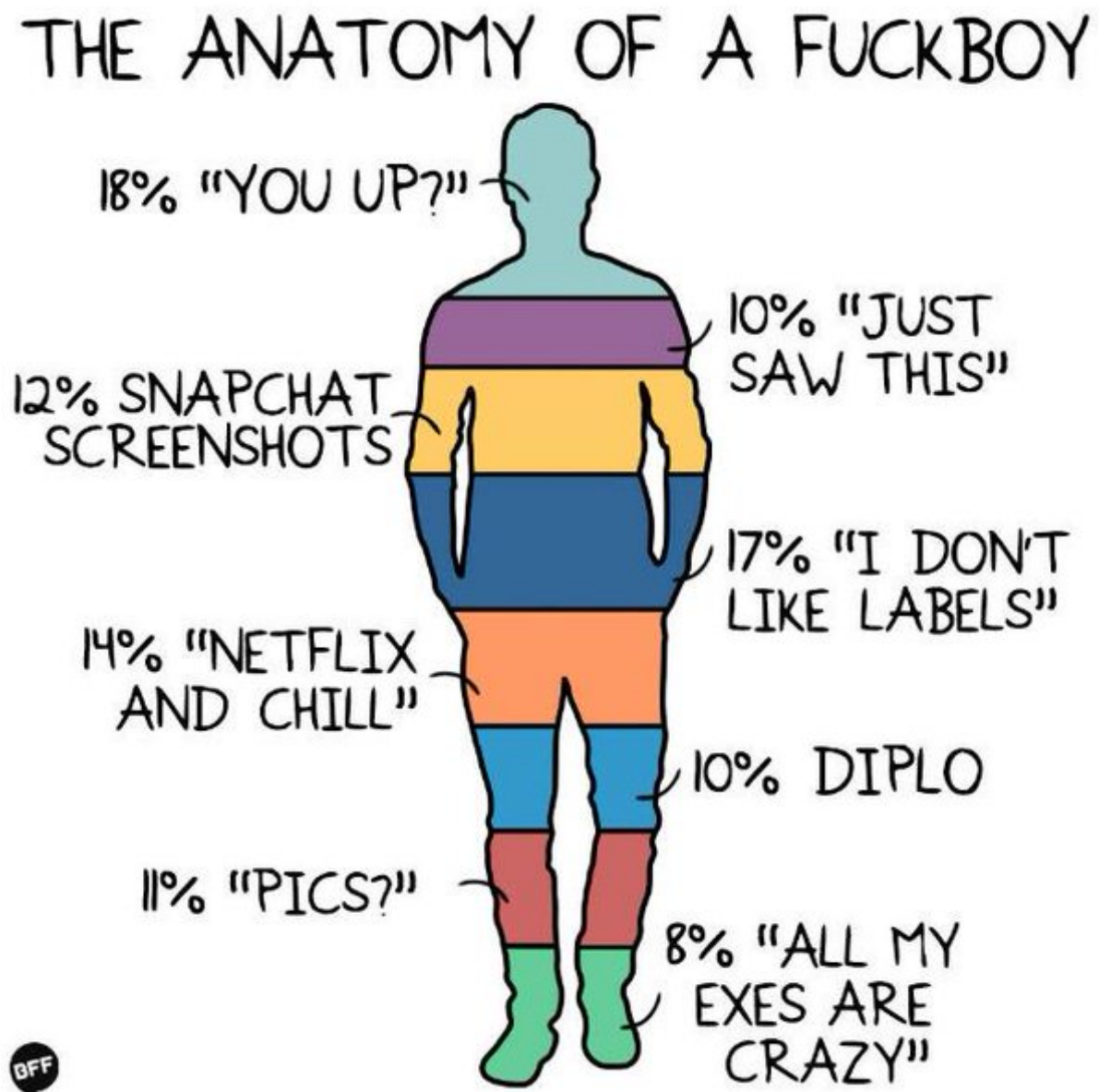
THE ANATOMY OF A FUCKBOY

18% "YOU UP?"

10% "JUST SAW THIS"

12% SNAPCHAT SCREENSHOTS

17% "I DON'T LIKE LABELS"

14% "NETFLIX AND CHILL"

10% DIPLO

11% "PICS?"

8% "ALL MY EXES ARE CRAZY"

BFF

Figure 3 Anatomy of a fuckboy with social media and popular culture references.
Note. Reprinted from Escandon, G. (2016, July 11). Your official fuckboi field guide: How to identify them in the wild. Retrieved from http://www.hercampus.com/love/dating/your-official-fuckboi-field-guide-how-identify-them-wild

In terms of the fuckboy, such relations are primarily in regard to heterosexual dating and "hookup" culture, which refers to casual sexual encounters. My aim in this pursuit is to address the rise in popularity of the fuckboy while determining how and why the fuckboy is presented as an inevitable misstep and derided character yet still somehow desirable. I also

address the discourses surrounding the aspects of digital and social media use of the fuckboy, which both represent and produce offline and online behaviors for the men and women involved in this discourse. The case of the fuckboy further explains how gender is perceived within the context of increased feminist and misogynist discourses in the time of vast digital media dominance.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

4.2.1 Sex advice and mediated intimacy

As postfeminist contradictions of masculinity abounded throughout the decades, media depictions of femininity likewise developed. To delve into the overall themes of postfeminist media culture, particularly relevant to this case is the sexualization of women and focus on management of the self and relationships. While there are many examples of how heterosexual dating has been addressed in media, a significant portion of the online fuckboy-related media bears similarities to how magazines previously depicted relationship and sex advice. Since online media have contributed to a decline in print publications, the popularity of these online resources can be considered as comparable to that of magazines in the 1990s and early 2000s. In Rosalind Gill's (2009a) discourse analysis of sex and relationship advice in a British women's magazine, she found many contradictory sentiments regarding what was expected of women and men in heterosexual dating culture, which is relevant to online articles of a similar nature.

First, the magazine advice had a strong focus on heterosexual sex, which is not surprising when viewed from a postfeminist lens. The discussions of sex in the magazine indeed encouraged women to actively explore their sexual subjectivities and their selves; however, this was suggested on the condition that the goal was to "construct oneself as a subject closely resembling the heterosexual male fantasy found in pornography" (Gill, 2007a,

p. 152). Gill (2009a) surmised that young women in Western society were supposed to have vast knowledge and experience in sexual behavior, and this is matched only by the limitless sexual desire of men. At the same time, women were meant to manage their emotional relationships and were encouraged to determine the precise characteristics which they wanted in a romantic partner. Finding someone with each of these qualities was meant to be attainable if the women put in enough time, thought, and work. Additionally, women were encouraged to analyzed men's actions and manipulate their reactions accordingly. Importantly, working to improve the self was encouraged, and interacting with potential partners who are deemed unsuitable was suggested to be the perfect way to improve the self and practice relationship techniques (Gill, 2009a, p. 354).

The advice in the magazine proposed that women be calculated and always attentive in their interactions with male partners to psychologically manipulate men into being romantically or sexually interested in them. Gill (2009a) said of the advice, "Men's needs must be recognized, perhaps even anticipated and pre-empted, by women, while women must silence their needs if they wish to win male approval" (p. 365). This produces a markedly disproportionate delegation of power and work in heterosexual dating advice. Throughout this discourse, men are presented as "benign and lovable" yet entirely focused on sex (Gill, 2009a, p. 363), but this libidinous presentation is suggested to be just the way that men naturally are, such as in the retrosexual or New Lad discourses.

On the other hand, magazines aimed toward men, particularly the 'lad mags' that blossomed in the 1990s and early 2000s geared toward the New Lad figure, presented sex as a site of playfulness and fun for men (Gill, 2007a). As Michael Kimmel said of the personification of the New Lad figure, "I drink a lot, take recreational drugs, don't care about much except being clever" (as cited in Gill, 2014). As the converse of sex advice for young women, young men were told to view sex as a persistent goal and as a natural expression of

manliness (Gill, 2009b). Gill (2007b) has expressed that these magazines showed masculinity "in terms of playfulness, flight from responsibility, detached and uninhibited pleasure-seeking, and the consumption of women's bodies" (p. 217). Gill has also argued that lad culture, as based on this definition of masculinity, can be viewed as a more comprehensive arena of media, including books and films aimed toward these young men in the 1990s and early 2000s. Beyond that, Gill and Garcia-Favaro (2016) claimed that lad culture has permeated society beyond the fringes, including through "universities, political discourse, workplaces, popular fiction and film, news media, television comedy, and many more" (p. 393). Lad culture was appeared in films and books, known as "lad lit" and "lad flicks" respectively (Gill, 2009b; Hansen-Miller & Gill, 2011). It was also criticized for its role in the normalization of female sexual objectification and sexual harassment, particularly on college campuses (Gill, 2014).

In a discussion of the emergence of the films aimed toward men that Hansen-Miller and Gill (2011) call lad flicks, Negra (2006) suggested that the men expressed in these trending films of the early 2000s was a postfeminist creation. She hypothesized that the much-visible "deficient/dysfunctional single femininity is now increasingly matched by deficient/dysfunctional single masculinity in a number of high-profile films and television series" (Negra, 2006). Through the expansion of lad culture into other areas of life, images of the lads splintered into sub-genres, including one that Hansen-Miller and Gill (2011) have referred to as the "player" variety. This depiction, often shown in lad flicks from the early 2000s, maintains the white, heterosexual, and fallible masculinity of the hedonistic New Lad, though the player variety is often shown as slightly more affluent and having renounced love and monogamy (Hansen-Miller & Gill, 2011). Within these films and books, the player is often spurred to action to grow up and accept responsibility for himself and his life, and this is often provoked by a woman in his life who is shown to be responsible, mature, and ready

for long-term monogamous intimacy. The player lifestyle in this genre is represented as a result of immaturity and some childhood trauma, and in the end, the labor of the successful woman is the cure. The genre is characterized by "the gleeful celebration of laddish pursuits," particularly the sexual presence of women, in such a way that "the humor of these films derives from what they depict as the juvenile nature of culturally identifiable masculine values and ideals" (Hansen-Miller & Gill, 2011). In other words, men's misbehavior is the crux of hilarity, particularly because it is meant to be an authentic and natural expression of manhood.

The focus in lad lit and lad flicks on gratuitous sex, particularly when it involves manipulation or strategy, exhibits men as naturally predatory to women, and while the characters apologize for their poor behavior, it is excused as honesty and an authentic representation of what all men do (Gill, 2014). This characterization has the effect of normalizing such misogyny and further provides suggestions of appropriate actions in heterosexual relationships. Gill (2014) has argued that these postfeminist media depictions of romance are the most comprehensive and widespread expressions of contemporary heterosexual dating culture. However, dating culture has adapted to the technological and sociological transformations of the online world. Online dating websites and, more recently, mobile dating apps have proliferated, thus increasing the available spaces which are capable of depicting constructions of contemporary heterosexual relations. The online nature of these interactions means that there is the potential to have documented evidence of how dating is approached, which is an essential part of the fuckboy discourse. The next section presents how online media and heterosexual dating have coincided.

4.2.2 Tinder fuckboys

One dating-centric space that has become widely popular is the mobile app Tinder. Tinder is mostly based on location, so potential matches are typically within a certain radius from one another, which makes it possible for immediate interaction if the players so choose. The app is based on users swiping right or left on profiles to indicate if they find the person attractive or not, respectively. If two users swipe right on each other, then they match, which opens the possibility to exchange text messages through the app. Also because of this, Tinder has become enmeshed with hookup culture, which is particularly popular on college campuses and refers to the broad quest for casual sexual relationships among young adults (Hess & Flores, 2016).

Due to the documented nature of the textual interactions on the app, it has become possible and popular to document interactions, often through taking a screenshot, and even re-contextualize these seemingly private conversations in other spaces online. One such way this has been done is *Tinder Nightmares*, an Instagram page that is dedicated to showing poor attempts by men to engage with women on the app. These *Nightmares* are typically overtly sexual sentiments sent by men, sometimes offensive, and often heterosexist, and the responses from women tend to be funny and witty. In their analysis of the *Tinder Nightmares* Instagram page, Hess and Flores (2016) noted the counter-disciplinary function of this page, where the scripts for online dating interactions are made visible and then called into question by the women who view these behaviors as undesirable. This type of action is what Jane (2016) called "feminist digilantism," which is a strategy that has been crafted by women to combat sexism and misogyny online by "calling out" bad behavior. In the constructions of gender on the Tinder app, offline dating norms are often followed and then adapted to the online space such that mediated interactions become a blend of existing scripts and online improvisation (Hess & Flores, 2016).

Hess and Flores (2016) inferred that Tinder is seen as a competitive space, thus men on the app may "feel pressure to engage in certain articulations of toxic masculinity that aid in establishing their power over women," including sexually aggressive behaviors that aim to maintain women's inferiority in online spaces (Hess & Flores, 2016, p. 4). These behaviors are often documented and then shamed on the *Tinder Nightmares* page, which further challenges dating discourses, as men are shown what is considered by women to be bad behavior that is based on existing traditions, while women are presented with scripts for addressing toxic masculinity in online intimate environments. One such counter-disciplinary reaction to these lewd messages and toxic masculinity as a whole on the Instagram page is to call these individuals 'creeps,' 'vulgar,' 'fuckboys,' or 'assholes' (Hess & Flores, 2016, p. 8). Such labels and counter-discipline suggest updated scripts for Tinder, thus showing how to successfully perform on the app (or not) and in the broader online dating discourses. In this way, women have been able to challenge toxic masculinity and affect new scripts for online dating (Hess & Flores, 2016). Because of the degree to which these scripts are circulated, Hess and Flores hypothesized that "for men who adhere to hypermasculine and heterosexist codes, it appears that the dream of successfully hooking up with women through these performances is over" (p. 15). Sadly, though, this sentiment seems to be a bit preliminarily hopeful. One reason for this evaluation is the aforementioned coexisting tensions of popular feminism and popular misogyny. As described by Banet-Weiser (2015), just as popular feminism can have somewhat legitimately feminist results, the rise of popular misogyny can affect more organized opportunities to target women and women's rights. As Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) found, two such examples of this misogyny are men's rights groups and the seduction community of pick-up artists. Rachel O'Neill (2015) conducted ethnographic research with the latter example, and she discovered that the men she studied were primarily concerned with improving their casual sex "game" (1.3) and, in doing so, treated casual sex

as a commodity controlled by women. Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) equated the anti-feminist sentiments of this community in part to unfulfilled male entitlement. As I show in the next section, despite the disciplinary function of the word 'fuckboy,' the discourse of such toxic masculinity still suggests that fuckboy masculinity is desirable, attractive, and inevitable.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 The fuckboy's evolution

The fuckboy has infiltrated online culture. This has perhaps been exacerbated by the novelty of the word, as it was seemingly introduced only within the last 15 years, but there are many factors that contribute to why the popularity of this phrase has proliferated recently, which I explain below. Media were gathered through internet searches for relevant keywords (in particular, "fuckboy," "fuckboi," and "fuccboi"), and videos were often acquired through snowballing from the YouTube platform's suggestions of what to view next. For the purpose of this analysis, 23 written articles were examined alongside 10 video files, all of which directly referenced the fuckboy and had their own specific definition of this figure. Of the 23 articles, most involved some personalized anecdotal accounts of fuckboys which were used to create lists of identifying features and further categorizations of fuckboy types (e.g., King & Ro, 2015; King & Parker, 2015; Complex, 2015; Holt, 2017); two such types can be seen in Figures 4 and 5. Many of the written articles disputed the definition of the term from prior articles, and thus data were gathered through this web of references and disputes. Indeed, Brogan (2015) exemplified this contention, "Everyone knows what *fuckboy* means. And no one knows what *fuckboy* means." Throughout the varying definitions, examples, suggestions, and warnings in regard to the fuckboy, three ideas remain generally consistent: 1) fuckboys act in fuckboy ways through their use of social media, 2) it is shameful to act like a fuckboy,

and 3) fuckboys are an unavoidable aspect of contemporary heterosexual dating life. The collected media depictions of the fuckboy create a composite image of this multifaceted and disputed character. Fuckboy-related media largely fall into two categories (1 and 2), though there are an additional two lesser categories (3 and 4) that are equally as important to this research:

1. Men appealing to an assumed audience of actual fuckboys and providing tips on how not to be a fuckboy. These are generally comedic parodies of supposed fuckboy behavior, and thus media consumers are meant to believe that these media creators are themselves definitively not fuckboys.

2. Women appealing to an assumed female audience regarding how to identify a fuckboy, how to avoid a fuckboy, what should be done if a fuckboy is discovered, and justifications for engaging with a known fuckboy.

3. Non-gendered discussions of the linguistic history of the word which claim that the broadly presented understanding of the meaning of "fuckboy" is incorrect.

4. Male defenses of the practices of fuckboys.

In terms of the third category of fuckboy media, the specific history of the name is somewhat unclear. Most articles which discuss the phrase's origin point to two beginnings: hip-hop culture and the 2002 song "Boy Boy" by Cam'ron (2002) or as prison slang referring to the male victims of prison rape (Bergado, 2015; Boboltz, 2015; Brogan, 2015; Stevenson, 2015). Both histories seem equally accepted, though tangible evidence of prison usage is lacking. So, while I do not discount this claim of origin, it is excluded from continued discussion in this analysis; future and further research may seek to examine if such a link exists between these threads of history and, if so, how and why. On the other hand, there is more concrete evidence of the history of the use of "fuckboy" in hip-hop and Black culture, as Brown (2015) has stressed. Relevant lyrics from this song by Cam'ron follow:

Oh this cat over front? Fuck boy, boy

He keep that shit up…fucking drop boy, boy (Cam'ron, 2002)

This snippet suggests a negative attitude toward the "fuck boy" in question. It seems clear that this male figure has partaken in undesirable actions and, should he continue, Cam'ron has implied that it is best to "drop" him, or discontinue relations. This seems to be an early example of the first category of current fuckboy-related media in which men appeal to other men to stop acting in these fuckboyish ways.

2. The accidental fuckboy:

Figure 4 An example of one 'type' of fuckboy.
Note. Reprinted from Stopera, D. (2015, September 25). 19 People who have reached peak fuckboy. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/daves4/peak-f-boy?utm_term=. ehwQDRa3d#.oo6P OykeE

The timing of the Cam'ron's 2002 song is likely related to the first mention of fuckboy on UrbanDictionary.com, the internet's guide to slang. The accompanying definition of the 2004 entry is as follows: "a person who is a weak ass pussy that ain't bout [*sic*] shit." With 741 submissions on Urban Dictionary at the time of this writing, "fuckboy" has become one of the most popular (and contested) slang words of the past five years. Brown (2015) contended that current popular definitions of fuckboy represent an appropriation and misrepresentation of Black culture, which may very well be true. However, there still remains the question: if fuckboy started out in Black hip-hop culture as a lame guy, how did it now come to now refer to "a (usually straight, white) dude embodying something akin to the 'man whore' label, mashed up with some 'basic' qualities and a light-to-heavy sprinkling of misogyny" (Boboltz, 2015)?

From 2002 to now, as previously mentioned, gender politics in media have adopted an increasing focus on new feminist visibilities. As the use of "fuckboy" proliferated, popular feminism grew in conjuncture with popular misogyny, meaning that these notions, however contradictory they are, arose simultaneously and amidst interaction. Killer Mike, another popular rapper who is linked to the rise of the fuckboy in hip-hop culture, has been quoted as saying, "You can identify fuckboys…because they are always doing fuck shit. Just the dumbest, weirdest, lamest possible shit ever" (as cited in Brogan, 2015). It is likely that the original vague definition of general lameness developed into womanizing behavior in intimate relations and dating because fuckboys are "the worst kind of guy, or at least one who represents the worst trends of the present moment" (Brogan, 2015). At the present moment, popular feminism has likely rendered mistreatment of women to be one of the worst trends of the moment, particularly because popular misogyny has risen at the same time. While popular misogyny has been linked the pick-up artistry's quest for casual sex and the seduction community's support of fuckboys (Castillo, 2017), popular feminism may have adapted these

practices to be villainous. Furthermore, it can be speculated that lad flicks problematized young, white, male, heterosexual promiscuity, and fuckboy progressed this discourse to the online social media world. This shift could have been a result of the trend that Marwick (2013b) discovered regarding technology being suited to its creators, which suggests that since young white heterosexual men invented these online spaces, these spaces are more prone to expressing their visibility.

4.3.2 The fuckboy online

Since the fuckboy was appropriated and re-contextualized into mainstream media, all definitions of this figure include characteristics of social media usage in relation to the pursuit of intimate or sexual relations with women. This is a key element of the fuckboy, particularly because of the relevant media's overwhelming concurrence regarding this facet of the fuckboy. Below, I highlight the main platforms which appear in the fuckboys discourse with a brief description of how media designate fuckboys' use of each site.

Snapchat: This mobile platform's affordances allow communication through short-lived text or photo messages that disappear after viewing, and the ephemeral nature of the app lends to its use being associated with 'sexting' (sending sexually explicit messages or photos) and secrecy. The fuckboy is said to often or exclusively communicate on Snapchat, which is linked to his lack of commitment and the possibility that he may be using the app to secretly engage with more than one woman (Dakota, 2015; Amaral, 2016; Jerry Studios, 2016; Moreau, 2017).

- Tinder: As mentioned previously in regard to *Tinder Nightmares*, Tinder is a mobile dating app that allows (typically) nearby users to assess each other's attractiveness based on a user-generated profile that can include photos and text, and if two users are mutually attracted, they are able to send direct text messages through the platform.

Tinder is often associated with hookup culture and casual sexual encounters due to the geographical proximity of users and is suggested to be the favorite app of fuckboys. This is especially pertinent because Tinder allows each user to be in direct communication with many potential partners at the same time (Dakota, 2015; Sales, 2015; Amaral, 2016; Jerry Studios, 2016; Lavalle, 2017; Corley, n.d.).

- Instagram: The most common fuckboy uses of Instagram are posting shirtless selfies, indiscriminately liking or commenting on photos of attractive women, and utilizing the direct message function to privately communicate with attractive women (Dakota, 2015; Jerry Studios, 2016; SimpleSexyStupid, 2016; Holt, 2017).

- LinkedIn: This is an app used for professional networking and thus features less often in the fuckboy world. It does, however, sometimes appear in the context of fuckboys adding women as connections on LinkedIn after they have hooked up with and 'ghosted' (i.e., ceased communication with) the women (Amaral, 2016; Lavalle, 2017).

Additionally, there are several habits of the fuckboy that are inherently relevant to social media or the digital era but are not necessarily specific to one platform. First, fuckboys are notorious for their use of direct message affordances, which include general text messages or private message features that appear on most popular platforms, including all of the above-mentioned ones; this is often called "sliding into DMs" (direct messages). This practice usually involves sending sexually based messages similarly to how this Hess and Flores (2016) described this happenstance on Tinder (see Figure 5). Fuckboys are said to ghost women by ignoring such direct messages, particularly after they have already engaged in sexual interactions, and they are also known for sending late-night messages to women in hopes of sex (Amaral, 2016; Jerry Studios, 2016; Holt, 2017; Lavalle, 2017). Some of such messages fall into the category of asking if women want to "Netflix and chill," which is

understood as a euphemism for sex (Terblanche, 2015; Jerry Studios, 2016). Furthermore, fuckboys frequently request that women send nude photos of themselves (Holt, 2017; SimpleSexyStupid, 2016; Lavalle, 2017; Corley, n.d.), and they are also said to send unsolicited photos of their own genitalia (often called "dick pics") or shirtless selfies to women (Lavalle, 2017; Corley, n.d.; Dakota, 2015).
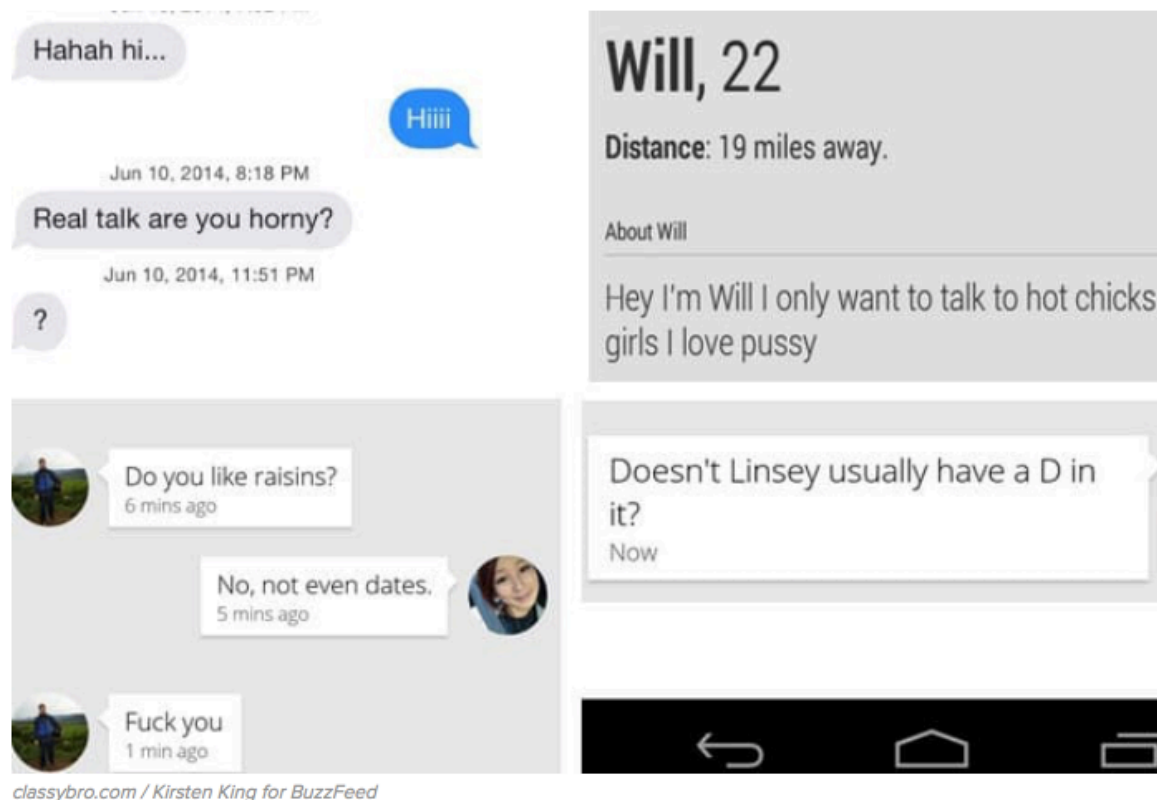

Figure 5 Examples of fuckboys who do not aim to garner a long-term relationship from these text interactions.
Note. Reprinted from King, K., & Parker, L. (2015, February 12). 12 Essential starter packs for fuckboys. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/kirstenking/starter-packs-every-fuckboy-needs?utm_term=.bh3Q0WAyV#.huqb8mZyE

Overall, the fuckboy can be identified by his social media presence, which is often mocked by female authors and used as a point of reference for duplicitous and immature behavior. The affordances of social networking sites, as described above, allow fuckboy behaviors in ways that are not possible offline, and the social media usage of fuckboys is indicative of an immature player masculinity that is focused on sexual gratification and

consumption of heterosexual sex. These sites have opened up new possibilities for enacting and performing sexual subjectification for all involved parties, and the consequence of these possibilities is that fuckboy masculinity is heavily determined by social media usage.

4.3.3 Unmasking fuckboys

Relevant data has said that fuckboys are tricksters, and they masquerade as nice guys when instead they are more akin to a kind of "venomous creature" (Escandon, 2017) or a "contemptible faker" (Brogan, 2015). Stevenson (2015) agreed with this characterization of the fuckboy, and she said this figure represents "the kind of promiscuous man who is manipulative and cocky while still being a worthless poser." Furthermore, a fuckboy "will try to charm you with kind words, taking you out, telling you he's different and acting really fun to be around. Be speculative about the pretty face he puts on" (Escandon, 2017). Fuckboys also "intend to inhabit a cultural identity that they may never achieve" (Dakota, 2015). These evaluations echo the tactic of the New Lad, who, as previously mentioned, is said to have played the role of the New Man while out with women but returned to his 'authentic' self when back in an all-male environment (Gill, 2009b); the retrosexual has been accused of similar tactics (Anderson, 2008). Notably, despite the many anti-feminist statements in his article, Castillo (2017) claimed that a fuckboy is not merely a man who is sexually involved with many women, but instead he characterized the figure as a liar or trickster. Perhaps this suggests that the "real man" narrative of authentic masculinity as demonstrated by the New Lad and the retrosexual is no longer wholly believable.

The significance of this deceit is the reaction to it in popular media: titles suggest that women should be on the lookout for the fuckboy and ready to unmask his true self (Escandon, 2017; Moore, n.d.). Much of the fuckboy-related media focuses on this notion of exposure. Online articles point women to ways to identify a fuckboy, including such titles as

"15 Tragic signs you're dating a fuckboy" or "How to tell if he's a fuccboi" (King & Ro,

2015; Terblanche, 2015; KrispyShorts, 2017; Moore, n.d.); another faction of fuckboy media

provides suggestions to women regarding what to do once they have identified fuckboys,

including how to learn to love fuckboys (Stevenson, 2015), "foolproof reactions" for

fuckboys (Spagnolo & Gerstein, 2015), and ideas of what to do instead of talking to a

fuckboy (Lakshmin, 2016). Additionally, many of these articles (e.g., Stopera, 2015; Holt,

2017) utilize screenshots of text messages to reveal and deride fuckboy behavior, much in the

same way as the *Tinder Nightmares* page operates. This trend utilizes existing clues and new

experiences to continuously update discourses regarding heterosexual dating culture as it is

expressed through media. Images that are presented as real interactions with fuckboys, like

screenshots of direct messages, give female readers possible scripts for responding to alleged

fuckboys in their lives. The tips on how to deal with fuckboys offer these readers guidelines

for appropriate actions, and the whole of this media implies that women should be constantly

vigilant in their suspicion and unveiling of fuckboys. As one article noted, the fuckboy

discourse acts as a "way to call out the bad behavior that accompanies unchecked male

privilege in the romance department" (Boboltz, 2015).

Figure 6 How to identify fuckboys based on social media usage.
Note. Reprinted from Holt, B. (2017, April 17). 15 Types of fuckboys that need to fucking stop.
Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/briannaholt/fuckbois-every-straight-woman-has-suffered-through? utm_term=.nfNZpPxGQ#.ul7KXW7LY

By providing clues on how to identify a fuckboy (see Figure 6), the relevant media, just as with *Tinder Nightmares*, supply updated scripts of appropriate behaviors and responses to fuckboys. These scripts suggest that women should be responsible for the monitoring of heterosexual relationships, which is in accordance with Gill's (2009a) analysis of sex advice in women's magazines that advise women to discover what men want sexually and romantically and adjust their actions accordingly. In this way, this discourse further insinuates that men continue to be sex-obsessed predators. It seems this uneven advice has not gone unnoticed by men in the world. In an article that defends fuckboys, Johnny Dollar (2017) wrote that in terms of how women discuss fuckboys, "it's as if she had no part in the non-relationship at all. It's as if he just showed up and thrust this 'what are we' relationship onto her without her having any agency about it." This passivity was addressed by a female author who claimed to have been treated poorly by many fuckboys because she allowed them to have power over how she chose to act. She felt that she became empowered herself when she began to engage in fuckboy behaviors and craft her own sexuality by using unsuitable partners as sex companions:

> The biggest mistake I've made with these men in the past was to let their desires have priority over mine. I let them dictate to me what my feelings were, without questioning their fuckboy logic. But if this past year has taught me anything, it's that I no longer have a problem standing up for myself. It's possible, empowering even, for a woman to engage in fuckboy-esque behavior as a method of genuinely expressing what she wants. (Stevenson, 2015)

The final portion of this quotation is also in line with Gill's (2009a) finding in the sex advice of women's magazines and postfeminist media culture in general (Gill, 2007a), which encourage women to learn and embody a depth of sexuality that is akin to a pornographic

standard. It is particularly excusable because fuckboys primarily desire sex, so when women identify fuckboys, they can make their own individual choice to either conform to fuckboys' desires or cease contact with them.

4.3.4 Growing up

Despite that fuckboys "treat women as if they are sex toys come alive" (McGrath, 2016), women are "still addicted to them" (Peterson, 2015). As Castillo (2017) asked, "Why does she keep falling in love with fuckboys despite the fact that she claims the opposite?" Keeping in mind Gill's (2009a) discovery that women's sex advice advocated dating men who are known to be unsuitable as partners as a means of improving the self and further crafting a sexual subjectivity, then it is clear why fuckboys have not been eradicated from contemporary mediated dating life (see Figure 7). As one author wrote in regard to her purposeful interactions with fuckboys, "it's just sometimes nice to have someone pay attention to you and have someone to pay attention to" (Peterson, 2015), even if that attention is fleeting and stems from a fuckboy, perhaps as a means of practicing tactics for when the proper man comes around. Another columnist reconciled her decision to intentionally engage with known fuckboys: "But what am I going to do, not date at all? Sincerely sit around and wait for the right guy to come along? Fuck that. I'm too impatient and too horny to wait, and too broke to not accept free drinks" (Stevenson, 2015). This echoes the discovery by Gill (2009a) that women are encouraged to put work into their dating life, and their work will eventually be rewarded by a committed relationship with an ideal man; in the meantime, they should continue to hone their sexual knowledge, present themselves as sexual subjects, and practice their relationship expertise with unsuitable men. Trends from lad flicks suggested that a successful woman who puts in work may be able to affect the change in an immature man that will craft him into a suitable partner (Hansen-Miller & Gill, 2011). The combination

of these discourses insinuates that men who act like fuckboys are just waiting for the right

woman to tame them into a successful man. In this way, media imply that fuckboys can

continue their immaturity and use of women for sex, and women should continue engaging

with fuckboys to practice heterosexual skills until one fuckboy eventually takes a cue and

matures into an appropriate partner. This revelation is especially potent when considered in

combination with the inevitable and natural "boys will be boys" characterization of the

fuckboy and that male bad behavior in lad flicks, including and especially irresponsibility and

womanizing, is shown as humorous (Hansen-Miller & Gill, 2011).

Figure 7 Screengrab example of a woman purposefully engaging with a fuckboy.
Note. Reprinted from Jerry Studios. (2016, December 21). FUCCBOI (Official music video) [Video file]. Retrieved from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCk9UjfjWHc

Overwhelming, the fuckboy-related media do not address what causes the existence of

fuckboys; instead, they provide ways to avoid the fuckboy and justifications for knowing

engaging with a fuckboy, which indicate that this figure is an inevitable and natural aspect of

contemporary heterosexual dating life. As Dollar (2017) said, "fuckboy is eternal." The title

of one article even broadly claims that all "dudes" are fuckboys until they reach a certain part

of their lives in which they mature, and the author wrote, "somewhere in [most men's] late twenties or early thirties, a dramatic change takes place. They hang up their f-boy pants and put on their adult, father/husband pants. The truth is, all men are fuckboys until they decide they aren't anymore" (Engel, 2016). It is interesting that the author suggested aspects of both nature and choice regarding the existence of fuckboys. This quotation's premise that all men are fuckboys assumes a naturally inherent feature of (heterosexual) men, likely one that prompts them to seek non-committal sex from women akin to the 'real man' narrative of the New Lad and retrosexual. On the other hand, the quote assumes that men cease being fuckboys when they reach a point in their young adulthood when it behooves them to stop.

The notion of the fuckboy being inevitable or even part of every man utilizes the postfeminist discourse of natural sexual differences. In an article by Castillo (2017), which appeared on a website for men who are involved in pick-up artistry, he wrote that fuckboy behaviors are part of men asserting their "rightful dominance" in society and getting what they "deserve." Castillo (2017) declared that "women want men who are men" and "real men do whatever they want," while women "use their vaginas as leverage and implicitly (or explicitly) threaten to withhold it if men don't acquiesce to their demands." Indeed, it is interesting that some of the only praise for fuckboyish behavior stems from media constructed by members of the seduction community, which has recently been linked to several sexual assaults and rapes (Zadrozny, 2016). Furthermore, Castillo's (2017) reframing of women's grievances with fuckboy behavior into a narrative of desire could have many dangerous implications when considering how the female side of the fuckboy debate offers scripts for appropriate behaviors to women in regard to the fuckboy; the male defenses of the fuckboy act in a similar manner. This is even more noteworthy when considered alongside Gill's (2014) assertion that lad culture was connected to real happenstances of sexual victimization of women.

Castillo (2017) further used natural explanations by suggesting that it is women's fault for the continued existence and popularity of fuckboys, with the accompanying reason of "because women, that's why." The author blamed women's natural emotions as a rationalization for their being drawn to fuckboys and encouraging fuckboy behavior: "I think women legitimately enjoy this emotional rollercoaster" (Castillo, 2017). In terms of female emotion, Dollar (2017) asserted that the demonization of fuckboys occurs through "no fault of their own" and instead is the fault of women who "caught feelings and then couldn't make a fuckboy their boyfriend."

Dollar (2017) said that he once was "what many would call a fuckboy," but he grew out of this part of his life and matured into a loving and monogamous husband and father: "today I have a wife and child that I both love more than anything in the world." This explanation coincides with the narrative of the player lad flicks in which the men avoid monogamy and overall maturity until a moment when the right woman appears. According to the media, it seems that the plight of women is to practice their sexual subjectivities and invest work with the wrong men until they find the right one who will decide to mature. This process is shown as some form of meritocracy, but may perhaps be more caused by chance. Meanwhile, men are supposed to inhabit a role of constant sex, dishonesty with women, and overall general immaturity, including irresponsibility with money and drugs (Spagnolo & Gerstein, 2015; Jerry Studios, 2016). There seems to be no concern about morality in this discourse and, keeping in mind how this type of behavior is presented in lad flicks, it may even be considered humorous to be a fuckboy. Castillo (2017) discounted the aspect of morality in the fuckboy debate as irrelevant: "what I see is that it's very, very profitable to be a fuckboy." In this, he explicitly commodified sex and referenced the competitive nature of casual sex that Hess & Flores (2016) pointed out in regard to how men act on Tinder.

Shaun Brown (2016) wrote a piece in which he expressed worry that he would remain a

fuckboy forever, despite wanting to dismiss the "childish ways" and the "fuckboy ways that have come to define our twenties for so many of us [men]" (S. Brown, 2016). He further said that he hopes someday to "grow up" and let go of the "man-child" he feels that he is as "a fuckboy at 29 years old" (S. Brown, 2016). The shame he voiced about being a fuckboy mirrors Dollar's (2017) assertion that fuckboys are "the most demonized group in the dating world." He explained the cause of fuckboy behavior as a result of emotional "wounds," which fits Hansen-Miller and Gill's (2011) narrative of the player in lad flicks having been emotionally stunted by a past trauma. When considering this affective emotional turmoil in conjuncture with how fuckboys are described almost entirely through social media use, it is shown that this figure is not naturally occurring in all men, but instead is crafted by emotional events in the past and gendered discourses. This is an example of postfeminist media culture's contradictory representations of gender.

In the *Tinder Nightmares* context of women replying to fuckboys with witty remarks (Hess & Flores, 2016), April Lavalle (2017) wrote a satirical piece regarding the evolution of a fuckboy to a "fuckman." In her evaluation, Lavalle (2017) contended that a fuckman is more mature than a fuckboy, but still engages in many of the same behaviors. The fuckman seems to be an intermediary between the fuckboy and the mature monogamous husband type of man, almost entirely because he acquired "a really good job in finance" (Lavalle, 2017). Interestingly, fuckman is still rife with undesirable qualities, most of which are expressed through social media usage, and the slightly evolved aspects of the fuckman are rather unrelated. For example, an indication of his maturity is that he "traded his muscle shirts for J. Crew button-downs," though he still sends unsolicited dick pics and asks women for nude photos twice per week (Lavalle, 2017).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter evaluated the fuckboy figure through relevant media depictions. Despite its

origins hip-hop culture, the fuckboy is now generally characterized as a young, affluent,

white, heterosexual man who seeks sexual relations with many women at once and does

through so dishonesty and secrecy. The fuckboys is overwhelmingly illustrated through

trends of social media usage, including heavy use of mobile dating apps like Tinder, sending

unsolicited dick pics, asking for nude photos of women, and utilizing social media as a means

of lying or acting duplicitously.

Through *Tinder Nightmares*, women created a space to share and shame misogynistic

behaviors in the online dating scene. The fuckboy conversation operates in a similar but more

widespread manner by allowing women to express their discontent with this player

masculinity while responding and offering advice. While this aspect of the fuckboy discourse

is feminist in nature in that it creates a grouping of women who attempt to call into question

the existing dimensions of toxic male behavior. On the other hand, the extensive focus on

individualism and empowerment through sexual interactions and the encouragement to

decide for oneself whether to engage with a fuckboy is wholly indicative of the tenets of

postfeminist discourses of gender.

The fuckboy represents a misogynistic masculinity which has developed in conjunction

with, and perhaps because of, digital and social media. The general characteristics of this

figure draw upon previous depictions of masculinity in postfeminist media culture and re-

contextualize these ideas through trends of the current moment, including social media and

popular feminism. The fuckboy may represent some of the first widespread recognition of

this player masculinity as inauthentic, particularly through his social media self-presentation,

though this figure is also addressed as if it is an inevitable and natural aspect of heterosexual

dating life. The fuckboy represents a childishness that is reflective of the player in lad flicks

of the early 2000s, and media show that this type of masculinity matures to become a monogamous family man only when the work of a successful female partner prompts an overhauling lifestyle change.

The women in this narrative, though, seem to provide updated scripts on heterosexual dating and hookup culture through their shaming and counter-discipline of the men whom they have deemed to be fuckboys. These scripts provide courses of action ranging from moving on and ignoring a fuckboy to shaming them online. These practices are associated with postfeminist media culture and, more specifically, the sex advice that Gill (2009a) found in women's magazines in the earlier part of the 21st century. These characterizations of women in contemporary heterosexual dating life recommend crafting a sexual subjectivity and assert that women need to be constantly attentive to what men think, feel, and want. Women are meant to manage and surveil these relationships, and the fuckboy discourse is in agreement with this. The fuckboys discourse suggests that women must identify these fuckboys, perhaps still engage with them to craft their sexuality, and invest work into their relationships until a fuckboy decides to mature into a real man who is ready for monogamy and a family.

Fuckboy seemingly grew from the player masculinity of lad culture, particularly lad flicks, in conjuncture with social media and how social media portrays and affects gender performances. The fuckboy is an expression of misogynistic and toxic masculinity, and women the labelling and spread of the word "fuckboy" has allowed women agency to determine this behavior and vilify it. However, it also maintains aspects of postfeminism in that it affords agency to the women, not to the men, suggesting that this is "just the way it is" and that women should be vigilant in finding and calling out this behavior, but men are not encouraged to change their ways. As the *Tinder Nightmares* article points out, though, this

may be a means for women to change the narrative of dating norms by discouraging negative behavior.

Popular misogyny, including practices of pick-up artistry, is present in the fuckboy discourse in blaming women for fuckboys continued existence, and this occurs through the characterization that fuckboys are natural figures and women's emotion will perpetuate their existence. However, fuckboy cannot be a naturally occurring figure in particular because he is described through social media use, which has obviously been around for only a few decades. Possibly, social media has become such an ingrained part of contemporary life that it seems that this behavior in heterosexual online dating relations may continue forever, but at the very least, this shows that the fuckboy is definitively not a natural phenomenon.

The idea that men are players who aim only for sex and the push for women's sexual subjectivity ensure that the fuckboy is a relevant part of contemporary mediated dating life. For men, media shows that achieving adulthood requires a dramatic shift in their expression of masculinity from a manipulative player to committed monogamy and professional success. Women are shown to be the catalyst for men to stop their fuckboy behavior and reach maturity. These behaviors for men and women thus become normalized into mediated scripts of heterosexual dating for men and women alike.

5 Instagram Husband

5.1 Who are the Instagram Husbands?

"Behind every cute girl on Instagram is a guy like me…and a brick wall" (The Mystery Hour, 2015), said the opening of the Instagram Husband video, and thus began a new trend of representing stereotypes of Instagram use. The video, a viral YouTube hit about men who take photos of their (female) significant others for Instagram, ironically began with this take on the infamous feminist rally cry. The video's subversion of the historical phrase operates within the typical re-contextualization of culture for which the internet is now notorious, and the irony that prevails in this pursuit ensures that the gender representations in this video are firmly entrenched in the tenets of postfeminist media culture.

Online virality, or "going viral," refers to when a creation (e.g., news article, video, 'meme') gains widespread short-term popularity by reaching a large audience, and this trend drastically affects how online media is produced and consumed. For The Mystery Hour, a sketch comedy group from Missouri, USA, their 15 minutes of viral fame occurred with the short clip they created entitled "Instagram Husband" (2015). At the time of writing, the video had received approximately 6.2 million views on YouTube and dozens of mentions in news sources, most of which praised the video for its comedic effect and their realistic depictions of what is commonly viewed as a new phenomenon in the social media realm. The phrase itself has also become entrenched in common online vocabulary, thus cementing this role as a popular figure of masculinity. Further additions to the Instagram Husband discourse in mainstream media point predominantly to the significant others of successful bloggers, social media influencers, and even traditional celebrities like Beyoncé.

A first impression of the video reveals a notably gendered statement on social media use, with the so-called husbands placed in the role of unwitting photographer, or "human selfie stick," (The Mystery Hour, 2015) and the women cast as controlling and Instagram-

obsessed models who demand documentation of everyday mundanity, like coffee, their feet on a street, or the outfit they have chosen to wear. Throughout the video and its accompanying website, InstagramHusband.com, it is clear that the women are primarily concerned with crafting their social media presence with the aim of appeasing and gathering followers in pursuit of some level of notoriety. Though the creators of the video reportedly had no intention of discussing contemporary gender politics (Griner, 2015), such a commentary is clearly present. The gender roles portrayed in this video and the subsequent media discussion of the phenomenon are importantly reflective of current understandings of gender with regard to social media use, so this analysis provides a unique opportunity to reveal the interplay of such notions in broader society.

In an interview with Adweek.com, creator and star of the film, Jeff Houghton, explained the video "felt universal, so I knew we had something" (Griner, 2015). This chapter and the analysis of this case attempted to understand what about the Instagram Husband is 'universal' in order to explain why the video gained such widespread success and why the use of the term maintains its popularity and relevance in mainstream media. The aim of such an investigation is to evaluate how the Instagram Husband as figure has internalized past and present ideas of masculinity and femininity and applied these notions to the realities of present-day social media culture. This analysis considers the satirical video by The Mystery Hour as the catalyst of visibility and context for this phenomenon, and the chapter addresses how the concept has since been appropriated in mainstream media outlets. To develop the background of this phenomenon, I construct a framework of Instagram practices of celebrity and microcelebrity, with a particular focus on Alice Marwick's (2015) conceptualization of "Instafame." The supposedly egalitarian model of social media suggests to 'average' users that they, too, may be able to achieve celebrity status, a notion that has only increased with the so-called "demotic turn" (Marwick, 2015; Khamis, Ang, & Welling,

2016) and the influx of social media influencers, or people who have created a profitable career from their social media presence. Such social media notoriety rests upon the development of a strong personal brand, which explains the strong relationship between Instagram usage and branding. Ideas of new and old feminisms and heterosexism are presented in this chapter to demonstrate the subtlety of the misogyny in this supposedly benign male figure, which bears important similarities and differences to the retrosexual figure. The primary aim of this chapter is to discuss how the characteristics of postfeminist media culture have shaped the success of the Instagram Husband video and how this video has, in return, shaped understandings of media culture.

5.2 Theoretical Framework

5.2.1 Instagram and Instafame

Instagram is a photo- and video-based social media app intended for smartphone use that was launched in 2010 and has blossomed into one of the most widely used platforms across the web. The image-based app is notorious for its set of pre-defined photo filters, most of which emulate a retro feeling of analog photography. The app allows users to add text captions and categorizing hashtags, though the layout of the platform is primarily intended to highlight the visual media. Instagram users have the option of having a 'public' or 'private' profile. With a public profile, anyone may 'follow' the user in a unidirectional manner and view all of their shared content, similar to Twitter, in which it is not necessary or expected that the user will 'follow back.' A private profile means that a user may request to follow the private profile, and the owner either agrees to or denies the request. The users may then like or comment on the photos that they see, and the mobile nature of the app encourages real-time updates.

User interactions online differ among all platforms and websites and are conditioned by the individual online spaces, particularly the platform's affordances and culture (Marwick,

2013c). Instagram tends to encourage a less hostile environment, which is especially conducive to women's self-expression considering the depth of disparagement and exclusion that they can face elsewhere online. The way the Instagram platform is constructed, following and viewing other people's posted content, is unidirectional, which encourages a dynamic more akin to fandom and admirable observation than friend-like interaction (Marwick, 2015).

Such a dynamic encourages "Instafame," a portmanteau that represents fame garnered from having achieved notoriety through a significant number of followers on the Instagram app, with the top-most followed accounts currently boasting around 100-200 million followers. Instafame can be relative to individual users, though, and achieving only hundreds or thousands of followers can be a mark of pride for some (Marwick, 2015). While Instafame can occur from only Instagram, meaning a user has garnered a loyal and attentive following solely from the app, many Instafamous users utilize Instagram as complementary to another primary pursuit, such as a blog, small business, or aspiring music career. Marwick posits Instafame as a type of microcelebrity, which involves a mindset similar to 'real' celebrity and is based off self-presentation practices that are generally cultivated strategically through social media and include interacting with followers and revealing certain personal information, thus increasing attention and online status (Marwick, 2015, p. 138). Instafame and microcelebrity are considered to be derivatives of the attention economy of recent decades in which merely attracting views or clicks online equates to profitability. The attention economy grew in conjuncture with neoliberal ideals of individualism and entrepreneurialism, which, when combined with the rise of digital media tools, resulted in success being at least partly measured by the metrics of online attention (Fairchild, 2007).

Microcelebrity represents a juncture between traditional celebrity and the average person, and it is thus a powerful guiding force in the social media realm. Seemingly, microcelebrity is a reward brought about by the pervasive conception of meritocracy, which

represents the belief that working hard will result in equal success. Today, this ethic generally indicates adopting the practices of successful people who display an authentic online persona, which amounts to consistent work on an individualized self-brand. Marwick (2013b), however, has referred to this meritocracy as a fallacy. Although such notoriety seems attainable by the layperson, Instafamous folk tend to fit stereotypical ascriptions of celebrity, thereby reinforcing existing discourses of cultural power. Consequently, Marwick (2015) considered Instagram to represent the intersection of the influx of real-time user-generated content, a heightened presence of the practices of celebrity and microcelebrity culture, and conspicuous consumption. In this way, microcelebrity mirrors traditional celebrity, and those who achieve this status mostly "reproduce conventional status hierarchies of luxury, celebrity, and popularity that depend on the ability to emulate the visual iconography of mainstream celebrity culture" (p. 139). In order to emulate symbols of mainstream celebrity culture, particularly on Instagram, it is necessary that the generated content (mostly photographs, some video) is of a similar nature and quality as that which celebrities post. In the social media era, celebrity has evolved from an almost entirely unattainable role into "a continuum of practices that can be performed by anyone with a mobile screen, tablet, or laptop" (Marwick, 2015, p. 140).

Microcelebrity, and Instafame in particular, thus requires the success of targeted and deliberate self-branding, the techniques of which have been appropriated from consumer branding practices and applied to individuals to operate effectively in accordance with neoliberal values. Furthermore, this self-branding represents self-commodification, and photographs are an increasingly popular and profitable means of accomplishing this commodification through online self-representation. Microcelebrity may be sought for a plethora of reasons, and while it is perhaps not the explicit goal of all users on the app, its effects are potent on the masses; hence, self-branding is widely practiced. Khamis, Ang, and

Welling (2016) identified three underlying contributing factors of the pull to engage in purposeful self-branding practices in pursuit of attention or fame:

1. There is an implication of social media that fame for the average user is not only possible, it can be achieved through practices of microcelebrity.

2. Within the reign of neoliberalism's (and postfeminism's) emphasis on individualism, self-branding seems to be both encouraged and incentivized.

3. The visibility of other microcelebrities' success on social media, monetary or otherwise, serves as inspiration for others, who see this success as attainable to the layperson (p. 4).

While it is indeed common for celebrities to post 'selfies' (digital self-portraits) and images of mundane activities in their lives, which are simple enough for a layperson to emulate, there are seemingly just as many, if not more, images that are taken by other people, such as for a press release or an outing. The luxury status of traditional celebrity activities and the photos of such activities ensure that photos by average users that emulate celebrity practices often require the assistance of an additional person to enact the part of celebrity photographer; this role is filled by the Instagram Husband. As the layperson attempts to emulate celebrity practices, which Marwick (2015) noted is an Instagram trend that she calls "aspirational production," the Instagram Husbands are those who take the photos to assist in this production. Aspirational production occurs when a microcelebrity disseminates content, and images in particular, that directly mimic and refer to celebrity culture:

> While nobody may actually be paying attention, aspirational producers want the audience to think that they are being snapped by the paparazzi even if their pictures are actually taken by a best friend or boyfriend…by positioning themselves as worthy of the attention given to celebrities, and by using the visual tropes of celebrities, [aspirational producers] position themselves *as* celebrities. (Marwick, 2015, p. 156)

Interestingly, by engaging in aspirational production, users may indeed advance their pursuit of Instafame. As Instagram (and other popular social networking platforms) are predicated on algorithmic content dissemination, such algorithms reward patterns of what content has already been found to attract attention. In this way, while algorithms do not set out to purposefully reward traditional ideals of celebrity or gender, as for example, they do become accustomed to what has already been determined to attract popularity, which fits into these conventional scripts (Carah & Shaul, 2016). Algorithms can significantly impact which people, and how many people, view a post, which could be the key to developing celebrity (or not).

The metrics of social media (e.g., number of followers or the shares, likes, and comments of a single post) ensure that social media popularity and audience engagement are easily quantifiable. Each increase of those metrics represents an increase in social currency and social reinforcement, although, as Marwick wrote, "the presence of an attentive audience may be the most potent status symbol of all" (2015, p. 141). Alternatively, an attentive audience may prove to produce more than just status. From the demotic turn, which refers to the trend of 'average' people achieving mainstream fame (brief or otherwise), social media has a significant role in the perception that (micro)celebrity is attainable by all (Marwick, 2015; Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016).

This understanding has been further exacerbated by the rise of social media influencers, who are people who have risen to microcelebrity through social networking sites and have turned this microcelebrity into a career that is profitable in both economic and cultural capital (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016). Social media influencers began as 'ordinary' social networking site users but have amassed a following "through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles" and they "monetize their following by integrating 'advertorials' into their blogs or social media posts and making physical paid-guest

appearances at events" (Abidin, 2016, p. 3).

Moreover, the contributions to Instagram by ordinary, microcelebrity, and celebrity folk alike (be it posting, liking, commenting on, or even scrolling past an image) work to create networks of users with their own self-branding and social networking activities; such networks "generate value for media platforms, brands, and events they are associated with" (Carah & Shaul, 2016, p. 75). Engaging in these practices, by celebrities or the average person, results in that cultural power being redistributed throughout a much broader population of users. In this way, "microcelebrity points to the growing agency, enterprise, and business acumen of everyday media users" (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016, p. 7). The use of selfies in this pursuit is extremely important. Posting selfies of quality – in both composition and editing – is imperative to being an influencer and building a profitable fan base (Abidin, 2016). Emulating such practices helps to successfully participate on social networking sites, Instagram especially, and participation in online spaces can in turn affect offline areas.

5.2.2 The male gaze

As digital self-portraits constitute a large part of self-branding and social media success, it is essential that these pictures be curated in a cohesive manner that is in line with each individual users' overall self-styling. This curation requires strategic planning and self-surveillance. This trend used Gill's (2007a) conceptualization of the subversion of former structures of discipline through the subjectification of women that occurred with female internalization of the male gaze.

Originally theorized by Laura Mulvey (1999) regarding film representations, the notion of the male gaze articulated female objectification in visual media. In this relationship, the male fantasy of the visualization is imposed onto the female in an inherent dynamic of active

and passive participants, respectively. Mulvey said, "In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (1999, p. 837). In terms of visual media, the viewer was historically placed in the masculine role of looker, which meant looking at the female participant through the lens of masculine erotic desire. Gill (2007a) postulated that in postfeminist media culture, the objectifying male gaze is removed from the masculine position and, instead, constituted the subjective constructions of women.

An early social media microcelebrity, Julia Allison, represented this phenomenon and the consequences of such a subversion. As described by Marwick (2013b), Allison's use of selfie photography and practices and symbols from celebrity and tabloid culture resulted in allegations of narcissisms and vanity, and further that she represented all that is wrong with online culture. Her self-presentation as an attractive woman without fitting into traditional discourses of femininity received extensive backlash and suggested that a woman presenting herself as an object insinuates "an agented subjectivity that threatens the male-dominated social hierarchy" (Marwick, 2013b, p. 17). While this practice is seen widely online today, many women still received much criticism for it, particularly on platforms that were harsher than Instagram.

As this practice was crafted by technological advancements, it fit the discourse of the retrosexual male's aversion to modern technology, which Brett McKay (2010) qualified as, "You cannot become a man by looking at Megan Fox's boobs or playing video games." Similarly, Laura Portwood-Stacer (2012) discovered a gendered aspect of connectivity wherein the masculine positioning of independence recommended avoiding technological connectivity, particularly on social networking sites. This posture linked connectivity with feminine dependency, and by association, the feminized domestic sphere. Indeed, masculinity

has been purposefully distanced from all aspects of domesticity since as far back as the late 1800s in what John Tosh (1999) called 'the flight from domesticity.' The emasculation that ensued from any association with feminized objects or activities rests at the core of postfeminist gender dynamics. By presenting women in media – particularly feminists – as the confident and powerful players in society, men are shown as confused losers and hapless victims who are stripped of their ability to occupy true masculinity (Gill, 2014; Gill & Garcia-Favaro, 2016). This characterization was often presented through and alongside the use of irony, a key point in postfeminist media, which allowed sexist or misogynist (or homophobic, etc.) views to be expressed as non-serious. This "irony" occurred in such a way that calling attention to this sexism was viewed as an overreaction because the overt sexism in the ironic statement was seen as proof that the speaker was not sexist. As Gill (2007a) explained, ironically utilizing retro sentiments and alluding to the misogyny of years ago, "sexism is safely sealed in the past while constructing scenarios that would garner criticism if they were represented as contemporary" (p. 160). This rationale had the effect of normalizing sexism as a 'joke' while allowing sexist statements to continue to circulate popular media.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 The work of the Instagram Husband

This analysis is concerned with the Instagram Husband video (The Mystery Hour, 2015) as the origination of the figure and the catalyst of subsequent media mentions. It is widely accepted that the video coined the Instagram Husband term, and thus each subsequent mention of the term implicitly or explicitly references the video. In total, 18 web articles were gathered through internet searches for the phrase. As this figure is still popular, searches were conducted regularly over a period of several months in order to gather the most current information possible. The progression of the use of the phrase in subsequent articles and

online sources has been carefully considered to represent the evolution of the Instagram

Husband discourse. In addition, the initial video creators also developed a website in the form

of a Tumblr blog (accessible at InstagramHusband.com or InstagramHusband.tumblr.com)

and an Instagram profile (@ig.husband) in the wake of the video's success. They still monitor

and post to these pages. Finally, a follow-up video, entitled "Introducing 'Just Husbands'"

was released in October of 2016. This video acted as an advertisement for a new Fossil brand

watch, which had a shutter release button that could be connected to a smartphone so the

wives could take photos of themselves without their Instagram Husbands. The additional

commercialized layer of the sequel and its inferior popularity (367,000 views on YouTube

compared to the original's 6.2 million) render it less relevant to this analysis, although it is

still considered to be a valuable datum in the Instagram Husband narrative. Several articles

offered interviews with real-life Instagram Husbands (Amelia, 2017; Austin, 2016; Cave,

2016; Clark, 2017), all of whom were the boyfriends or husbands of microcelebrity bloggers

or social media influencers who utilize Instagram as a supplemental form of networking.

The Instagram Husband website posted a list of symptoms of the Instagram Husband (see

Figure 8), while Kashmira Gander's (2016) interview with the video's creator, Jeff

Houghton, supplied the following definition from him: "An Instagram husband refers to

anybody who *has to begrudgingly* [emphasis added] take pictures of their significant other."

The significance of this quote rests in the qualification of 'having to,' a sense of being forced,

'begrudgingly,' to do something to help another person. This definition then places an

element of forcefulness on the wives and an attitude of disinterest on the husbands, which

implies a subversive power relationship where men were the "victims," "poor souls," or

"unsung heroes" (Gander, 2016; Cave, 2016). However, suggesting that women's

engagement in common social media practices in pursuit of capital is a hindrance to the men

in their lives still placed the power in the men's hands insofar as the Instagram Husbands'

desires are more important than their wives' careers. As Moore (2015) wrote, the humor of

the Instagram Husband video rests on the novelty of men playing a supporting role in their

wives' careers.

The term Instagram Husband does not necessarily refer to marital status, relationship status, gender, or age. Anyone can be stricken as an Instagram Husband, including boyfriends, girlfriends, parents, or sons and daughters. Instagram Wife is also gender, status, and age neutral. It is important that you find out if you are an Instagram Husband.

Are you unsure if you're an Instagram Husband?

Answer these questions.

1. Are you the designated photographer for your Instagram Wife?

2. Do you take more pictures with your Instagram Wife than you would take on your own?

3. Is your photo thumb calloused and/or blackened with wear?

4. Have you ever been yelled at for presuming you should only take one, maybe two, pictures of a particular pose?

5. Do you suffer from uncontrollable bodily twitches when you hear any mention of the words: selfie, brick wall, puppy, succulent, the food has arrived, shoes, it's snowing out, I don't look good in this one, one more, crema, sunset, latte?

6. Have you ever taken pictures of your Instagram Wife while she pretended to sleep peacefully?

7. Have you ever thought to yourself when looking at an Instagram photo you took, "Only I know the rage and venom that was directed at me immediately before and after this seemingly happy photo was taken."?

8. Have you ever said, "I can't take this anymore, it's me or your Instagram followers, Katelyn!"? Have you ever been saddened by the length of time she took to answer, "Hashtag-followers, Bradley. I choose my followers."?

9. Have you stood on more railroad tracks since meeting your Instagram Wife than in the previous years of your life combined?

10. Do you need help?

Scoring:
1-3   You are an Instagram Friend
4-6   You are an Instagram Boyfriend
7-8   You are an Instagram Fiancé
9-10   You are an Instagram Husband
11-12 You are not great at counting

Figure 8 Instagram Husband symptom checker.
Note. Reprinted from Instagram Husband Tumblr. Retrieved from http://instagramhusband.tumblr.com/symptoms

While Houghton has claimed in interviews (Griner, 2015; Buxton, 2016) and on the official Instagram Husband Tumblr website that being an Instagram Husband is not gender-bound to men, the reality is that this discourse, like all others, does not exist in a vacuum. Gender traditions, including women's emergence in the workforce and historical responsibility for snapshot photography (Seligson, 2016), ensured that it seemed appropriate to label this figure as masculine. Despite Houghton's claim of knowing "plenty of Instagram husbands that are the women behind the camera" and that "Nate from the video is the one more obsessed with Instagram than Sarah, his girlfriend" (as cited in Griner, 2015), the history of gender discourses resulted in Houghton's belief that a realistic depiction of Instagram usage "might be confusing" (as cited in Griner, 2015). By maintaining this gender stereotype in the video, which has shaped discourses of gender online, Houghton and The Mystery Hour team aided in perpetuating heterosexist notions of work, connectivity, and natural sexual differences within the emerging context of social networking sites.

Several articles geared toward Instagram Husbands offered tips for taking better photos (Austin, 2016; Cave, 2016; Lim, 2016). These tips were seemingly a nod to recent feminism visibilities as an indirect means of potentially combatting the sentiments of Tracey Moore's (2015) article, which claimed the Instagram Husband video was "an accidental ode to the still-shitty gender dynamics of success." However, the tone of these helpful articles was condescending and implied the same type of victimization of the Instagram Husbands that the original video purported. In Austin's (2016) article, a three-point pre-photoshoot checklist for Instagram Husbands was presented, which offered little input regarding photographic technique and instead trivialized the process altogether: 1) ensure there are no hair ties visible in the setup, otherwise "you may as well just not show up" because visible hair ties are taboo; 2) it is "natural and admirable" to want to capture the beauty of a woman, but it "actually shows you care" to ask what the focus of the photo should be; and 3) discuss what food will

come after the picture-taking because "there is nothing better than eating a burger after the mental exercise of finding that perfect angle." However, these real-life Instagram Husbands revealed that their experiences were not as horrible as they let on, and indeed they may have learned about a new realm of life and culture (Buxton, 2016; Clark, 2017). One man said, "After a lot of practice, I feel like I can speak her language now" (as cited in Buxton, 2016). While this comment exacerbates notions of natural sexual differences, it also demonstrates that if or when the feelings of emasculation subside, it may be possible to open up a new form of acceptable masculinity from somewhere within this discourse.

The women, for their part, were not given agency to speak to their side in the video. Instead, they were shown as demanding and unreasonable, especially while suggesting their husbands perform dangerous stunts to get the best angle for their photos. The video focused only on the process of taking photos while entirely neglecting all context, including that adopting the practices of microcelebrity was widespread among social media users nowadays, particularly by microcelebrities themselves (including social media influencers and fashion bloggers). The most significant of the real-life narratives from social media stars is a compilation of letters from successful bloggers to their Instagram Husbands thanking them for their service (Bayley, 2015), which is an interesting subversion of past husband-wife work dynamics as noted by Moore (2015). The women, both in the video and the real-life examples, followed conventional beauty standards. While these standards are neither exactly subversive or feminist, they fall directly in line with the expectations of microcelebrity culture and the emulation of tradition celebrity. Furthermore, the empowerment of these women's individual choices, the branding of their subjectivity, and their successes in crafting a profitable online persona ensure they are essential postfeminist players.

5.3.2 Retro views

Despite the widespread popularity and light-hearted tone of the video, the Instagram Husband is a site of toxic masculinity, which has been found in increasingly many areas and increasingly more subtle instances on the web. Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) defined toxic masculinity as "a (heterosexual) masculinity that is threatened by anything associated with femininity (whether that is pink yogurt or emotions)" (p. 171). This fragile masculinity has manifested in many ways, including men's rights activist groups and the seduction community (pick-up artists) and, I argue, insecurity with taking photos. In terms of the practices of Instagram Husbands, it is possible that taking photos invokes this fragile masculinity because domestic or family photography has long been viewed as a women's job, and Instagram may qualify as 'snapshot' photography (Seligson, 2016). One real-life Instagram Husband likened his role to "the new version of a man having to hold a woman's purse" and suggested that he feels "embarrassed" when taking shots of his wife in public (quoted in Cave, 2016). Another husband, quoted in Clark (2017), suggested that being an Instagram Husband is even further emasculating in that he must carry a camera slung over, a handbag, and an iPhone. Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) suggested that the influx of expressions of toxic masculinity online may have been triggered by the economic crisis in 2007-2008, which left many men struggling financially, thereby threatening their masculinity. This hypothesis may indeed also correlate to a hesitation by men to accept and support new types of stereotypically feminine work that arose around that time and was predicated on online connectivity, such as social media influencers and blog writers.

The InstagramHusband.com site offered a list of suggestions for Instagram Husbands to approach their wives (see Figure 9) and "receive help." Interestingly, the first tip for the social media stars' beleaguered significant others is to utilize #InstagramHusband on social media to raise awareness, which calls into question the Instagram Husbands' concerns with

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their usage of social networking sites. 'Medicine' is also suggested to relieve the symptoms of being an Instagram Husband, and the medicine of choice is to visit the website for Jack Daniels Tennessee Whiskey – a notably masculine-associated drink and a nod to the good old days of retro masculinity. The Instagram Husband website also gave advice for men to connect with spirituality to cope with being an Instagram Husband; this advice includes a direct link to a YouTube video entitled "What happens if you shoot an iPhone 6?" that shows

> You can survive, even thrive, as an Instagram Husband.
>
> Don't be afraid of confrontation. You can approach your Instagram Wife with your feelings. However, do so with caution.
>
> 1. Invite your wife into reality saying, "Honey, it's me, Brian, the guy from the other side of the camera, your husband. I invite you to step out of frame, and into reality."
>
> 2. Repeat Step 1, only louder.
>
> 3. Touch her hand as a gentle reminder of the physicality of real life. She may be shocked at the feeling of something that is not glass and/or plastic, re-entering reality is not easy.
>
> 4. Speak in words she will understand, "Honey, I feel like I'm living my life in Willow, and I want it to be Lo-Fi." You don't have to know what that means, she will.
>
> 5. Hold the phone out to your side, this will force her to look into your eyes, as she is trained to look away from the phone.
>
> 6. She will want to take a picture of this poignant moment. Now is the chance to use your new boldness. Say, "No. Honey, no." This will be difficult, but stay strong.
>
> 7. She may not be able to change immediately, have patience. Hide all of her shoes.
>
> 8. If she does not respond positively, throw a well-presented plate of quinoa on the ground and run. She will not be able to resist a pic, giving you a great head start.

Figure 9 Tips for Instagram Husbands to approach their wives.
Note. Reprinted from Instagram Husband Tumblr. Retrieved from http://instagramhusband.tumblr.com/approaching.

the mobile technology being blasted with a gun (TechRax, 2015). These aggressive suggestions for coping with taking photos are remarkably retrosexual in nature through their rejection of all notions of femininity and technology, as according to Peretti (2004), what retrosexuals love most is their "not-inconsiderable fear of modern technology." In addition, acting as an Instagram Husband has been equated to "basically the modern day form of chivalry" (Baila, 2017), which refers to a new manifestation of retrosexual desires to act in a

chivalrous yet disinterested manner toward women. This inference correlates to another familiar characteristic of postfeminist masculinity, which implies that men should hide their true selves from women. While retrosexual canon encouraged this behavior in order to engage in sexual activities with women, none of the analyzed Instagram Husband media directly addressed sex. On the other hand, it is inherently assumed to be present in the husband/wife relationship and may thus be a peripheral factor in this discourse. With these retrosexual tendencies, despite the creators' attempt to make this figure inclusive and non-gendered, the Instagram Husband discourse is accessible only to heterosexual men who feel their masculinity is threatened by participating in an activity that has been deemed too feminine. In the same way, it suggests that adopting microcelebrity practices on social networking sites is available only to women, which renders invisible the many men who partake in these activities. Indeed, male social media influencers are a growing faction (Abidin, 2016).

Figure 10 An imagined dialog of an Instagram Husband attempting to input his own creative direction.
Note. Reprinted from Instagram Husband (2017). @ig.husband [Instagram Profile]. Retrieved July 24, 2017, from https://www.instagram.com/ig.husband/

When photos are taken by Instagram Husbands, the men are in some ways invisible actors in the process. The portraits are directed and edited by the wives in order to fit their own conception of their personal self-branding. The women then share the photos on their own pages, which call into question traditional ideas of authorship and artistry. Whereas the video has presented discussion of a new phenomenon – strategic Instagram usage – the creators did so in a way that conforms to existing or retrosexist statements. The Instagram Husband, as a "fun creative act," does indeed "resist dominant paradigms" (in this case, paradigms of ownership and intellectual property), however it still "hews to conventionally sexist tropes" (Marwick, 2013b, p. 12). In this way, the video's creators adapted their creative outlet to existing discourses of gender and social media. The lack of autonomy in the process of taking photos for Instagram may be a sore spot for the Instagram Husbands and is quite telling of their agenda in this pursuit. One real-life Instagram Husband suggested that he is "fortunate" to be an Instagram Husband because his wife frequently asks him to take candid shots of events or activities that are actually happening, rather than a staged photoshoot: "I would have a hard time swallowing it, I think, if it were something that didn't feel like it looked in real life" (as cited in Buxton, 2016). Another Instagram Husband took issue with how his wife "acts natural" in the photoshoots, which suggests that he is uncomfortable with the staged authenticity (as cited in Clark, 2017). The important distinction here is that a candid photo would imply that the Instagram Husband acted autonomously in the creative direction of the photo-taking activity and produced a result that was crafted by his eye – in other words, a desire for the reinstatement of the male gaze and traditional retro masculinity. This implication is further confirmed by Buxton (2016), who described video creator Jeff Houghton's Instagram Husband qualms: "His only current complaint is that his wife tends to look off into the distance and adopt a dramatic pose rather than smiling in photos." Here, Houghton wished for his own fantasy of his wife to be reflected in the visual media that she

crafted for her Instagram profile, and the agency that his wife assumed in this pursuit was

problematic to him because it does not reflect his male gaze (see Figure 10).

Figure 11 Screengrabs of Instagram Husbands in action.
Note. Reprinted from The Mystery Hour. (2015, December 8). Instagram Husband [Video file]. Retrieved from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFzKi-o4rHw

The video utilized irony to promote the gendered claims more so than the real-life examples, particularly in the opening statement. By undermining the meaning of the classic feminist phrase "behind every great man, there's a great woman" to then redefine it as emblematic of the victimization of men serves to both acknowledge and renounce feminism in a truly postfeminist manner. The existence of the camera was utilized to create a confessional for the Husbands through which they duplicitously interacted with the assumed audience (see Figure 11). The men gave knowing glances to the camera when the wives engaged in 'victimizing' behaviors, such as chiding a husband for drinking coffee before she could take a photo, or when the voiceover suggested that "help is out there" (The Mystery Hour, 2015). This video also depicted the familiar premise that male figures act in a certain way around women while hiding the "real man" underneath, such that the camera acted as the outlet for 'true masculinity.' The deepest irony of all, however, was that the Instagram Husbands became famous social media haters *through social media viral fame*. Furthermore, the methods for help, spirituality, medicine, and all other suggested actions related to helping Instagram Husbands or making them more visible were based online and through social networking sides. The deep contradiction here is emblematic of contemporary expressions of mediated gender – an environment in which every action of women is surveilled and critiqued and men are applauded for engaging in the simplest of domestic tasks.

5.3.3 The continued Instagram Husband discourse

The Instagram Husband has been re-contextualized in mainstream media since the video's release. As Michelle Houghton, wife of the video's creator, stated, "Now, if you say, 'Can you be my Instagram Husband?' someone will immediately understand what you're asking them to do," (as cited in Buxton, 2016). Popular media have suggested that musician and producer Jay Z, actor Ryan Reynolds, director Judd Apatow (famed for 'lad flicks'), and even

former President Barack Obama embody the Instagram Husband role, even if there is

evidence of only one photograph being taken (Baila, 2017; Feldman, 2017; Harris, 2016;

Sisavat, 2017). After the Metropolitan Museum of Art's annual event (known as the "Met

Gala"), a high-profile evening for elite celebrities, an article emerged that showed "The best

Instagram Husbands of the Met Gala" (Baila, 2017), all of whom were somewhat famous

men taking photos of their similarly famous wives or girlfriends. Through these

interpretations of the figure, it is now implied that *any* man who is seen taking *any* photo of

his wife, as long as either of them are remotely famous, is thus an Instagram Husband; there

have even been further subversions of this dynamic that do not require the presence of a

woman (see Figure 12). This definition then celebrates the efforts of men in a mundane task,

snapshot photography, for which women have been thanklessly responsible since the dawn of

the medium (Seligson, 2016).

Figure 12 Shared headline and image of a news article referencing the Instagram Husband
Note. Reprinted from Instagram Husband (2017). @ig.husband [Instagram Profile]. Retrieved July 24, 2017, from
https://www.instagram.com/ig.husband/

Finally, after the success of the video, the Instagram Husband has evolved into a paid position. TaskRabbit, an online platform that facilitates small-scale errands and activities, developed a limited-time offer to rent an 'Instagram Husband' for New York Fashion Week (Hamilton, 2016). This offer was aimed at fashion bloggers, and the service was so popular that it was reiterated for the London version of the same event. The price tag for such an arrangement was around USD$45 per hour, and the notion that the gendered aspect of a video inspired a real-life luxury service will surely have great effects on the Instagram Husband and social media discourses in the future.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the Instagram Husband as it was conceptualized by the eponymous short video created by the comedy group The Mystery Hour (2015) and subsequent mediated references that acted to shape the definition of the figure in popular culture. This masculinity figure was inspired by how the photo-sharing social networking app Instagram became involved in the offline world and took shape as a site for self-branding, microcelebrity, and conspicuous consumption. While the actual definition of an Instagram Husband as presented by its creators was not inherently gendered, the masculine-centered name ensured that the discourse of this figure was entrenched in the overall discourse of contemporary gender articulations.

Instagram has become one of the most-used platforms on the internet, and it has emerged as an arena for cultivating fame, regardless of whether fame means having 100 or 100 million followers. Conventional images of traditional celebrity are frequently emulated by ordinary users and those who have already reached some amount of Instafame. For those who can garner enough followers to gain recognition by advertisers, microcelebrity can become an economically profitable career. For those who may not want to follow this path,

their presence and activity on the app can still result in increased cultural capital and self-actualization. As the so-called 'wives' act as aspirational producers and, depending on the content they provide, cultural intermediaries, they become essential players in the brand economy that exists and are steadily increasing throughout social media. Even ordinary users contribute to this economy by viewing, liking, commenting, and sharing such images.

However, traditional celebrity culture follows historical models of various themes, including but not limited to gender, consumption, and status. There have been accusations of narcissism or vanity in regard to social media image use, particularly in regard to digital self-portraits of women. In the online world now, these interactions are key for marketing, whether on a large or small scale, and following conventional symbols is beneficial to crafting a dedicated following. The systemic aspects of the application ensure that traditional gender notions are rewarded through the metrics of the platform and are rearticulated through the algorithms for popularity. This re-articulation acts not to purposefully perpetuate gender dynamics, but to reward that which already gains attention in the interest of marketing.

The Instagram Husband concept seems to be a reaction to engagement in microcelebrity-like behaviors and attempts to craft an Instagram persona that mirrors traditional celebrity and microcelebrity. The creators of the video suggested that their intention was not to make a statement about gender, but rather to discuss some aspect of social media usage and norms; this intended commentary was not explicitly detailed in any of the analyzed interviews. The reality, however, is that their video feeds into, and exacerbates, existing gender ideologies regarding social media usage, and the popularity of the video is representative of how gender is understood in terms of digital photography and Instagram usage. This popularity has further influenced such understandings by suggesting that it is only women who engage in microcelebrity pursuits, and that these pursuits are trivial and burdensome to their intimate relationships. It is possible that these men may wish to eject

themselves from the attention economy altogether, but the Instagram Husband, instead attempts to eject *all* men from the attention economy and technology in a very retrosexual-inspired manner through their suggestions that men are victimized merely for photographing women.

What becomes normalized through this discourse is 1) derision for taking social media use seriously, 2) gender differences continuing to be explained by sexual differences, and 3) a retro sense that the subversion of the male gaze is not acceptable and 4) women are chided for crafting a social media persona. The conceptualization of the Instagram Husband suggests that social media's pull to achieve microcelebrity or to engage in such practices, for whatever reasons, are applicable only to women. The widespread popularity of the term has resulted in a re-contextualization in which male celebrities are now being praised and pitied for taking photos of their female significant others.

Through postfeminist media culture's attention on self-surveillance and constant work on the body and the self, particularly for women, the internalized male gaze has left masculinity in question in regard to visual media. The Instagram Husband figure is a response to this uncertainty, and the interpretable sentiments is a desire for the reinstatement of traditional ideas of gender. The Instagram Husband's retrosexual-inspired desire to return to how life used to be is also articulated through ideas of natural sexual differences, as the stereotype is that men are irritated and disinterested technophobes while all of the women are self-obsessed vanity snobs only concerned with their social media accounts. The creators admittedly knew that this was not representative of real life, but seemingly the desire to produce stereotypically recognizable depictions of gender relations was overwhelming. The success of the video has resulted in meaningful adaptations in other media, including the widespread acceptance of the figure and even a monetized version of this work, which is an interesting gendered addition to the service industry.

This chapter aimed to show how renewed feminist and misogynist discourses have infiltrated mediated gender representations in digital and social media. This figure demonstrates the new manifestations of heterosexism based on how social media has infiltrated societal consciousness, the most common of which is through irony. Through the use of irony, sexist remarks can be hidden and claimed to be just for laughs. Irony allows for deeper contradictions of gender representations in overall media culture, which adds to the ambiguity of how gender is articulated, particularly in this online format. Indeed, perhaps the deepest contradiction in the entirety of the Instagram Husband saga is the celebrity and success which has been achieved by the video's male creators through social media virality, while their video, the crux of their success, derides some of the same common social media practices of females.

6 Conclusion and Future Prospects

This thesis has depicted contemporary gender construction in media through the analysis of two popular masculinity figures, the fuckboy and the Instagram Husband. Through tracing a history of mediated masculinities in the 20th century, it is clear that similar themes of gender have remained consistent even from before the 1980s start of postfeminism in media culture. Research by Rosalind Gill (2003; 2007a; 2007b; 2009a; 2009b; 2014; 2016) on postfeminist media culture and postfeminist masculinities provided a theoretical background through which I drew out the overall themes of tensions between masculinity and femininity within male-centric media figures. The New Man of the 1980s represented a response to second-wave feminism and showed a softer masculinity characterized by enjoyment of feminine-related pursuits. The New Man was presented as the type of man a woman would want to forge a relationship with, but the New Lad of the 1990s asserted that the New Man was inauthentic in his denouncement of the pleasures of "real men," which the New Lad claimed to be beer, sports, and sex with women. New Lad was seen as representative of authentic manhood, which included putting on a New Mannish act when out with women and using irony to express sexist and antifeminist ideas through media, particular lad lit, lad mags, and lad flicks.

A similar story of backlash against feminized masculinity took place in the metrosexual and retrosexual tension. The metrosexual was characterized by many of the same features as the New Man, including a focus on consumerism and self-care. The retrosexual was presented as a direct response to the metrosexual and utilized some of the same hypermasculine attributes as the New Lad while insisting that men should return to their simple roots. The retrosexual, the New Lad, and overall hypermasculinity have been repeatedly portrayed as realistic representations of what real men are like.

As the proliferation of globalization and digitalism developed, so too did media culture and gender politics. Swiftly, the mediated men of the late 20th century morphed into those of the early 2000s. While many claimed that these figures experienced mediated death, so to speak, it is clear through the literature that merely the names of these figures dissipated, but their inherent qualities continue to reemerge in new incarnations that are specific to the sociopolitical moment. Each mediated and gendered figure has existed in tension to another, all of which have embodied the forces within gender tensions of recent times: masculine versus feminine. As media culture has itself been wrapped in contradictory and complex themes, so too have the figures which burst forth from mainstream media. These figures have generally followed a somewhat linear succession. However, rather than think of these masculinities as independent identities with which some men identified at various times, it is important to consider the coexistence and continuity of certain characteristics and their manifestations within these figures. In this way, it becomes possible to view mediated gender representations in tandem with current political and social happenings and the underlying sociocultural atmospheres at the times in which these figures were prominent. By doing so, these figures are exposed as expressions of new and old ideas of gender which are broadcast within the framework of very contemporaneous trends and technologies. With the vast expansion of online media and increased connectivity worldwide, the sheer possibilities for these figures have emerged in both niche and mainstream online spaces.

Recent visibilities of new types of feminism and misogyny have prompted the consideration that postfeminism is no longer a viable tool for analyzing contemporary media culture. Gill (2016) rather has shown that new feminist visibilities are more closely related to postfeminist tenets rather than that political movements of feminism, particularly in how they represent individual choice and overt sexuality as empowering. The upsurge in this popular and commodified feminism has been matched by an upsurge in popular and normalized

misogyny, particularly in online spaces (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Gill, 2016; Jane, 2016). Social media and social networking sites are often the location of contemporary sexism, and the community-forming abilities of these online spaces ensure that people with all different types of ideologies can find like-minded folk with whom to exchange ideas.

On this notion, this thesis examined two prominent figures of masculinity which have arisen very recently in various forms of media and, as such, represent the contradictions of gender in both media and society today. This analysis utilized critical discourse analysis to unpack the entanglements of old and new gendered ideologies and norms as they have been represented in media. These online mediated discourses influence offline scripts, and vice versa. I contend that the fuckboy and the Instagram Husband are two manifestations of toxic masculinity that have been partially affected by the recent rise in popular feminism and popular misogyny. Men's social media usage is now an important aspect of how masculinity is viewed in today's world, and it represents one of many factors in the overall construction of a man.

The two case studies in this thesis demonstrate that social media usage has become intrinsically related to how contemporary masculinity is constructed and understood. In terms of the fuckboy, social media usage points to an immature masculinity that utilizes the affordances of these platforms to manipulate women and engage in sexual encounters with as many women as possible. The fuckboy seemingly only stops being a fuckboy when he decides to mature into a monogamous family man. The Instagram Husband, on the other hand, seemingly has a distaste for social media and social networking, akin to the retrosexual's disavowal of modern technology, but seems not to be concerned with sex at all, possibly because of the marital implications. If the fuckboy and Instagram Husband are viewed together, it could be interpreted that heterosexual men's social media usage is, in some ways, directly related to their intimate interactions with women. The "real man"

discourse of a social media avoider, like the Instagram Husband, is perhaps the next stage in the mediated evolution of the fuckboy: a younger man uses social networking sites and digital media in his boyish quest to indiscriminately 'hookup' with women, and when the man reaches a point of maturity, a woman acts as a catalyst for the man to settle into monogamy and disconnect from social media use. The fuckboy appears as an updated form of laddish masculinity, while the Instagram Husband bears more similarities to the retrosexual.

The contradictions engrained in the discourses of two figures ensure a continued dominance of masculine power, particularly in online spaces. This occurs through many subtleties, such as the derision of women's use of social networking sites, which was popularized and circulated through the Instagram Husband video which itself contradictorily utilized social media to further its message; the men present disconnectivity as a masculine ideal or goal, yet the creators of this video utilized social networking sites to build a community for men who hate social networking sites. This contradiction leads to continued stereotypes of women's social media use as frivolous, which undermines the profitable work that women have found or created online. In terms of the fuckboy, this lying player-type of man is seen as a natural and inevitable part of heterosexual dating life, thus excusing his poor treatment of women online and offline. This is further confirmed by lad flicks of the early 2000s that showed such behavior to be funny.

This is not to say that women are powerless in online spaces or in the discourses of these figures. Indeed, the continued media presence of popular feminism, regardless of how commercialized it is, offers new gendered scripts for appropriate behavior on- and offline, and feminist spaces online continue to grow. As evidenced by *Tinder Nightmares* and the female side of the fuckboy discussion, online spaces for communication, community, and counter-discipline of toxic masculinity have a widespread effect on gender discourses and

will likely continue as such. Through these avenues, women have crafted updated scripts for heterosexual dating life, which has recently coincided with online and mobile technologies, particularly dating websites and dating apps. By creating media that show how "empowered" women react to fuckboys, these female authors affect the discourse of heterosexual dating life. Indeed, it is possible that these counter-discipline practices have rendered authentic masculinity to be considered less authentic.

This thesis is limited in its view of broader gender and sexuality constructions. Further research should focus on how non-binary gender is constructed in today's mediated world and what possibilities exist for those who do not fit into mainstream gendered discourses. As this thesis focused only on masculine figures as they relate to heterosexual and heteronormative functions, future analyses should include media regarding more sexuality preferences. As technological advancements continue, gender discourses will likely take on new properties and pull old ideologies into new contexts, thus consistent reimagining of ideas similar to those presented in this thesis is encouraged. Finally, as online spaces, mobile technologies, and online communication persist, the recent rise of popular feminism and popular misogyny will likely continue to develop, and this is sure to produce interesting scripts in gender politics around the world.

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