Type Cast(e)-ing: Subversion and conformity in the embodied identities of fat male film and television actors

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A Thesis

In

The Department

Of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts (Sociology) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: John Bryans

Entitled: Type Cast(e)-ing: Subversion and conformity in the embodied identities of fat male film and television actors

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Sociology)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Abstract

Type Cast(e)-ing: gendered fatness/embodied identities of male film and television actors

John Bryans

Typecasting of actors in film and television based on physical appearance is common as it facilitates the narrowing of an immense talent pool (Zuckerman et al., 2003). Despite its apparent advantages, however, this categorization process has been criticized for participating in the reproduction of heteronormative standards (Dean, 2008). Research on fatness and masculinity in film is scant and tends to focus on issues of representation (Fouts & Vaughan, 2002). Very little research examines the lived experiences of those men whose work is to perform fatness onscreen. Because of the demands of their work, men in the performing arts are uniquely positioned to offer insight into how the fat male body is constructed in light of contemporary shifting ideals of the male body in popular culture (Morrison & Halton, 2009). In many cases, these men are called upon to embody fat masculinities that have the capacity to both subvert and reinforce hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Buchbinder, 2008; Benson-Allott, 2012). In light of the reductive nature of acting roles for fat men (Gilman, 2004), this research examines how fat male actors negotiate their personal and professional identities and, in doing so, disrupt or conform to heteronormative constructions of the body in popular culture. This thesis draws on findings from a video research project in which fat male film and television actors were tasked with co-creating their own narratives by discussing their experiences as professional actors vis à vis participant-produced video diaries.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Dr. Marc Lafrance for his instrumental support, guidance, and all-around brilliance. I could not have executed such an ambitious project without his unwavering belief in my abilities and willingness to let me create.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Shelley Z. Reuter and Dr. Valérie De Courville Nicol for their commitment to my project, and for their generous and valuable feedback.

I owe a large debt of thanks to Dr. Frances M. Shaver, Dr. William C. Reimer, and Dr. Martin French for the incredible opportunities they have extended to me and for their support during my time at Concordia. Additionally, thank you to the incredible faculty in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

To my fellow graduate students, Nayiri Tokmanciyan and Anne-Marie Turcotte, whose support and input helped me retain my sanity and develop my ideas: thank you.

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology are lucky to have an exceptional administrative staff, and I certainly benefitted enormously from their assistance and support. Special thanks to Sheri Kuit, Eve Girard, and Rebecca Hadida.

This project began during my undergraduate studies at the University of Manitoba under the incredible mentorship of Dr. Moss E. Norman to whom I am greatly indebted. Thank you also to Colleen Plumton, Dr. Jay Johnson, Dr. LeAnne Petherik, and the rest of the faculty and staff in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Manitoba for encouraging me to take this journey.

To my Mum, Dad, Margaret, Jess, Georgia, Janet, Jen, Robin, and all of my friends and family who have loved me and travelled this road with me: I love you.

And lastly, to my guys: Jim Armstrong, Constant Bernard, Bob Kerr, and Nick Settimi. Your generosity floors me to this day. You dove into this project willingly and selflessly, without ever having met me in person, and shared intimate details of your life without question. I find it strange to think we have never met in person and yet here I am dissecting your narratives. I hope that I have done them justice. I cannot thank you enough.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In a December 2014 GQ Magazine interview with Chris Pratt, the lead paragraph of the article trumpeted the actor's conspicuous display of hyper masculinity (target shooting! beer drinking! dove grilling!) and resoundingly exorcized his former "doughy", "doofus-y" image (Magary, 2014). The article went on to describe the audition process for the film, "Guardians of the Galaxy", noting how those charged with casting the film initially considered Pratt's body "too fat" for the role and felt the idea of casting a fat actor in a leading role to be "insane" (Magary, 2014). Ultimately Pratt was cast in the film against type (read: fat), underwent a considerable physical transformation through diet and exercise to play the role, and wound up with a 2015 MTV Movie Award nomination for "best shirtless performance" (Magary, 2014; Katz, 2015). When asked about his former "doughy" identity Pratt remarked, "I'm done with that." (Margary, 2014).

In addition to the GQ article portraying Chris Pratt's fluctuating identity in terms of his gender and body, the article also hinted at how his identity was constructed as part of a collaborative undertaking between himself, his colleagues, and the media in response to industry expectations of how a leading man should behave and, more importantly, look (Magary, 2014). While Pratt had already achieved fame with a considerable body of acting work (his role on the sitcom "Parks and Recreation" being his most recognizable at that point), it was his fat body that was being read as an obstacle to securing roles as a leading man in action movies, a genre known for its muscular, hypermasculine stars (Morrison & Halton, 2009; Magary, 2014). Pratt's fatness had effectively come to signify what Irving Goffman (1963) referred to as a discredited stigma symbol, marking his body as deviant and whose discordance needed to be reconciled for Pratt to be able to successfully market himself as an action star to the film industry. Pratt's deliberate

distancing from his former identity as a funny fat guy (itself a common trope in film and television [Himes & Thompson, 2007]) and altering his physical body into a more marketable "prestige symbol" (Goffman, 1963) allowed him to correct his spoiled embodied identity in order to be read as an action figure and secure the types of acting roles he sought (Magary, 2014).

Discourses pertaining to diet and exercise often oversimplify the complexity of fat to a question of energy consumption and physical activity (Medvedyuk, Ali, & Raphael, 2017), and the Chris Pratt story conveniently offers a pat demonstration of how other fat people might also realize successful transformation. We would not be amiss in assuming that Chris Pratt's self-identity is more nuanced and potentially contradictory than the GQ article implies (GQ, 2014), and yet by adapting his fleshy body to the demands of the industry he was able to recast his image as a sexy, masculine movie star with apparent ease. But what about those whose fatness is not so easily escapable? Who might resist conforming to normative industry standards? If a "spoiled identity" (Goffman, 1963) cannot be entirely recovered, what recourse is available to those who might wish to negotiate the obstacles engendered by their identity? If the social construction of the self is an ongoing interactive process in which individuals continually modify their performance (Goffman, 1959), then I contend that fat male actors must engage in various strategies attending to the constant management of their spoiled identities which are regularly marginalized by industry and cultural hierarchies of embodiment (Goffman, 1963; Murray, Wykes, & Pausé, 2014).

Fat male actors arguably occupy a precarious position between multiple discursive worlds of privilege and oppression as they are simultaneously expected to embody hegemonic standards of masculinity (Connell, 2005), as well as stereotypes of pathetic, deviant, and

clownish fat men as part of their performances (Forth, 2013). These men must reconcile fragmented masculinities that alternate between being big and powerful and soft and feminine (Norman, 2013), between being hyper-heterosexual while also challenging gender norms (Alberti, 2013; Forth, 2013). Given the apparent tension between the privileged position of white masculinity (Usiekniewicz, 2016) and stigmatized fat identity (Joanisse & Synnott, 1999), as well as the adaptive character of power relations that can be reconfigured and operate from multiple contexts and locations (what Demetriou [2001] calls a "hybridization" of hegemonic power), conformity and subversion of normative identity categories are both possible outcomes as these men negotiate their identity (Butler, 1993). In this sense, fat men in the performing arts are uniquely positioned to offer insight into how the fat male body is constructed in light of contemporary shifting ideals of the male body in popular culture (Morrison & Halton, 2009) as these men are called upon to embody subordinate fat masculinities that have the potential to both subvert and yet reinforce hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Buchbinder, 2008; Benson-Allott, 2012).

Research on fatness in film is scant and tends to focus on analyzing media representations of fatness (Fouts & Vaughan, 2002), with almost no research that examines the lived experiences of those men who perform as fat men onscreen. Queer theorists' explorations of the abject cultural "other" have examined the ways in which some actors have disrupted heteronormative stereotypes of the "fat actor" through more nuanced and gender fluid representations of fatness and desirability in their work (Benson-Allott, 2012). This thesis project will examine the complex ways in which gender, sexuality, and body size and shape interlock in producing the performance of fat male actors' identities both onscreen and off. Using a novel and in-depth qualitative research design that invited participants to record four separate video diary entries

about their personal and professional lives, this research will fill a gap in the existent literature on the performances and representations of fat masculinities in popular culture by exploring the everyday lived experiences of fat male actors themselves.

This study will pair a symbolic interactionist framework with performance theory (Brickell, 2003, 2005) to explore how fat male actors in the film and television industry construct and manage their identities not only within the context of a field that often relegates fat men to subordinate and reductive masculinities (Connell, 2005; Himes & Thompson, 2007) but also in light of pathologizing and stigmatizing discourse that produces gendered fat bodies in Western culture (Murray, 2007; Gard, 2011; Monaghan & Malson, 2013). I will draw primarily from Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self (1902), Goffman's theories of impression management (1959) and stigma (1963), as well as Butler's concept of discursive performativity (1990) and the notion of a mimetic process that "others" marginalized bodies in relation to normative categories (1993) in order to explore how an actor's corporeal identity is relationally constructed via the various performative demands encountered in their personal and professional lives. Brickell (2003, 2005) argued that using the theoretical frameworks of Goffman and Butler in tandem can illuminate how multiple gendered and embodied identities are managed in light of powerful regulatory gender norms and it is these two theorists who will largely inform my research project, supplemented by the fields of critical masculinity and critical obesity studies.

By linking up these theoretical frameworks, my intention is to investigate the interplay between the fat body and the social processes that work on them and to what extent this might allow fat male actors to exercise agency with respect to resisting or conforming to the identity performance that is expected of them. While many critical obesity and gender studies tend to take a Foucauldian/discursive/governmentalities perspective (Butler, 1990, 1993; Murray, 2007,

2008; Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015) and symbolic interactionist perspectives have been taken up in the study of fatness (Degher & Hughes, 1999; Joanisse & Synnott, 1999) and masculinity (Wienke, 1998), pairing these two corpuses offers an alternative way to connect discursive power, performativity, and the agentic construction and management of identity in everyday interactions (Brickell, 2003). While it has often been argued that anti-fat discourse produces the fat body (Murray, 2008; Lebesco, 2011), embodied fat identity is also socially and relationally constructed by individual actors (Sobal & Maurer, 1999; Monaghan, 2008b), making this coupling a particularly attractive theoretical framework within which to explore embodied subjectivities in the everyday personal and professional lives of my participants. Given the reductive nature of acting roles for fat men (Himes & Thompson, 2007) and the larger cultural pathologizing of fat bodies (Murray, 2008), I am curious about the strategies engaged in by these men to manage their spoiled identities that might substantiate power relations or find ways to disrupt heteronormative constructions of the body.

At the outset I wish to acknowledge that I am a former professional actor, making me an insider to this community who intimately understands the physical and emotional demands placed on actors working in an industry where work is scarce and competition is fierce (Dean, 2003). My position as an insider in this industry has lent me insight as a researcher that I might not otherwise have been privy to and given the wide acceptance of the classic feminist position, "the personal is political", I feel it is incumbent upon me as a researcher to lend my story and voice to this project in a way that is reflexive and transparent (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Although I do not identify as fat and recognize my privilege as a relatively thin person, I do understand the intense physical scrutiny that actors endure as part of their professional lives. And so, alongside the body story of Chris Pratt mentioned above, I will include my personal narrative

as a professional actor as this has played a large part in the genesis of this thesis project. Indeed, in order to more fully situate myself in relation to my research, I will now spend a moment unpacking some of my history to establish myself as a member of this community and as someone who has the experience to speak to the issues that will be addressed in this thesis.

There is a term in film and television casting known as "finding your hit", which describes the process of a casting director quickly assessing an actor's appearance to make decisions about the types of roles they are suited to play based on appearance. And this "hit", which is often simply a first impression, can have an enormous effect on whether an actor is deemed successful in an audition. Although I was trained in classical theatre, I made most of my livelihood as an actor doing television commercials and my own hit in the commercial world was typically "average joe", "a nice guy", and most often, explicitly heterosexual (I had many "girlfriends" and "wives", and my commercials sold symbolically masculine products such as beer, cars, and sporting goods). The irony of the commercials in which I performed was that I do not drink beer, I ride a bicycle; I am not a hockey fan or much of a sports fan in general; and I am gay. But as far as the directors and producers with whom I worked were concerned, my outward appearance could be read in the ways they wished and, most notably, could sell a product. Despite the discord I felt between how I perceived my personal identity and how others perceived my professional identity, I was careful to cultivate the image that I was asked to perform at work.

A brief anecdote from my own acting career that I think is pertinent with respect to this thesis concerns an audition I had for an HBO series in which my body was explicitly foregrounded as part of the work. I had received a phone call from my agent who informed me that a new television show was holding auditions in Toronto and the casting director wanted me

to come in and audition for one of the lead characters. This was exciting for me because, up until that point in my career, I had mostly auditioned for small speaking parts and commercials. But, as my agent told me, there was a catch with this particular show. The series was being billed as an “erotic drama”, meaning that there would be love scenes in which I would be required to be nude. In addition to reading for the part, the producers were asking the actors to disrobe and show their bodies. This would include taking off my shirt, so they could look at my chest, and then turning around and dropping my pants so they could also look at my butt.

The circumstances of this audition left me feeling conflicted. On the one hand, I knew this was a lead on an HBO series and, although he would never have said this outright, my agent was expecting I would jump at the opportunity. On the other hand, however, I felt embarrassed and vulnerable at the thought of having to display my body so brazenly. At the time, I was overly preoccupied with my body, going to the gym four to five times a week and keeping very active because as an actor (and, not immaterially, a gay man) I knew I had to look my best and keep my body in good functional shape. Rationalizing that this audition was the very thing for which I had been preparing myself, I consented to do the audition. This culminated with me onstage in a studio theatre, joined by the tv director and his assistant (who was operating the camera) as I performed my scene and then dropped my pants. This was not what I had anticipated my career would entail while at theatre school and it was certainly eye opening for me about what I was actually bringing to the table as a performer – selling my body in addition to my craft as an actor. Ultimately, I did not get the part.

In the subsequent thesis I will investigate the impact of embodied typecasting on the performance of identity among four male actors who self-identify as fat by means of video diaries they produced. My intention is to contribute to the existing research on typecasting and

the acting profession, as at present there is virtually nothing in the literature concerning the lived experiences of fat male actors in the film and television milieu. However, I must point out that I am not arguing that fat people are the only people who are typecast due to their so-called difference, but rather that my research and that of others strongly suggests that members of dominant groups are by far the most "mobile" when it comes to acting opportunities (Dean, 2008; Rumens & Broomfield, 2014). This is in keeping with feminist and critical race theory's contention that marginalised people are denied the full range of subject positions that are offered to and bestowed upon those from dominant groups, particularly with respect to representation at the cultural level (hooks, 1990; Snead, 1994).

My literature review will be divided into two parts, with the first part addressing a brief overview of the craft of acting (Naremore, 1988; Strasberg, 1988; Butler, 1991; Bourgoyne, Poulin, & Reardon, 1999; Seton, 2013) and the small but critical body of research on labor conditions and typecasting for actors (Zuckerman et al., 2003; Dean & Jones, 2003; Dean, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008; Rumens & Broomfield, 2014). The second part will examine literature concerning representations of masculinity and fatness on film and how subversion and recuperation of power has been realized onscreen through representations of both hegemonic and non-hegemonic gender performance over time and genre (Palmer-Mehta, 2009; Benson-Allott, 2012; Alberti, 2013). Following this I will compose my theoretical framework by drawing on symbolic interactionism (Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959, 1963), performance studies (Butler, 1990, 1993; Schechner, 2013), critical masculinity studies (Demetriou, 2001; Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Moller, 2007; Atkinson, 2011), and critical obesity studies (Lebesco, 2004; Murray, 2008; Cooper, 2010; Wright & Harwood, 2012) that will provide a scaffold with which to investigate processes of subversion and hybridization, and the

construction and negotiation of identity by my participants. Using a theoretical purposive sampling method (Gobo, 2011) and post-structural analysis (a line of inquiry to illuminate the relationship between the self and the social and to situate the embodied self in relation to social institutions and discourses [Wright, 2004]), I closely examined the video diary entries produced by my participants to explore how they perform their identity as fat male actors and how strategies for managing identity were deployed in the context of narrating their videos, with an emphasis on moments of contestation and the recuperation of spoiled identities. Finally, implications for the fields of study on which this work is based and reflections on the current research will be addressed.

A Slight Note on the Word "Fat"

Before I begin, I think it is important to address one of the assumptions of this project, which is that language and discourse are instrumental to the formation of human subjectivity (Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997). While I acknowledge that the word "fat" is an emotionally charged term that may have negative connotations for some, I initially took my cue from fat activists and theorists who have reclaimed this language to distance themselves from biomedical, moralizing accounts of fat bodies (Murray, 2008; LeBesco, 2011). The term "obesity" is itself the creation of the biomedical sphere and is laden with pre-existing assumptions about normative body shape and size (Wright, 2012). Hegemonic biomedical discourses of "obesity" that are preoccupied with empirical categorization persist in pathologizing so-called overweight bodies as emblematic of disease and epidemic all while legitimizing thin, "healthy" bodies (Murray, 2008). The "obese" body also serves as the antithesis to neoliberal constructions of what constitutes a "healthy" body: a body whose maintenance is the moral responsibility of the individual, whose thinness indicates the achievement of good citizenship by engaging in bodily discipline (LeBesco, 2011; Medveyuk et al., 2013).

However, in devising this study I was cognizant that my participants might not self-identify with the word "fat" and might associate this word with symbolic or actual violence enacted against them because of their size (Monaghan, 2008a). After directly asking them to reflect on language around body size and my use of language in this project, all four of my participants refuted biomedical terms used to describe fat bodies. The men shared the belief that although some words, particularly the word "fat", had been weaponized against them, by the same token these words could have their power revoked by refusing to tip toe around language. Following their lead, in this thesis I will use the word fat as a descriptor and not as a moral value

judgement, eschewing the all-too-often hushed and patronizing tones of body talk in the spirit of speaking frankly and openly about bodies.

Literature Review

Recent calls to action have been made by film industries in Canada, the UK, and the United States for greater minority representation (ACTRA, 2017; Moody, 2017). Lack of diversity both on and off camera hint at the reductive nature of casting in the film and television industry when it comes to minorities (Smith, Pieper, & Choueiti, 2017). The purpose of this literature review is to contextualize the terrain on which the actors in my study construct their embodied identities in light of the tendency towards homogeneity in their industry and will broadly touch on the literature pertaining to acting, labour conditions in the entertainment industry, organizational sociology, and film studies and how this contributes to the practice of typecasting. Drawing largely from the field of organizational sociology, research on typecasting has been primarily concerned with labour market conditions (Zuckerman, 2005; Hsu, Hannan, & Polos, 2011). Interestingly, the main consideration underpinning research on typecasting in the film labour market has been assessing skill level based on an actor's prior body of work, despite evidence that appearance and societal stereotypes also have a significant impact on this process (Zuckerman et al., 2003, Dean, 2005). A small but vital body of research has since emerged concerning the day to day working conditions minority actors face in theatre and film industries, including typecasting, with particular emphasis on how women and gay men navigate this landscape (Dean and Jones, 2003; Dean, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008; Rumens & Broomfield, 2014). In order to illuminate how these latter factors impact typecasting for fat men, it is important to understand how actors construct "reality" vis-à-vis their craft and how this reality is shaped by shifting ideals of masculinity and representations of the male body. I will address these issues in two parts, first I will briefly overview the literature concerning both the craft and labour

conditions of acting, then I will sketch out how scholars have considered visual representations of men on film and their associated cultural assumptions of embodied masculinity.

Acting as Craft

The craft of acting as it exists today emerged from a long tradition of acting theory that traces its origins to the rise of "realism" in Russian drama in the 19th century and then formally developed by Russian actor and teacher, Konstantin Stanislavski (Butler, 1991). Stanislavski's emotional and sensory based technique was developed through the 20th century in the United States, becoming what today is widely known as "method acting" and proliferated by teachers like Lee Strasberg, Uta Hagen, and Stella Adler (Strasberg, 1988; Adler, 1990; Hagen, 2009). According to the tenets of the method, the work of an actor is to strive to bring themselves to a role with utmost realism, using an embodied emotional repertoire that is derived from their life experiences (Strasberg, 1988). Strasberg (1988) believed that, rather than merely imitating human life, actors ought to employ their affective memory as creative fodder in order to embody the character's life fully in their performance. But this requires significant effort on the part of the actor, and Strasberg (1988) cautioned that the body will try to resist conjuring an acutely felt emotional experience with a counter reaction meant to temper the intense emotion, and that this counter reaction must be overcome by the actor to attain true inspiration and aliveness in their acting work. This embodied reification of the self through the performance of a role often dovetailed with an actor undergoing psychotherapy so that they might fully access their interior emotional lives in their work and achieve a high level of authenticity and detail (Strasberg, 1988).

Notwithstanding this ethos of total immersion into the life of a character required for the reproduction of reality, part of the work of an actor lies in maintaining a distinction between

performance and reality (Butler, 1991). Because of this, a given performance is able to maintain a mutually immersive experience for the audience and performers while not posing any actual danger to them (Naremore, 1988). Naremore (1988) posited that the mechanism that allows for this distinction is the cinematic use of what Goffman refers to as 'framing' devices, or the establishing of social cues through which context can be read and understood and through which we can separate performance from reality. In film, according to Naremore (1988), the primary frame that governs our experience is the conceit between filmmakers and audience that they are participating in a theatrical performance, indicated by features such as the movie screen, the theatre, the technical aspects of filmmaking, and the actors in the film. Because the cinematic or theatrical performance (no matter how "real" it appears to an audience or an actor) always makes use of this overarching frame of "performance", the knowledge of fundamental artifice is always in the background signaling that a film is a constructed reality (Naremore, 1988). In the same way that Naremore argued that the frame of theatricality was ever present, Kirby (1972) believed that the actor was always seen in the character, although this is not to say that some acting is not taken as real by an audience, or that actors (particularly those who follow the Method) do not attempt to "believe" wholly in what they are doing. Indeed, Kirby (1972) conceded that this "believing" in the given circumstances of a performance was largely successful in creating performances that are received as authentic (by audience and actor) but reiterated the point that even performances that are received as "real" do not have the effect of negating the fact that they are produced by acting. This knowingness of the constructed nature of a performance was also echoed by Dean (2005) who contended that the audience understands this pretense and can safely take on the part of "voyeur" because of this knowledge, while the actor is given a modicum of distance from the performance that prevents them from losing themselves in their work.

However, this distinction between reality and fiction is often troubled in cinema, particularly with respect to how an audience interprets the identities of actors and the roles they perform onscreen (Boyle & Brayton, 2004; Tal-or & Papirman, 2007). In social psychology research, this blurring between actor and role is known as the "fundamental attribution error" in which the behavior an actor portrays onscreen as a character is mistaken by the audience for their offscreen persona (Tal-or & Papirman, 2007). Boyle and Brayton (2004) referred to actors as inhabiting an intertextual space, meaning that Hollywood stars are produced via the roles they play and their celebrity personas, breaking the so-called fourth wall of a performance so that no matter the role they are playing their persona as "star" is ever-present and colors the audience's perception of their performance. Some celebrities, notably Tina Fey and Seth Rogan, have created work that explicitly trades in their celebrity to produce characters that blur the line between real life and fiction, winking knowingly at the audience (Patterson, 2012; Reinwald, 2014). Unlike celebrities who play up this boundary crossing for intentional effect, the fundamental attribution error is often a complete confusion on the part of audiences between actor and character (Tal-or & Papirman, 2007). This blurring between actor and character is particularly salient for those actors who are typecast, although Tal-or and Papirman's (2007) research focused exclusively on the audience's perception of actors, not on the effects this confusion might have on actors themselves.

Given the popularity of "inside-out" approaches to acting like the Method that prioritize engaging in a deep emotional vulnerability, some actors find themselves unable to manage the boundary blurring that can occur between their real lives and the characters they are playing (Bourgoyne et al., 1999; Seton, 2010). According to Bourgoyne et al. (1999) this blurring can manifest in two ways: an actor "loses" themselves in the performance to the degree that they lose

control onstage, or the role being played is “taken on” by an actor after the performance and can detrimentally impact their personal lives. Arguing that the powerful embodied experience of an actor giving a performance is why this form of storytelling is so enduring and seductive for actors and audiences, Seton (2013) insisted that to say that an actor can “take off” a role could not be considered as anything more than a metaphorical statement. Because the actor embodies the character and the character takes its shape from the embodied life of the actor, the two are intertwined and, according to Seton (2013), to deny this would be a dangerous line of thinking given that embodying characters that require an actor to live out emotionally fraught scenarios can have a profoundly negative effect on an actor’s psyche. In their study of student actors and boundary blurring, Bourgoyne et al. (1999) posited that alongside roles that demand potentially damaging emotional risk, typecasting could also negatively impact an actor’s emotional health, as two of their female respondents who identified as “large” recounted how being typecast according to the cultural meanings associated with their physical appearance negatively affected their self-image. However, and by their own admission, this finding was not fully developed by Bourgoyne et al. (1999) as typecasting was not the focus of their study, and the authors called for more research into the effects of typecasting on actors--albeit only with respect to women. Still, if audiences have come to expect actors to fully inhabit a role so that there is no question about the authenticity of a performance, Naremore (1988) argued that this is due to an expectation that, at their core, the performances that shape cinematic reality are the symbolic manifestation of social structures which are maintained by ideology and representation.

Industry Labour Conditions

If the performing self is a collection of socially derived symbols that are borne out through the actor’s body and transformed into a commodified performance to be sold to

producers in the acting labour market, we can classify this undertaking as aesthetic labour (Dean, 2005). Dean (2005) described aesthetic labour as the use-value ascribed to an actor's embodied performance which is taken up and leveraged by a producer to be sold as a commodity to an audience. Social relations (for example between gender, class, race, etc.) constitute the conditions in the industry through which the aesthetic labour process occurs and in which value attributed to the performance is determined. At the same time, however, these relations appear so common-place they become taken for granted and obscured within the eventual commodified performance that is sold in the labour market (Dean, 2005).The responsibility for creating this value falls to individual (and chiefly) self-employed actors who take up various "body projects" (working out, dressing for an audition, even the embodied work of movement, dance, and voice classes) that reflect the value systems of the social world from which they are drawn and that confer use-value onto their embodied performance (Dean, 2005). Boyle and Brayton (2012), citing Dyer (1986), argued that the unusual position of actors as aesthetic labourers in late capitalist modes of production who both produce themselves as a product and as an element in the eventual product of a feature film, also find the relationship to their labour becoming antagonistic as they age, and their aesthetic value diminishes. Unsurprisingly, feelings of ambivalence and alienation by labourers in this market are hallmarks of a commercial industry that relies heavily on typecasting and values performers for their aesthetics (Zuckerman et al., 2003).

The increasingly high cost of production and the high return on successful films mean that the values underpinning the film industry and their resulting working conditions are characterized by capitalist economic rationalities (Hadida, 2009). In addition to the aesthetic demands actors face, working conditions in the United States film labour market have

increasingly deteriorated following the 2008 economic crash (Christopherson, 2013). Media conglomerates (as opposed to film studios) now determine how productions get funded and distributed to a mass market audience, relocate production to the cheapest markets, and offload risk onto creative workers, resulting in an actor's work life becoming even more precarious due to (among other factors) production time constraints, longer hours, lower pay, and fewer jobs (Christopherson, 2013). In Canada these pressures on production are felt as well[1], as evidenced by the Alliance of Canadian Television and Radio Actors (ACTRA, 2017) lobbying against the trend towards hiring non-union actors in television commercial production and the Canadian Media Guild's report on high levels of employment precarity in reality television (Canadian Media Guild, 2015). While statistics specifically concerning actors in Canada are limited, in 2015 only 22% of actors were represented by a union (Government of Canada Job Bank, 2018) and of those represented by Canadian Actor's Equity (theatre actors) most earned less than twenty thousand dollars in income in 2014 (McQueen, 2017) while actors represented by ACTRA earned an average of approximately eleven thousand dollars in 2008[2] (statistics on film and television actors in Canada are virtually non-existent) (The Star, 2009). Further to this, commercial success and artistic recognition, the complementary yardsticks of a film's overall worth, are predicted based on the commercial and artistic track records of those key players (lead actors, director, producer, writer, etc.) who are involved in a production and greater financial resources (i.e. big budgets) are what draw these key players to a project (Hadida, 2009). Because of high levels of unemployment and uncertainty, tight networks of repeat collaborators are the

[1] Although the industry overall has increased its capital, reporting the second highest numbers on record for overall total investment in commercials, animation, and major productions in Toronto (City of Toronto - Economic Development and Culture Division, 2017).

[2] Average earnings of ACTRA members in 2008 were virtually unchanged from those in 1998 (Newhouse & Messaline, 2007)

norm and offer a way of mitigating risk in an increasingly commercialized market, capitalizing on past successes and offering a sense of community for actors as well as those who work in production (Starkey, Barnatt, & Tempest, 2000).

Typecasting

One strategy employed by industry gatekeepers, such as agents or casting directors, to facilitate decision making and mitigate risk when casting a project is the use of typecasting, a process used to discern skill from a large labour pool that requires labourers to limit themselves to a narrow identity category (Zuckerman et al., 2003). Typecasting typically fixes on an actor's success in past roles to determine future casting (Zuckerman et al., 2003) as well as achieving a high degree of "fit" by hiring actors who are perceived as possessing an embodied characteristic that can be read instantaneously (Dean, 2003). In their longitudinal study of actors' credits on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), Zuckerman et al. (2003) noted that an actor's past credits are given a high level of importance as a way of sorting the unskilled from the skilled because what constitutes acting skill evades precise definition in the film and television market (ergo, more credits of one type are considered to be indicative of talent). Additionally, qualitative interviews conducted with industry players (including actors, agents, casting directors, and producers) by Zuckerman et al. (2003) emphasized the importance of physical appearance in typecasting. Gatekeepers benefit from presenting a slew of candidates to prospective employers whose physical attributes *and* acting credentials fit the requirements of the role being cast, as this promotes efficiency in the casting process as opposed to presenting a range of candidates who do not obviously fit the requirements of the role (Zuckerman et al., 2003). In a labour market that relies heavily on typecasting, once a candidate has been matched with a category the potential to

be considered for a different category is significantly reduced, as gatekeepers are incentivized to expedite production of the project (Zuckerman et al., 2003).

Actors are often confined to playing a narrow range of roles that do not reflect the actual acting skill that they may possess and are instead hired based on heuristics that facilitate the casting process and minimize financial risk (Zuckerman et al., 2003). The pressure to mitigate risk placed on casting directors leads them to be overly cautious in terms of the options they will present to producers, favoring prospective actors who easily fit a type and will not jeopardize the reality of the narrative being produced (Dean, 2008). In Dean's (2007) qualitative interviews with actors about the audition process she found that looking "right" for the part was prioritized by participants, who believed that typecasting was partly due to an emphasis on achieving realism for the sake of audience buy-in. This was supported in Dean's (2008) follow-up research interviewing gatekeepers in the industry about the casting process that found actors were hired because they were perceived by casting directors to already embody a physical quality of the role being cast ("does she read as a mother figure?" [p.172]), not because the actor possessed any skill at transformation. There was agreement among gatekeepers that talent was part of the assessment in terms of casting, but equally important was that the person fit the "look" of the part and could convey symbolic meaning through the embodiment of social norms (Dean, 2008).

While typecasting inevitably affects all actors it has particularly negative repercussions for women (especially older women), ethnic and sexual minorities, and actors with disabilities who find themselves furthest away from embodying the standard-bearing white heterosexual male (Dean, 2007). Patriarchal ideologies not only shape the roles that women are hired to perform, but despite the non-standard nature of the labour performed by both men and women in the industry, women continue to be paid less, have fewer roles/jobs, and have shorter careers

(Dean, 2003). Adding to this, the performing labour market is not merely segmented along singular lines of gender, race, age, sexuality, etc., but within these markets are multiple internally segmented markets that encompass intersecting social categorizations i.e. “women under 40”, “women over 40”, “dark skinned black women”, “light skinned black women” and these segmentations can continue as far as our imaginations regarding social categorization can take us (Dean, 2003). And although ethnic minority women, ethnic minority men, and white women could arguably all be seen as being similarly disadvantaged by the industry, Dean (2008) found that ethnic minority women were more severely limited by this discrimination. Dean (2008) also observed that tokenism was widespread in the industry and that when they were called upon, ethnic minority performers were often asked to embody racial stereotypes, and when perceived as being unable to embody the stereotype in question (for being too "black", too well-spoken, etc.) they found themselves missing out on jobs (Dean, 2008). Because there are no adhered to standards and practices when it comes to diversity in casting, Dean (2008) argued that it is left to the individual caprice of what is generally a heterosexual, white male lens operating through gatekeepers in the industry to determine who is cast in what role.

Pressure to properly meet the expectations of social stereotypes, and the repercussions for failing to do so, was echoed in Rumens and Broomfield’s (2014) study of gay male actors in the industry. Despite notions that the arts are a safe haven for queer people, gay men in this study reported facing potential discrimination based on their sexual identity, causing them to either be closeted or attempt to approximate what they perceived as the desired heteronormative comportment necessary to win over a casting director and obtain employment (Rumens & Broomfield, 2014). Once again, the line appeared to be blurred between performer and role, as the general consensus among respondents was that if an actor were out, knowledge of their

personal lives would colour how gatekeepers in the industry and audiences would perceive them, regardless of the quality of their acting technique. The authors also noted a double-bind working on these men, as they were subject to penalization for being out as gay men by being precluded from “straight” roles but were also denied access to “gay” roles by casting directors who sought out straight actors because they could play gay characters that were required to act more “masculine” (Rumens & Broomfield, 2014).

Despite attempts by Rumens and Broomfield (2014) to recognize gendered power dynamics—such as how privileging the voices of gay men might be misconstrued as a claim to authority at the expense of other queer voices--a disappointing oversight in this work is any analysis of how the men in this study might benefit from the overwhelming gender disparities that exist in the industry (Dean, 2003). Rumens and Broomfield (2014) believe that gay male actors are categorized by gatekeepers under a generic "gay" label that precludes them from being cast in a variety of roles that require a diverse range of gender performances. The authors also claim that such is not the case for heterosexual male performers whom, they believe, escape such narrow definitions. While gay men in the industry certainly face discrimination and outright homophobia in the workplace (certainly this was my own personal experience), the framing of gay men solely as victims of patriarchal and homophobic oppression by Rumens and Broomfield (2014) unfortunately does not engage critically with how gay men simultaneously benefit from male privilege and are marginalized for their sexual identity (Shugart, 2003). Conversely, it would be remiss to deny that heterosexual men enjoy a privileged position in the industry as Coston and Kimmel (2014) contend, but this also overlooks, as Dean (2005) argued, the likelihood that all male actors are negatively impacted to some extent by patriarchal gender relations and power imbalances in the industry (although as Kimmel [2004] points out, while

some men suffer greatly under patriarchy, to only see the suffering of men in relation to other men is to ignore the privileges they benefit from as men in relation to women). This reductive categorizing is most evident in how men have been represented onscreen and it is to this issue that I now turn so that we might begin to see how different kinds of men are constrained and privileged by prevailing cultural expectations.

Representations of Masculinity Onscreen

Over the past forty years, critical analyses of masculinity in popular culture and media have become more commonplace (Hundley, 2013) and a common strand of this work has examined how men have become subjected to increasingly stringent ideals of embodied hegemonic masculinity (Morrison & Halton, 2007; Tasker, 2012; Dallesasse & Cluck, 2013). As Connell notes, hegemonic masculinity retains a very public quality as it links the institutional and the cultural, where masculine ideals are transmitted at the regional (nation-state) level through public figures such as politicians, sports figures, and movie stars, providing a cultural framework for carrying out masculine practices in local contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Commodification of the male body (Alexander, 2003) and the rise in locating male identity through body modification projects such as working out at the gym (Gill, Henwood, & MacLean, 2005) have garnered attention alongside the increased proliferation of flawlessly "ripped" and "shredded" male bodies on display in film and television (Morrison & Halton, 2007; Dallesasse & Cluck, 2013). In their analysis of top grossing action films, Morrison and Halton (2007) found that muscular characters in movies were more likely to be romantically involved, to have a sexual encounter, to achieve a positive outcome, to use weapons, and be physically aggressive. The study of action film characters by Morrison and Halton (2007) is also noteworthy for demonstrating that the rewards allocated to performances of embodied

hegemonic masculinity on display in these films operates on a continuum with respect to body size as well as age. Younger muscular characters in these films reap more rewards than their older fat counterparts, indicating that representation of multiple forms of masculinity onscreen function as a way for hegemonic masculinities to be framed over and against subordinate masculinities (Morrison & Halton, 2007).

In contrast to the intensely lean and excessively muscular idealized male body, portrayals of fat men are often reductive and stereotypical (Fouts and Vaughan, 2002; Morrison & Halton, 2007; Forth, 2013). This is unsurprising since, as scholars like hooks (1990) and Snead (1994) have noted, all too often the members of dominant groups are given more options and opportunities for self-development and expression than members of minority groups. Further, representations of fatness and masculinity in popular culture, to borrow from Butler (1993), sculpt the body into a historical and cultural shape, one that is often reduced to a paradoxical view of fatness, with the palatable (i.e. jolly, prosperous) fat man on the one hand and the distasteful (i.e. pathological, morally corrupt) on the other (Fouts & Vaughan, 2002; Gilman, 2004; Himes & Thompson, 2007; Forth, 2013). In their content analysis of representations of fat men on television sitcoms, Fouts and Vaughan (2002) noted that fat men are underrepresented compared to their thin counterparts and fat characters often engage in negative self-referential commentary. Forth (2013) argued that although body size can be read as powerful and physically imposing in film, fat villains in film noir have historically been portrayed as unlovable gluttons with appetites that symbolize an "out of control" identity. While representation of the fat male body can elicit multiple readings, stereotypical tropes continue to contribute to stigmatizing fat bodies onscreen rather than allowing for a fully realized human experience (Himes & Thompson, 2007).

While portrayals of fatness in the media tend to oscillate between the funny fat guy (Himes & Thompson, 2007) and the pathetic bad guy (Forth, 2013), some actors have successfully subverted the stereotypical tropes foisted on them and their representations of fatness have put forward alternative readings of the fat male body (Benson-Allott, 2012). The performances captured in these films are credited with disrupting or "queering" what San Filippo (2012) calls a "compulsory monosexuality" in film, in which embodied categories of sexuality and romance are questioned and resisted within the narrative of the film. As Benson-Allott (2012) illustrated in her critical examination of the career of actor Phillip Seymour Hofmann, marginalized sexualities and modes of embodiment were made visible by Hoffman in his mainstream Hollywood films through the performances enacted by his fat body (Benson-Allott, 2012). Hoffman was able to make a career out of performances that subverted heteronormative ideals of what is an acceptable male body, even winning a Best Actor Academy Award for his performance of Truman Capote. By depicting his fatness and sexuality with a nuance and humanity that is often lacking in portrayals of larger bodies, Hoffman disturbed Hollywood's compulsory heteronormative desire typically reserved for the aesthetically beautiful, and reimagined what constitutes a sexual, desirable male body onscreen (Benson-Allott, 2012).

More recently there has been a turn towards examining destabilized masculinity and narratives of masculinity in crisis, in which fascistic bodily ideals are traded in for an embodied "brutal honesty" in the depiction of male insecurities about changing gender roles on film (Buchbinder, 2008; Alberti, 2013). Alberti (2013) argued that "bromances" (a combination buddy movie/romantic comedy), a subgenre credited to writer-director Judd Apatow, challenge the role of the male romantic comedy hero as male characters grapple with the confusion of reconciling compulsory heterosexuality/hegemonic masculinity with an increasingly destabilized

notion of masculine subjectivity. This is borne out through the bodies of the bromance stars, as historically hegemonic "alpha male" portrayals have come to be an untenable destabilizing force in the face of changing gender relations, finding suitable replacement by the "beta males" of the bromance (often played by actors like Seth Rogan, Jonah Hill, and Michael Cera) (Alberti, 2013). The "average" physical embodiment of these actors and the bromance narratives have come to symbolize an increasingly anxious brand of masculinity reflecting the insecurities associated with male identity in the wider culture (Alberti, 2013). This seemingly novel depiction of introspective "real" men raises the question: does the phenomenon of the beta male on film indicate a new democratization of available masculinities (Reinwald, 2014), or is it merely the reconfiguring of hegemonic masculinity such that the beta male might enjoy the spoils formerly reserved for the alpha male (Buchbinder, 2008)?

While the rise of the bromance is revealing in terms of changing attitudes towards masculinity, further examination of how the problem of these masculinities is resolved reveals that these "beta male" characters are often able to recoup some of the social capital lost by way of their spoiled male identities (Palmer-Mehta, 2009; Alberti, 2013). These cinematic representations of subordinate masculinities, whom Buchbinder (2008) referred to by the Yiddish term, "schlemiel" (a pathetic awkward man, often an embodied category), serve as both a balm for working through contemporary anxieties about masculinity in crisis and, quite crucially, as a reconfiguration of patriarchal dominance. On the surface, the proliferation of cinematic representations of subordinate masculinity and seemingly greater diversity in the types of men playing leading roles appears to indicate that a power shift has occurred in contemporary gender relations, and yet these (mainly straight and white) subordinate masculinities grappling with contemporary anxieties about the role of men manage to establish themselves as a new kind of

hegemonic masculinity who succeed despite their perceived shortcomings (Palmer-Mehta, 2009). These men save the day, overcome the villain, and most importantly get the girl (Buchbinder, 2008). While the traditional male-centered heterosexual relationships and identities being scrutinized in the Judd Apatow bromances may be viewed as a source of confusion and discontent for men, whatever the anxieties driving the dramatic action might be, all the films eventually resolve themselves in the classic Hollywood resolution, heterosexual marriage (Alberti, 2013).

Further to updating and reaffirming narratives of heroic masculinity, subordinate masculinity in popular culture also reasserts its dominance in opposition to women, racialized men, and non-normative bodies (Shugart, 2003; Palmer-Mehta, 2009). Straight white men who do not approximate the physical ideal of the traditional leading man, are able to strategically position themselves by deploying misogynistic, homophobic, and racist tropes, as Palmer-Mehta (2009) demonstrated in her analysis of how "mediocre masculinity" is able to succeed despite its being relatively unremarkable. Using the context of the late night comedic talk show, "The Man Show", Palmer-Mehta (2009) contends the hosts of the show, Jimmy Kimmel and Adam Corolla, are able to temper their own mediocre masculine embodiment, for example Jimmy's hairy fat body, by overtly exploiting more marginalized identities, as portrayed by type-cast actors on the show (for example, the ornamental female dancers nicknamed the "Juggy Girls", the "smart Chinese kid" character, and the "court jester dwarf" character). This recouping of seemingly lost masculine power is not always achieved through blunt displays of heterosexual dominance but finds ways to rearticulate social hierarchy by exploiting marginalized masculinities through subtler means (Shugart, 2003). For example, the gay male characters in *Will and Grace* and *My Best Friend's Wedding* who act as tools for normalizing patriarchal heteronormative discourse in

their pseudo-romantic misogynist relationships with stereotypically needy, predatory women (Shugart, 2003). While representations of masculinity onscreen are not always presented as traditional, it is often in their relationship to other marginalized identities that the reassertion of powerful social hierarchies becomes evident as a consequence of contemporary film and television.

Complicating the critical analysis of media representation is the sometimes-myopic, shallow conceptualizing of power in the very literature that studies these portrayals itself (Alberti, 2013). In his discussion of the opening credits of the Judd Apatow film *Knocked Up*, a scene in which the white "beta" male stars (Jonah Hill, Seth Rogan, Jason Segal, Jay Baruchel) engage in infantile "party" antics while underscored by the rapper "ODB" singing sexually explicit lyrics, Alberti (2013) argued that the use of black hypermasculinity (signified by hip hop music) was used ironically to further underscore the infantilized, white masculinity in crisis. Arguing that the use of hip hop in this scene highlights the absurdity of the failed white masculinity on display at first seems to be a reasonable claim (Alberti, 2013), although this overlooks the possibility of a subtler reading of the scene. Casting their spoiled white identities against the exaggerated bravura of hip hop may be a critique of how white men appropriate blackness to recoup the loss of power, but in making this extreme contrast it nevertheless (and perhaps unwittingly) perpetuates a racist stereotype, the threatening, hypermasculine, hypersexualized black man (Snead, 1994; hooks, 2001; Usiekniewicz, 2016), while removing the cultural intelligibility of hip hop from its intended context. The use of black stereotypes in a movie made by white men and starring white male actors (there are no leading or supporting black characters in *Knocked Up* [IMDb, 2018]) is made all the more distasteful given recent nuanced portrayals of black masculinity in movies like *Moonlight* that challenge the tropes

traded in by movies like *Knocked Up* (Jordan & Brooms, 2017). For Alberti (2013) the contrast between the infantile white masculinity and the hypermasculine black masculinity is meant to be taken solely as a humorous ironic dig at the former, but he fails to note the social/representational costs in that while the white men in this movie are given the chance to recuperate their temporarily misplaced masculine power, black men are never meaningfully heard from again after the opening credits.

The goals of the preceding literature review were two-fold: to provide an overview of the craft and labor conditions of actors, and to sketch out the changing representations of masculinity in contemporary cinema. While there has been increased interest in examining representations of fatness, and certainly masculinity, on film by researchers (Fouts & Vaughan, 2002; Gilman, 2004; Himes & Thompson, 2007; Shary, 2012; Forth, 2013), one of the limitations of the typecasting and acting literature is that fatness is only ever given a cursory examination, typically in relation to women (Bourgoyne et al., 1999; Dean 2005), or else overlooked altogether as a line of analysis in the study of men (Rumens & Broomfield, 2014). What follows in this thesis will fill the gap in the literature and attempt to bridge the two broader domains of cultural production and cultural product, and the affect these have on the everyday lives of the actors who find themselves caught in this nexus.

Theoretical Framework

In assembling my theoretical framework, I will touch on four relevant theoretical corpuses as they pertain to the production and performance of fat male identity in film and television actors, while addressing some of the criticisms levelled at these approaches. First, I will draw on the field of symbolic interactionism to conceptualize embodied and gendered performance as an interactive accomplishment of identity (Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959, 1963; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Next, I will turn to performance studies and definitional distinctions within this field (Schechner, 2013; Schwandt, 2014). In particular, I will anchor my work using the concept of mimesis elaborated by Judith Butler which posits that categorical distinctions are maintained through the notion of an "original" positioned over and against a "copy" (1990) and will focus on how the seeming "reality" of a coherent gendered subject is actually an unstable effect of discursive performativity. According to Butler (1993), normative gender identity must be continually reasserted over and against the marginalized other in order to appear intelligible, but it is in light of this incessant imperative to maintain coherency that its instability becomes apparent and opportunities for gender to be subverted, and even reconfigured, become possible. Next, I will draw from the work of sociologist Chris Brickell (2003; 2005) to consider how symbolic interactionism might be linked with performance studies as a framework for investigating how social theory can locate subversive acts as the outcome of human agency without foregoing the influence of powerful social norms. Additionally, I will link performance theory to the enactment of gender, specifically masculinity, as a hybridization (Demetriou, 2001) or pastiche (Atkinson, 2011) that effects new forms of patriarchal power through the reconfiguration of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). Lastly, I argue that the social construction of the fat body is also derived from the legitimizing power of mimesis, as the

performative fat body is invoked by moral, political ideology as well as questionable discursive medical categorizations such as the Body Mass Index (BMI), relegating it to abject status.

Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic Interaction is a social constructionist theoretical perspective attending to the collaborative and interpretive creation of symbolic meaning through social interaction, which gives rise to individual action and the constitution of the self (Blumer, 1969; Sobal & Maurer, 1999). Primarily attending to the micro-sociological aspects of social relations (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959), the perspective often adopts an in-depth qualitative methodology focusing on comparative case study and participant observation (Blumer, 1969; Handler, 2009). While symbolic interactionists have been critical of positivist sociology that seeks to generalize through quantitative analysis (Handler, 2009), interactionists such as Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) sought to establish a valid qualitative approach that was grounded in empirical social science and from which theoretical claims could be made about the social construction of subjective meaning and interpretation. Still, methodological approaches in the discipline have tended to distance the field from positivist epistemology and criticism has often been leveled at the lack of validity and scientific rigour associated with theorists such as Cooley and Goffman (Schegloff, 1988; Jacobs, 2009).

Despite this purported lack of rigour, Cooley's sociological theory, in particular his concept of the Looking-glass Self, has been highly influential with respect to subsequent work in the interactionist field (Scheff, 2005; Scheff, 2011). According to Cooley (1902), social interactions engage individuals in a creative process in which we imagine how others perceive and evaluate us, leading to an emotional response that serves as an impetus for our

actions/behavior. It is this imagined-self, reflected back at us through our interaction with others, that forms the basis of our own subjectivity (Cooley, 1902). Over one hundred years later and the concept continues to have significance for social science research, for example in Litt's (2012) exploration of online identities cultivated for an imagined audience via social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The looking-glass self has had a profound influence on interactionist theorists, with Goffman's theory of impression management arguably serving as Cooley's heir apparent (Scheff, 2005).

In Goffman's (1959) formative work, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, identity is achieved through a creative interactive process that is "dramaturgical" in nature. In and through this process a series of performances are assumed by an actor that are continuously monitored and adjusted to ensure that this produced self is successfully received by an audience as authentic (Goffman, 1959). Authentic performance is predicated on normative social constructs that adhere to accepted interpretations of social behavior and conforms to the physical setting or "frame" that complements and gives symbolic and literal meaning to a performance (Goffman, 1959). Although Goffman felt his work was more closely aligned with Durkheim and structuralism than with the microsociology of interactionism, Scheff (2005) argues that Goffman's performance management theory was in fact more closely aligned with that of Cooley, given the level of attention paid to the management of emotions that arise from the perception of a successful or failed social interaction.

Scheff (2005) notes that the management of emotional responses resulting from social interaction (what Cooley called "self-feeling" emotions) are important aspects of both the looking-glass self theory and impression management theory (Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959). Cooley (1902) initially specified both pride and shame as the two potential emotional outcomes

of the looking-glass self, and Goffman (1959) further developed this, arguing that the management of emotional outcomes, particularly those that are shame-based, are an essential component in the construction of the self (Scheff, 2005). While both Cooley and Goffman posited that the experience of either shame or pride is predicated on how well we are able to approximate social norms of behavior in our interactions, Cooley strongly implied that the intersubjectivity of the looking-glass process was outside of awareness ("We live in the minds of others without knowing it") (Scheff, 2005). For Goffman (1963), however, shame leads to an acute awareness that serves as the impetus for managing our behaviour as we seek to present a self to the world that is recognised by others.

Goffman's (1963) study of stigma offers a useful framework for understanding how marginalized individuals/groups experience shame as the result of an undesirable attribute that marks them as "other" in contrast to those whose identity falls within the limits of normalcy. These attributes can be hidden from plain sight ("discreditable"), or visible to others ("discredited"), but are in both cases managed by those afflicted by them. Goffman (1963) argues that stigmatized individuals must manage their "spoiled identities" by either obscuring their defect or adapting to the expectations placed on them by social norms, thereby creating a performance that is more or less received by others as normal. Goffman (1963) believes that marginalized individuals who are unable to replicate idealized social conduct and therefore enact a form of deviance are most reliant on impression management to reconcile stigma. Additionally, according to Goffman (1963), stigmatized individuals may seek out others with similar stigmatizing attributes for support or, conversely, may reject their own peers due to their own internalized aversion to the stigmatized attribute.

In the social sciences fat stigma has been covered extensively (Puhl & Latner, 2007), with Goffman's stigma theory first applied to body size in Cahnman's (1968) essay detailing the relational process of ascribing negative meaning to fat bodies. Stigma research concerning fatness is often centered around the management of spoiled fat identities and the strategies employed by individuals to cope with discrimination (Joanisse & Synnott, 1999; De Brun, McCarthy, McKenzie, & McGloin, 2014; Barlosius & Phillips, 2015). Individuals may manage stigma in order to conform to normative pressures without critical examination of those same underlying norms, as evidenced by Barlosius and Phillips (2015) in their exploration of how young people internalize fat stigma and discourses of personal responsibility and how these manifest in negative presentations of the self. However, De Brun et al. (2014) found that individuals may also engage in what they termed "narrative resistance", actively rejecting the negative categorizations and depictions of the fat body that are bound up with bodily norms that are dictated by ostensibly scientific metrics like the BMI. Nevertheless, Carnavale (2007) cautions that while Goffman's theory remains a valid framework for researchers, its tendency to portray individuals with stigmatic qualities (particularly disabled people) as relatively powerless does not go far enough in offering a means of pragmatic resistance to structural oppression for marginalized groups.

One of the criticisms often levelled at micro sociological approaches like symbolic interactionism is that the focus of analysis too often centers on the collaborative elements of constructing meaning, resulting in the downplaying of macro sociological forces that underpin shared symbolic meaning (Vom Lehn & Gibson, 2011). In her overview of critical studies of the body, Blackman (2008) noted that we come to understand our embodiment not only through human interaction but through the macro sociological processes (i.e. cultural inscription) that

inform how we understand the materiality of our bodies. Blackman further argues that by attending to how culture is inscribed on the body (as feminist and critical race studies have done, for example) discussions of self and identity can begin to reconcile the micro/macro dualisms that have traditionally been so pervasive in sociological identity theory. Oversight regarding the impact of social and cultural structures can also result in neglecting the role of power that shapes our everyday interactions, how that power is conferred to certain individuals but not others, and how it can be deployed as a resource in interactional settings by those who wield it (Misheva, 2009). A notable exception to this oversight is the ethnomethodological work on "doing gender" by West and Zimmerman [1987], in which the notion of gender as a managed interactive micropolitical process is explicitly tied to institutional and cultural discourses of capitalism and patriarchy.

Performance studies

Often considered to have both emerged from the symbolic interactionist tradition (Poggio, 2006) and established itself as a new discipline, performance studies advance a multitude of possibilities for exploring the production of identity and symbolic meaning (Schechner, 2013). With roots in theatre and drama, performance studies have evolved to encompass a varied field that has surpassed traditional scripted performance and often evades precise definition (Worthen, 1998; Schechner, 2013). Despite resisting a unified theory of performance that could stifle the adaptable and inventive character of the field, Schechner (2013) argued that many useful connections might be articulated between performance studies and the social sciences, especially with respect to the study of semiotics (Austin, 1962), theories of behaviour (Goffman, 1959), and interactions in everyday life (Turner, 1982), expanding

performance beyond the theatrical realm and blurring the boundaries between the real and the performed.

Establishing definitional distinctions between the seemingly interdependent concepts of performance, performative and performativity is of particular concern in the field of performance studies in part, because there has been so much confusion regarding the definitions and applications of each term (Schechner 2013; Schwandt, 2014). “Performance” can be thought of as an act or event that is preceded by a subject who assumes the performance (the “doing”) of this act or event through role play and ritual (Eldridge, 2005; Schwandt, 2014), with the aforementioned dramaturgical work pioneered by Goffman (1959, 1976) being an example of this concept. Conversely, the term “performative”, which can be traced back to Austin’s (1962) formative work on speech-act theory, refers to the capacity of language statements to accomplish an action, the classic example being the phrase “I do” spoken to seal a marriage ceremony. Austin’s performative linguistic acts are a precursor to Butler’s (1988) use of “performativity” by which gender identity is reified through repetition of discursive acts. Butler’s (1988) concept of performativity posited that it is through the repetitive act of naming an object (in this case a sexed identity) that said object comes to signify a seemingly “natural” origin, obscuring the underlying social processes that constitute this object.

For Butler (1988), gender identity does not emerge as the expression of a subject’s free will, but rather is the product of powerful norms whose legitimacy must be continually reiterated through the stylized repetition and recitation of gendered acts shaped by and through discourse. Explicitly distancing herself from Goffman, in her early work Butler (1988) rejected the deliberate theatrical quality of a “performance” undertaken by an actor and the seemingly agential quality given to “doing gender”, and instead argued that the very notion of our selfhood

and interior psychic subjectivity was made possible by internalizing gender norms which are then compelled over and over through performative acts learned from birth. Unlike a theatrical performance where the lines between reality and fiction are maintained by the performer, performativity is so deeply entrenched that discursive articulation becomes cloaked in a powerful illusion of reality that gives our internal subjectivity, the so-called “I” of human consciousness, its ontological status (Butler, 1988). Butler (1993) argued that there is no subjective “I” before discourse, and the notion that an individual may claim a pre-social, biologically determined gender identity is a fiction made credible by the taken for granted, predetermined character of gender relations in society.

However, Butler (1993) should not necessarily be accused of espousing a purely constructionist view that would deny human subjects the potential for purposeful action, as she herself claimed a position that exists in the space between the culture/agency binary that so often permeates sociological theories of gendered embodiment (Osborne, Segal & Butler, 1994; Blackman, 2008). As Butler (1988) asserted early on: “The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly pre-given cultural relations. But neither do embodied selves pre-exist the cultural conventions which essentially signify bodies.” (Butler, 1988, p. 526) Although there is no subject that exists prior to gendered construction (the "I" of self-consciousness being invoked through gender-related discourse), neither is there a singular, deterministic matrix that constitutes us as homogenous subjects (Butler, 1993). Butler (1993) maintained that it is not a matter of "discourse constructs the subject" any more than it is "the subject constructs discourse", rather it is that through our subordination to and internalization of powerful norms that we become subjects. Paradoxically, it is the internalization of socially determined regimes of power that initially shapes and enables our subjectivity which allows us to

later act and resist the terms of our subordination to norms (Butler, 1997). In other words, inherited norms are both the condition of our agency and its limit (Olson & Worsham, 2000). Human capacity to radically refigure the conditions of gendered selfhood, as Butler proposes (1993) suggests a degree of agency, but an agency that is made possible, ironically, by the normative desires and attachments that are at the foundation of subject formation in infancy and childhood (Butler, 1997).

Underscoring the establishment of gendered selfhood is a process of mimesis, through which normative gender identity is formed over and against the abject that exists outside the limits of what are deemed to be legitimate forms of subjectivity (Butler, 1993). Further, dominant gender norms are intrinsically linked to heterosexuality, as our gender expression is made legible through our sexual behavior, giving normative gender expression – yoked as it is to a normative sexual orientation -- its appearance of being the coherent "original" while the "copy" of homosexuality is rendered an illegitimate and abjured position. Butler (1993, 2004) contested the notion of an "original" altogether, arguing that homosexuality is to heterosexuality as a "copy" is to a "copy"; both are constructs and their coherence is defined by what she termed their *constitutive outside,* meaning as much by what they are not as what they are. Crafting a singular sexual identity always becomes haunted by what is excluded, as Butler says, "the more rigid the position, the greater the ghost" (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994, p.115). Because they reveal the constructedness of the category of "original", the abject and unliveable become the very thing by which we can question the limits of acceptable gender expression and critically redefine what it means to have "symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility" (Butler, 1993, p.3).

Because our subjectivity relies on the continuous rearticulation of discursive power that is pregiven by the governing regulatory norms of what Butler (1993) initially termed the

"heterosexual matrix", the possibility for subversion lies in the spaces that exist between the repetition of performative gendered acts (Butler, 1996). By refusing to claim a normative subject position for ourselves, we might disrupt the hegemony of categories, and destabilize the norms we are compelled to perform, by calling into question the legitimacy of both the norm and the abject (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994). In fact, it was in Butler's move away from using the term "heterosexual matrix" when defining the power relations through which subjects are compelled, to her use of the term "heterosexual hegemony" that a means of subversion became theoretically workable. Butler insisted that "hegemony" implied a degree of malleability in the norm because hegemony must always be rearticulated in order to legitimize its power, implying that power is not absolute and that structures can also be come derailed (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994). Butler's (1990) intention was to open up gender practices and the potential for rearticulation and contestation, making a deliberate attempt in her work to avoid being prescriptive in terms of how one should adopt gender or sexual practices. Even those categories that could be considered "subversive" had their status called into question, as all categories should be rendered unstable (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994).

Butler (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994) espouses an intentional "degrounding" that troubles how identity categories are taken up by deliberately calling their ontological status into question. Butler avows a position of resistance that involves neither accepting nor denying these categories but challenging their limits in order to keep them "alive" as possibilities and maintain the viability of multiple potential subjectivities (Olson & Worsham, 2000). Although citing an identity category and claiming it is necessarily a flawed position in that the very act of citing excludes the possibilities that exist outside of the category, for Butler it is a necessary evil in order to leverage the political utility of a category in order to extend rights to a plurality of

disavowed identity categories (Olson & Worsham, 2000). Butler herself (2016) both takes up the terms “queer theorist” and “feminist” (albeit reluctantly) as a political position and resists them as a way of “dis-identifying” and degrounding the subject positions that are often imposed on her and which limit her to intellectual and personal projects that are perceived to be part of her purview as a “queer theorist” or “feminist”. Dis-identification does not seek one unifying identity to serve a political goal, but rather it is the advancement of political goals that don't require a normative touchstone of identity that can make space for a plurality of identities that exist on the margins, and in this way dis-identification makes space to include the abject in political action (Butler, 1993).

Despite the suggestion that subversive practices are often enabled by the very norms that condition our capacity for action, Butler did not believe that this meant subversion was a calculable effect whose outcome could be predicted (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994). An act of degrounding that calls into question the ontological status of identity categories is an inherently risky undertaking as it also threatens the continued coherence of the subject that undertakes this act of subversion (Olson & Worsham, 2000). This is assuming that an act of subversion is successful at all, as Butler contends that subversion is a negotiation and as such can be recuperated, even easily recuperated, particularly when the act of subversion is intentional (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994). The priority Butler gives to power regimes over subjective agency suggests that despite our best intentions recuperation of power is more likely than subversion in the negotiation of subversive acts (Mills, 2000). That said, in an interview with Olson and Worsham (2000), Butler recounted a story in which a young boy abruptly called out to her on the street, “Are you a lesbian?” and to which Butler immediately replied, “Yes, I am”. By immediately affirming herself as a lesbian, Butler entered a discursive negotiation with the boy,

whose intention (according to Butler's interpretation of the encounter) was to identify and brand her as a sexual deviant. Proudly claiming the boy's labelling that was clearly meant to expose her and discredit her allowed Butler to at least attempt to counter the claim to power that her interrogator had directed at her. While the outcome of this interaction was not predictable, the fact that she could move towards disrupting the linguistic grounds on which they were both trying to stand meant that Butler could trouble the boy's meaning of the category, "lesbian", as something shameful and deviant, even momentarily (Olson & Worsham, 2000). This is the degrounding that Butler believes must be done over and over again. always seeking out the unstable ground from which to negotiate, rather than acquiescing to classification by supposedly stable, coherent terms (Olson & Worsham, 2000).

Butler's project of destabilizing performative identity categories is not without its detractors, with many accusing Butler of reducing the subject entirely to the outcome of discourse and ironically disregarding the role of the material body that is the ostensible subject of *Bodies That Matter* (1993) (Prosser, 1998; Lafrance, 2007; Segal, 2008). As Segal (2008) and Prosser (1998) have both argued, albeit at different junctures in Butler's theoretical timeline, there is a disconnect in Butler's work between the cultural and the embodied, where material accounts of the body are never allowed full command over the defining aspects of human life that may be attributed to them. In his book on transsexual subjectivity, Prosser (1988) argues that Butlerian post-structural accounts of queer identity (by which narratives of transsexualism are often subsumed) do not account for material ways of knowing the body that are non-performative. Prosser (1998) explores transsexual narratives of undergoing corrective surgery (for example, but not limited to, sex change) to demonstrate how sex can be known in a bodily sense. Because transition that occurs within the body can be the source of identity, constructivist

accounts of embodied gender identity fall short in explaining how one might come to know one's body (and consequently, identity) as a felt sense rather than the product of linguistic determination (Prosser, 1998). Picking up the critique of bodily oversight, Segal (2008) felt that Butler had avoided meaningfully addressing women's bodies in her 1994 interview with Segal and Peter Osborne, as Butler had refused to attribute any significant meaning to the sexed female reproductive system, preferring instead to entirely dismiss the argument that sex or gender could be located in the material body rather than discourse. Since then, Segal (2008) is happy to report, Butler has revised her position and even conceded that the primacy of culture she espoused in her earlier work overlooked the materiality of the biological body and what Butler now sees as the mutually constitutive interplay between the two.

Another common critique of Butler (particularly of her earlier work, but a critique that persists today) is that because of her insistence on prioritizing the discursive origins of subjective agency, her work is limited by its abstract quality (Hey, 2006), and consequently her theory does not account for how one might "do" resistance (Brickell, 2003; Magnus, 2006). Citing Salih's (2003) defense of Butler's opaque prose, Hey (2006) argued that the challenge that readers face when engaging with Butler's work is in fact an intentional degrounding so that her ideas evade recuperation by those who would flatten them and rob them of their power to challenge and deconstruct notions of intelligibility. Objecting to this intentional ambiguity, Magnus (2006) protested that Butler was not explicit enough about how to go about acts of resistance, leaving her readers with unhelpful abstractions that reduced action to discourse rather than a pragmatic course of action. But this apparent reticence on Butler's part is likely because she does not presume to be able to predict the success of acts of resistance given they are a negotiation and there is always a risk of failure (Olson & Worsham, 2000). Not only that but, as mentioned

earlier, subversion for Butler is an incalculable effect, so for those that would have her lay out instructions for how they should attempt their own acts of subversion this is hardly a task that Butler can accomplish for them (although her interviews with Olson & Worsham [2000] and Sara Ahmed[2016], do press Butler to clarify some of her ideas and provide examples as to how subversion might be undertaken).

Magnus (2006) does offer a more persuasive critique of Butler when she argues that by conceptualizing resistance solely in negative terms in her earlier work (specifically The Psychic Life of Power [1997] and Excitable Speech [1996]), Butler reduces agency to resistance and action that is necessarily a reaction to oppression. In order to effectively subvert the terms that are imposed on identity, Butler regarded the subject as always reacting against the conditions of its oppressive subjugation to social power (Magnus, 2006). By framing the subject as only permitted to resist their subordination to the inherited and internalized ideological norms of human existence, Butler precludes the radical limits of agency from redefining action (and thus refashioning subjectivity) in positive terms (Magnus, 2006). Butler's negative account of agency means that a subject can never master or produce the terms of their existence as effects of their own doing as agency is always subordinate to the inherited terms of normative subjugation that enable its existence in the first place (Magnus, 2006). This may not entirely be fair to Butler though, as she has said that “I think it's possible sometimes to undergo an undoing, to submit to an undoing by virtue of what spectrally threatens the subject, in order to reinstate the subject on a new and different ground.” (Olson & Worsham, 2000, p.739). Butler’s claim that we might be capable of reinstating the subject on “new and different ground” suggests the possibility for the positive conception of agency and subjectivity that Magnus calls for.

Indeed, it is in Butler's later work (Magnus refers specifically to the Adorno Lectures [2004]) where she begins to hint at how the subject might be materialized as the product of interdependent relations and consequently enable our agency as the outcome of a moral and empathetic response to intersubjective responsibility (Hey, 2006; Magnus, 2006). Rather than subversive actions merely arising as a response or a reaction to oppression, as previously indicated, our actions can be positive to the extent that their objective is the founding of a moral, interdependent social milieu (Magnus, 2006). In her discussion of the struggle for recognition between two subjects, Magnus (2006) argues that it is through our awareness of our own human fallibility (of knowing ourselves absolutely) that we might come to respect human difference and develop empathy for others who we recognize as similarly fallible. By recognizing the limitations of our own self-knowing, and understanding the implications of our intersubjective responsibility, we might find the impetus for acting ethically towards others and in doing so risk our own subjectivity by allowing for a degrounding of the normative discourse that produces our sense of selfhood (Magnus, 2006). It is my moral intersubjective sense of responsibility that guides a given act of subversion (which here might be better termed an act of creativity) rather than merely a response or reaction to my own oppression (Magnus, 2006). Echoing Magnus (2006), Hey (2006) also notes that Butler later claimed that our existence as subjects and resulting agency is dependent on our place in a collective whole and through a process of "recognition" which is granted to us by the collective. While the notion of agency continues to be an ambiguous concept, as the "self" continues to be the product of the "social" rather than the offshoot of radical agency, an important development is the notion that our identities are inter-relational (Hey, 2006). According to Hey (2006), this opens up possibilities for ethnographic

research that can situate the principals of Butler's theoretical work, in particular identifying discursive performativity as a set of social practices, in everyday encounters.

In order to recover the supposedly "lost" reflexive and actively embodied self within the context of prevailing poststructuralist frameworks like those of Butler, Brickell (2003) argued that the intersubjective nature of gender performativity could be elucidated by interactionist frameworks. According to Brickell (2003), gender performativity and ethnomethodology share a common lineage and could be used in tandem as a methodological framework for studying gender. Brickell (2003) cited the work of Goffman, Garfinkel, McKenna and Kessler, and West and Zimmerman to argue that ethnomethodologists view gender as an episodic and ongoing micropolitical interactive process. It is the self-regulating process of "doing gender" that gives it the illusion of a natural and unchanging character (Brickell, 2003). Like Butler, the ethnomethodologists believed identity was socially constructed[3], that there is no essential self that exists outside of culture, and like Butler they believed that subjectivity is defined within the available social parameters that permit identities (Brickell, 2003). The main difference between these two approaches then, according to Brickell (2003), lies in the extent to which subjective action is seen as being enabled by systems of power. According to the ethnomethodologists the gendered self is actively produced during interaction, albeit interactions that are contingent on the dictates of inherited social norms (Brickell, 2003).

Brickell (2005) has sought to overcome the limitations of linguistic interpellation that dictate our subjectivity and find a way to clarify how action might be undertaken, particularly with respect to acts of subversion, by linking performativity and ethnomethodology. While

[3] Butler (1993) contests the term "social construction" in the introduction to *Bodies that Matter (p.xi),* preferring discursive or normative *materialisation* rather than the language of *constructivism*.

Brickell (2003) does believe that the ethnomethodologists provide a more satisfactory account of gender performance as a set of relational practices, he does retain two strands of Butler's work that he thinks are her most useful contributions: the centrality of heterosexuality and the mimetic qualities inherent in gender performance. (p.168). Brickell (2005) nevertheless reserves some critique for Butler's concept of subversion as outlined in *Gender Trouble* (1990), which he feels was plagued by undertheorized notions of parody, repetition, and resignification of linguistic discourse, offering little practical guidance on the relational mechanisms of subversion as a strategy of resistance. As a way of accounting for this perceived lack of precision, Brickell (2005) called for a re-examining of Goffman's (1974) work on frames and gender schedules (the context or set of occurrences (mental schema) that allow us to make meaning of a situation) as a way of extending subversion beyond repetition and parody to acts that expand, adjust, or replace the parameters of social norms through micro-level interactions. In this way Brickell believed the "frames and schedules" that define the parameters of our performances of the self could be reorganized so that possibilities for new modes of subjectivity and action might be materialized (Brickell, 2005).

Brickell (2005) rightly interprets much of Butler's work (in particular her earlier work) as effectively banishing the notion of an agential self as a fiction, however Butler has always been careful to allow her work some leeway in this regard. In subsequent interviews after the publication of *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, Butler opposed the notion that agency could be characterized as a "mockery" and even went so far as to say that she is not opposed to the notion of undertaking a conscious performance of gender, though she qualifies that

performance is compelled by norms that are not freely chosen[4] (Olson & Worsham, 2000, p.738, 752). Nevertheless, if there is, as Butler claims, a body that can be fashioned, Brickell (2005) contends that this fashioning must have human origins and therefore indicates a degree of agency within the confines of the social scripts we follow. The meanings that permeate the actions, gestures, and movements of our (gendered) embodiment are enacted and negotiated through the various everyday interactions of social actors and within the parameters of a multiplicity of social contexts (Brickell, 2005). Brickell (2003) concludes by calling for Butler and the ethnomethodologists to be used in complement to one another as a methodological tool, arguing that the gendered self is an accomplishment of interaction within the social parameters that are available to us.

Gender Hegemony

While Butler spoke of gender hegemony as the internalizing of power relations and offered potentially useful ways of framing resistance to the hegemony of normative categories through acts of subversion, she does not offer much explication on how hegemonic power might be recuperated in more subtle forms. Fortunately, critical masculinity studies, in particular the framework of hegemonic masculinity, offers a way of conceptualizing power and the reorganizing of gender relations for the purpose of upholding patriarchy, the global domination of men over women. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is most often associated with Connell (2005) who, by using Antonio Gramsci's work on class hegemony as a starting point, developed a three-fold model of gender hegemony, encompassing power (i.e. patriarchy),

[4] Interestingly, Butler made a similar point in her earlier work when discussing Simone De Beauvoir's contribution to gender studies ("Gendering the Body: Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution", 1989, in A. Garry et. al.) – pointing out that subjects do have gendered agency but that sometimes normative imperatives are such that subjects are compelled to "choose against themselves." This point seemingly becomes lost in her later work in which she more forcefully argued that gender performativity is prior to the materialization of the subject.

production relations (i.e. economic activity that is dominated by men, with a gendered division of labour that generates dividends for men) and cathexis (i.e. the emotional attachment to male heterosexuality as an adjunct to men's social dominance). Gender hegemony links "cultural ideal and institutional power" (Connell, 2005, p.77) so that one reflects the other, resulting in a legitimate claim of masculine *authority* (derived through coercion and self-regulation rather than brute force).

The authority resulting from hegemonic masculinity is deployed at the local (interpersonal), regional (society-wide but at the level of the nation state), and global level (transnational and geopolitical) (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Central to this are cultural figures (film stars, for example) who, through their local practices, help to shape both regional and global patterns of hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2008). In a similar vein to Butler's arguments concerning the norm and the abject constituting each other, hegemonic masculinity is legitimized through its relationship to femininity (*external* gender relations) and other forms of masculinity (*internal* gender relations); that is to say, dominant masculinities are positioned over and against not only femininity but also other non-hegemonic masculinities that can be characterized as "subordinate" to dominant forms (gay masculinities, for example) (Connell, 2005). According to Connell (2005) when those who embody subordinate masculinities disrupt the separation of masculine and feminine by projecting "feminized" masculinities, dominant (or hegemonic) masculinities react against this by reasserting their authority over the subordinate through violence, institutional exclusion, and perhaps most importantly, by prompting self-regulation.

However, hegemonic masculinity is not a static concept in which power is conceived of in a top-down linear fashion, rather it is unstable and context driven with varying hegemonic

models superimposed onto masculinity so that any given masculinity finds itself positioned within a network of power relationships and subject to "internal contradiction and historical interruption" (Connell, 2005, p.73). Because of its mutable quality, hegemonic masculinity is understood as a gender *practice* whose main objective is to bolster the dominance of men over women, i.e. patriarchy, and emerges from people *doing* gender (similar to West and Zimmerman (1987)) rather than a static concept of gender that remains unchanged (Connell, 2005). When one form of functioning hegemony is eroded and no longer serves as a legitimizing force, space for a shift in what constitutes hegemonic masculinity opens up (Connell, 2005). Yet as Connell (2005) stressed, while new gender practices that assume the place of old practices might operate under different logics from the previous version, what remains the same is the legitimacy given to masculine authority over subordinated femininity (although Connell later emphasizes that a "positive" hegemony could also prevail in which equality is achieved between masculinity and femininity [Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005]).

In his critique of Connell's model, Demetriou (2001) applauded Connell's adaptation of Gramsci's notion of hegemony insofar as it attended to the distinction between *dominance* over an external group, and internal *leadership* within a group whose goal is the unification of allies under the umbrella of the wider group. But while Gramsci originally conceived of leadership as a reciprocal relation in which the various subgroups contributed to the united whole, Demetriou (2001) argued that Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity adopted a limiting top-down approach in which exercising power is reserved for hegemonic masculinities. While hegemonic masculinity constitutes the yardstick against which other masculinities are configured, in this model subordinated and marginalized masculinities are denied the ability to affect the production of dominant masculinities in turn (Demetriou, 2002). Although Connell acknowledged the

interaction of subordinate and dominant masculinities in the deployment of hegemonic masculinity discourse, for instance in how hegemonic masculinity might authorize certain marginalized or subordinate masculinities because they are in line with the goals of external domination, in Connell's initial development of the model the subordinate never helps shape the dominant (Demetriou, 2001).

Further to this, Demetriou (2001) rejected the notion that hegemonic masculinity might merely seek to maintain its authority as a singular entity rather than establishing a united front with other forms of masculinity. The achievement of authority of some men over other men could never be merely an end in itself as the hegemonic project is always in relation to the end goal of men's domination over women, and as Demetriou (2001) argued, framing the project solely in terms of subordinated men would be out of step with Connell's "feminist principle" that centers patriarchy in the conceptualization of gender relations. Hegemonic masculinity cannot be satisfied merely with the domination of subordinate and marginalized masculinities, it *relies* on them as part of the ultimate project of the global domination of women. What is crucial here is Demetriou's (2001) insistence that the concept of hegemonic masculinity move beyond a binary conception in which dominant masculinities have authority over subordinate masculinities but remain untouched by the subordinate.

Because subordinate masculinities often do help shape the dominant group, Demetriou (2001) argued for the revision of Connell's model so that the united front that arises between hegemonic masculinities and subordinate/marginalized masculinities in pursuit of their shared goal of patriarchal domination is made explicit as a hybridization of hegemony. Instead Demetriou (2001), drawing from Gramsci, characterized these relationships as a historical *hybrid bloc* in which the primary leadership group might absorb some of the features of the subordinate

allied groups because those features are in accordance with the objectives of external domination. In other words, hegemonic masculinity *reproduces* and *translates* the useful elements of multiple masculinities into the hegemonic ideal as an adaptation to shifting gender relations in a particular historical context for the dual purpose of obscuring and reinforcing patriarchal authority (Demetriou, 2001). In this sense Demetriou (2001) was able to further develop how alliances between various masculinities are materialized while at the same time preserving Connell's initial feminist critique that the definitive goal of hegemonic masculinity was the global domination of men over women.

Both as a response to the critiques of Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity and a re-thinking of the terms of the concept to update it for contemporary audiences and shifting historical context, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledged that hybridization, in which aspects of one form of masculinity may be strategically taken up by another form, can occur, albeit in limited fashion. Even though they affirm that subordinate groups do possess agency, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) stopped short of fully allowing non-hegemonic forms of masculinity to shape dominant forms, arguing that implications for hegemonic hybridization do not extend beyond the local level of gender relations (p.845). While subordinate masculinities may inform hegemonic masculinities at a local level (for example, the microlevel interactions studied in organizations, communities, and families common in ethnographic accounts), Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) contend that "[…] there is little reason to think that hybridization has become hegemonic at the regional or global level (p.845)," This is a confusing assertion, given that regional level masculinities are later described as the symbolic representation of local gender practices (p.849) and that the local can inform the regional level, which can in turn inform other local contexts (not to mention that the global level is also implicated in this reciprocal

association) (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) go on to discuss “protest masculinity” and the agency of subordinate groups, the simultaneous incorporation and oppression of subordinate masculinities as a necessary step in the accomplishment of hegemony, and interrogate the interrelations of femininity and masculinity in the maintenance of hegemony. Despite their resistance to fully endorsing the “dialectical pragmatism” of Demetriou (2001), at least as far as it might apply at the regional and global levels of gender hegemony, Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) reworking of the concept takes steps towards making the field of masculinity studies more nuanced.

Yet according to Moller (2007), the field of “masculinity studies” continues to fall prey to its own internal biases, having come to denote a political project whose primary objective is identifying and correcting masculinities that are deemed problematic. In Moller’s (2007) view, Connell's framework compels researchers working under the banner of "masculinity studies" to adopt a critical and political stance in relation to masculinity as objective observers of patriarchy that can single out those masculinities that need critique, a demand that Moller claims limits the researcher to their political orientation towards masculinity rather than a holistic view of masculinity. Moller (2007) believes that Connell used what is known as the “identifying strategy” of naming and establishing the criteria for a phenomenon (i.e. hegemonic masculinity) before then identifying instances that appear to fit the pre-established criteria. This strategy can potentially lead researchers to focus their critique on the instances of hegemonic masculinity they uncover based on the negative criteria ascribed to the concept and bringing to light the negative aspects of masculinity as they perceive them, a move which also distances and obscures the researcher from their own complicity in power relations (Moller, 2007). Moller (2007) argues that while the concept of hegemonic masculinity does serve as a useful organizing principle

under which a specific type of gender performance might be codified for the purposes of intellectual critique, this limits the study of masculinity to a narrow field of focus in which practices are seen as part of a pattern that follows the complementary logics of hierarchy and hegemony.

Moller (2007) is interested rather in interrogating those who name and locate a specific kind of masculine power equated with explicit domination, who locate that power in others, and then disavow that they are complicit in the proliferation of masculine power themselves. For Moller (2007), this obscures the subtler ways that masculinity operates through and holds power over the more banal aspects of our lives. He extends this critique to the study of masculinity, arguing that in locating power as a form of domination perpetrated by others, it legitimizes the critical focus on a small group of men who have been deemed problematic and absolves the researcher of reflexively engaging with their own complicity (Moller, 2007). Which is not to say that Moller (2007) wants to drop the critique of patriarchal power as it has currently been undertaken, but that this should be accompanied by the investigation into more banal and subtler mechanisms of power (he gives the examples of negotiation and consensus building) and for those engaged in this research to be self-reflexive and ask themselves difficult questions about their own access to privilege and power. Moller (2007) believes that a shift is necessary from conceptualizing power/oppression as a function of masculinity to the ways that masculine identity and embodiment are rendered vulnerable, weak, and powerless, so that our readings of masculinity and male experience might become more nuanced. By bringing in a renewed focus on emotional vulnerability and discovering where masculinity constrains or enables men, rather than attempting to correct problematized masculinity, Moller (2007) argues that researchers can illuminate the dynamics of power that are not as obvious as dominant typologies of hegemony.

Echoing Demetriou (2001) and Moller (2007), Atkinson (2011) also criticized gender scholars like Connell for linking masculinity and power in such a way that men whose characteristics align with hegemonic masculinity by extension must also wield the associated social, economic, and cultural power associated with those characteristics. Atkinson (2011) acknowledged a "residual patriarchy" (p.24), an enduring structural inequality in Canada that accords a balance of economic and social power in favor of men but rejected what he believed to be a halted intellectual project within masculinity studies which favored an oversimplified reading of how power is mobilized as a resource. Although traditional tropes of "hegemonic masculinity" may no longer exist as they had a generation or two previously, men still benefit from patriarchal privilege albeit as they negotiate a fractured version of what this once may have represented (Atkinson, 2011). Atkinson rejected reading power vis a vis binarisms such as power/powerless, victim/victimizer, and masculine/feminine (p.31), claiming that,"[…] hegemony has become a pastiche micro-logical power play in late modernity for men" (p.32) Here Atkinson suggests that rather than an over-arching hegemonic masculine logic from which power is located and wielded, masculinity had become a series of fragmented masculinities (or "pastiche") that are not necessarily dominant or coherent with hegemonic masculinity and that mobilizing hegemonic power was dependent on its particular cultural location.

Atkinson (2011) argued that performing masculinity in alignment with marginalized identities offers up a form of cultural power (p.41) through which pastiche masculinity accumulates its power incrementally, dependent on context and moment to moment interaction. While men may not overtly enact direct authority and domination over women, and in some instances may even repudiate practices that treat women with disrespect, they will continue to benefit indirectly from the patriarchal structures in which they live their individual lives

(Atkinson, 2011). In this sense, Atkinson (2011), Demetriou (2001), and Connell (2005) agree that all men are complicit in upholding masculine authority derived from the patriarchal imperative. But is it necessary to differentiate "pastiche" from "fragmentation" or from "hybridization"? These terms seem to reflect similar ideas concerning the deployment and claiming of power, and that this is tied up somehow with strategies of survival that harken back to Butler's argument in *Gender Trouble* that citing a particular identity legitimizes not only our gendered performances in terms of "the original", but also establishes the "copy" as an unlivable status. We might ask whether a strategy to secure social capital despite a stigma characteristic (for example a fat body) might be conceived as a bid for power or a struggle to survive lest one be relegated to the abject. Is there ever merely a survival strategy? Is survival always predicated on a bid for the recuperation of power?

Critical Obesity

Lastly, I turn to critical obesity scholarship as a way of examining how discursive norms become inscribed on the body (Butler, 1990) and enact power relations with respect to abjection and stigmatization. Critical conceptualisations of the fat body in the social sciences take as their starting point the symbolic meanings contained within the body that can be situated culturally and historically (Evans et al., 2002; Murray, 2007; Guthman, 2009; Bailey, 2010). While critical obesity scholarship tends to prioritize a Foucauldian deconstruction of biomedical discourses that pathologize and moralize corporeal subjectivity, obesity discourse has also been challenged by a broader body of work which can be grouped under what is sometimes referred to as "fat studies", that incorporates insights from a diverse theoretical terrain (Cooper, 2010). In this context the word "obesity" is often exchanged for the word "fat" as a political act of discursive reclamation

by scholars and activists that oppose the inherent biomedical associations with "obesity" (LeBesco, 2004).

Various theoretical debates have emerged concerning the discursive origins of the fat body and its subsequent vilification in the late 20th/early 21st century, which often center on its perceived moral failure (Guthman, 2009; Bailey, 2010). Guthman (2009), among many others, argued that moral outrage towards fat bodies was a result of deep investment in the neoliberal values of individual responsibility and "good citizenship" (against which fat bodies are characterized as the physical embodiment of failure and irrationality) (Zanker & Gard, 2008; Lebesco, 2011; Norman, 2011). Bailey (2010), in her essay on fatness in the post-911 context, drew parallels between the "war on obesity" and the "war on terror", noting that since the early 20th century in America fatness has often served as a moralizing rallying point during times of national crisis. Bridging the divide between broader political structures and individual identification, Murray (2007) argued that discursive knowledge about fat bodies is internalized and essentializes fatness as an inherently negative state, pathologizing fat bodies and once again signifying them as the "other" in relation to "normal", thin bodies. Echoing these other theorists, Lebesco (2011) also linked medicalized discourses to state-run initiatives combatting obesity that employ neoliberal notions of individual responsibility in order to mobilize the public in a moral war that equates weight with disease.

One of the principal strands of critical obesity theory concerning stigmatized fat identity is the notion that medical discourse serves as a powerful and legitimatizing means of pathologizing fat bodies and instantly marking them as unhealthy (Murray, 2007, 2008; Lebesco, 2011). Fatness is discursively produced as an offshoot of a medical preoccupation with empirical categorization, what Murray (2007) refers to as the "clinical gaze", which obscures the socio-

cultural forces that are at play. Despite long being criticized for being an arbitrary measure that lacks validity (Wickramasinghe et al., 2005; Campos et al., 2005), the Body Mass Index (BMI) continues to be used by regulatory bodies like Health Canada, which associates underweight, overweight and obese categories with increased to extremely high adverse health risks in comparison to the classification associated with the least risk, "normal" weight (Health Canada, 2003). In 2015, the Canadian Medical Association adopted new policy measures that classify obesity as a disease, effectively demarcating a significant portion of the Canadian public as ill overnight based on weight classification (Rich, 2015). The hyperbolic nature of obesity epidemic rhetoric has been successful in constructing a global health crisis, despite the fact that fat bodies typically are no more inherently unhealthy than bodies that are not fat (Orpana et al., 2009; Gard, 2011).

Fat-phobic discourse that gives rise to negative and stigmatizing attitudes is deeply embedded in socialization processes learned from early childhood (Rail, 2008; Sykes & McPhail, 2008; Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015). As McPhail and Sykes (2008) argued, fat phobia is often at the root of physical education curriculum that seeks to impart self-disciplining regimes that enshrine misogyny (i.e. unruly feminine bodies) and neoliberal discourses of health (i.e. fat people are portrayed as lazy, unproductive, irresponsible drains on society) to students, thereby marginalizing fat bodies and limiting children's participation in physical activity (which ironically circumvents efforts by proponents of the "obesity epidemic" to eradicate fat bodies). Wright (2012) characterizes these obesity discourses as Biopedagogies through which corporeal knowledge regarding obesity and health is culturally generated, leading to the regulation and surveillance of the body at individual and population levels. Biopedagogies are also proliferated through mass media representations that draw from public health policy discourses in their

depiction of healthist and moralizing cautionary tales, compelling bodily self-regulation through diet and exercise as the wider populace learns to dread "obesity" (Lafrance, Lafrance, & Norman, 2015). As we can see, Biopedagogies do not operate in conceptual isolation, as our ideas about health are articulated in corporeal and ideological terms that are also bound up with heteronormative ideas of masculinity and femininity (Rail, 2008).

Historically, fatness has been portrayed as a feminist issue with a focus on the experiences of girls and women and the feminization of body image issues (Orbach, 2016) and while such research is important in contesting fat-phobia that is steeped in patriarchal ideology, there has been less consideration for how boys and men think about and experience their bodies (Bell and McNaughton, 2007; Monaghan, 2008a). Such an oversight is often premised on the assumption that boys and men do not engage in "feminine" anxieties about body size, shape or weight), although bodily anxieties among males are relatively common (Norman, 2011; Field et al., 2014). As Monaghan (2008a) noted, fat male identities are not only spoiled by healthist discourse but also by the supposed emasculating effects of abject feminized fatness. Monaghan (2008b) argued that studying fat stigma among men may be useful in supplementing critiques of the gendered social construction of fatness, disrupting patriarchal views of the body that negatively affect men and women, and potentially discovering new ways of resisting fat discourse that do not rely on misogynist strategies typified by a discrediting – or repudiation as Kimmel (2004) puts it – of the feminine.

Despite the hostile climate which produces marginalized bodies, fat men have found new ways to resist dominant narratives about fatness in their identity formation (Wienke, 1998; Lebesco, 2004; Monaghan, 2005; Monaghan, 2007; Murray, Wykes, Pausé, 2014). Queer theorists and activists have laid much of the groundwork by subverting conventional conceptions

of fatness and disrupting heteronormative subjectivities (Lebesco, 2004). By redefining the meaning embedded in fat bodies from immoral monstrosity to a beautiful liberating embodiment, Lebesco (2004) demonstrated the fat body's political potential for rebellion. Online communities have provided space for asserting fat male sexuality and subverting bodily norms, but as Monaghan (2005) argues, alternative fat identities formulated against powerful negative conceptualizations may potentially lead to feelings of ambivalence among fat men that continue to sustain and internalize stigma. This ambivalence was also noted in an earlier study of men's strategies for managing their identities in light of hegemonic ideals of masculine embodiment, as Wienke (1998) observed that some men may reject conventional standards of masculine embodiment but that this was nevertheless often accompanied by feelings of dissatisfaction with their own bodies. While resistance to irrational, fat-phobic discourse may produce ambivalence, the significance of actively opposing dominant heteronormative modes of embodiment that enact symbolic violence on the bodies of fat men should not be downplayed (Monaghan, 2007).

Conclusion

Given their participation in culture production (Connell, 2005), fat actors are a particularly useful group for illuminating how power is both taken up and contested in the production of embodied identity. Following Brickell's (2003) insistence that a reflexive self might be located within the social norms that constitute it, I hope to discover how the men in my study reproduce or subvert the categorizations that are imposed on them, in general and in the context of their professional lives as actors. By looking at how the self and identity is performed, and how this intersects with discourses of gender, sexuality, race, and fatness, I will address how mimesis might be read in the context of the men's video diaries as examples of how subversion and hybridization are materialized as the effects of strategies for managing (spoiled) identities as

fat male actors. Rather than trying to simply critique the enactment of masculinity, I will attend to how these men are constrained and made vulnerable (Moller, 2007), but also how their various identities might be viewed as creative projects that seek to establish ways of living in the world that are just and intersubjective (Magnus, 2006). Each of the above theoretical frameworks provides another layer of analysis that is critical to my being able to provide a considered portrayal of their lives.

Methods

As a former actor who worked professionally in film and theatre for over ten years, I am an insider to this community and have an intimate and first-hand understanding of how actors negotiate the social terrain of the performing arts. In this thesis, I take my cue from Ellis' (2004) work on autoethnography and cultural-level studies where the researcher is a full insider and intimate part of the culture under investigation. Similarly, I am informed by Goffman's (1989) insistence that the core of observational fieldwork is for the researcher to be so immersed in the social world of the subjects in question that this results in an embodied, empathetic experience, to "witness" the lives of those being observed. Although my own methods – which draw largely from post-structural analysis (Gavey, 1989, 2011; Wright, 2004), narrative analysis (Bruner, 1991, 1995), and qualitative video research (Bancroft et al., 2014) - might not align with all of Goffman's and Ellis' methodological guidelines to the letter, my intent has been to devise an inventive approach (Lury & Wakeford, 2012) for this project that makes use of my expertise while attempting to at least consider my blind spots. Autoethnography involves looking at and interpreting social structures, but also demands a personal inward reflection on what one's position is in the research context and requires self-critique of the researcher's personal biases, beliefs, and position in the broader cultural context (Ellis, 2004). My insider status and my lived experiences as an actor are undoubtedly the catalyst for my underlying motivations and the design of this study, as well as an asset to my analysis of the data.

But my broader experiences as, among other things, a gay man also inform this work, particularly in relation to my personal understandings of men, stigma, subjectivity, and the body. I understand what it means to negotiate and even attempt to downplay or hide parts of one's identity because of stigma, having done this myself as an actor trying to book a gig. These

understandings enrich the work, but I concede that they may also obscure my perspective, for example my experiences of homophobia are particular to me and are part of a lifetime of experiences that have shaped my perspective, but the indignation I feel with regard to typecasting in the acting profession may also be amplified and formed by my expectations and privilege as a white man. It would be impossible for a researcher to be entirely reflexive about their work, and as Mauthner and Doucet (2003) argued, some inaccessible interiority on the part of the researcher is inevitable. Instead, researchers should strive for "degrees of reflexivity", something I have attempted to do with this work, rather than an unfeasible all-encompassing reflexivity.

This master's thesis research is not only based on my personal experiences as a professional actor but is a continuation of two independent research projects that I carried out as an undergraduate at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management under the supervision of Dr. Moss Norman. The first project was a qualitative study of men who work in the performing arts (i.e. dancers, actors, and performance artists) while the second was the production of a short documentary film about two former acting colleagues of mine and their experiences of embodied identity, one as a leading man and the other as a character actor. I drew on both of these projects for my current master's research as they informed my theoretical conceptualization and continued narrowing of my research focus. The ethics protocol and the interview questions for the current work were elaborations of those I had previously devised.

This project examines the narratives of four professional male actors in Toronto, Canada who perform in film and television and who self-identify as "fat actors" or "character actors" and for whom body size consistently informs the roles they play (Forth, 2013). As Cooper (2010)

notes, fat identity is contingent on multiple subjectivities and is largely self-defined, making self-identification of particular significance in this study. Self-identification not only narrowed the participant selection process but was integrated as an element of exploration within the study, drawing on Degher and Hughes' (1999) work concerning the adoption and management of a fat identity. In addition to the previously identified intersections of body size, gender, and sexuality that shape fat identity (LeBesco, 2004; Monaghan, 2008a; Norman, 2011) other identity categories (such as race, (dis)ability, class, age, etc.) also have bearing on this study and will be considered using an intersectionality framework (Valentine, 2007). That said, body size and gender identification (as fat and male, whether cisgender or transgender) are the two primary identity categories under investigation.

Film and television actors were of interest to me in this study as they are often relegated to subordinate or competing masculinities in their work (Fouts & Vaughan, 2002; Benson-Allott, 2012; Forth, 2013). Typecasting of actors in film and television based on physical appearance is common (Dean, 2005), particularly for actors whose careers are relatively new, as it facilitates the categorization and narrowing of an immense talent pool (Zuckerman et al., 2003). In order to increase the likelihood that participants might have experienced typecasting based on body size, an attempt was made to recruit participants who had not participated in the industry for longer than eight years or who had more than 10 acting credits (not including non-speaking roles or commercials). I make the distinction between the small group of actors who have greater access to choice in their employment and what Dean (2005) termed "jobbing" actors, who are vying for a very small pool of jobs and who do not have the same elite status as actors who are consistently working for high level theatre and film companies. My assumption being that "jobbing" actors would likely be more negatively affected by typecasting as they would have less leverage to

negotiate their career paths if they wished to book more jobs (Dean, 2005). Performers who did not regularly get cast as series or film leads were also of interest to this study as supporting or "bit" roles would be less likely to be given in depth characterization by scriptwriters. Ultimately many actors in Toronto work in both theatre and film, and three of the men in this study (Jim, Nick, and Constant) also work in theater and this informs their experiences of the industry.

Toronto was an attractive site for recruitment not only because it was where my professional acting career took place and where many of my industry contacts are located, but also because it offers other important considerations relevant to study design. First, the English Canadian context in which Toronto's acting labor market is situated meant that prospective participants might not have as high a degree of control over their careers compared to their U.S. counterparts as there is no "star system" in English Canada that might offer them more leverage over their careers (Lacey, 2012). Additionally, Toronto is a major center for advertising and commercial production which are among the main sources of employment for actors in Toronto (ACTRA, 2017). Commercial acting work is a relevant area of interest for this study as commercials are known to trade in reductive stereotypes, particularly with respect to race and gender, and have an enormous cultural reach (Furnam & Mak, 1999; Maher, Herbst, Childs, & Finn, 2008). Arguably, actors who work in Toronto would likely be seen frequently for commercial auditions and therefore be called upon to perform stereotypes as part of the aesthetic labour they are selling on the labour market.

As far as operationalizing what constitutes being an actor, in order to separate actors who are engaged in aesthetic labour for a living from those who might participate in amateur acting work as a leisure activity, my interest is in what I will term a "professional actor". The criteria for qualifying as a professional actor entails at least one of the following:

1. Belonging to a professional acting organization such as Canadian Actors Equity Association (CAEA), the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), or Union des Artistes (UDA)

2. Currently being represented by a talent agent/management company recognized by the Talent Agents and Managers Association of Canada (TAMAC) which would indicate that a participant is actively seeking work as an actor

3. Three professional film credits recognized by ACTRA (the minimum requirement for membership in ACTRA and an indication that an individual is a working professional in film and television)

4. Some professional acting training has been completed, for example the National Theatre School of Canada or the Canadian Film Center Acting Conservatory (although this criterion alone is insufficient as it does not indicate active participation in the film and television industry labor market beyond the training program)

Based on these criteria, participants were recruited via a purposive sampling technique (Faugier & Sargent, 1997) and I drew on my professional contacts from my own acting career to seek out potential participants largely through Facebook and email correspondence (Richie & Lewis, 2003). I drafted a recruitment letter outlining the parameters of research participation and sent it to over 100 contacts, most of whom responded to my request, even if only to say that they did not have any suggestions. Interestingly, many contacts with whom I spoke about participant recruitment expressed reticence or feelings of awkwardness around asking people to self-identify as fat, given that this could be a contentious assumption. This indicated an implicit understanding that “fat” is a stigmatized identity and I was careful to use sensitive language around body size in

all of my recruitment correspondence as well as any further documents that I supplied to my participants. That said I attempted to be clear about the criteria for inclusion in the study and the particular identity constructions I was investigating (i.e. bigger body size) so that my language was not so ambiguous as to be misunderstood.

From the recruitment process I carried out, six men initially agreed to participate; two wound up dropping out shortly after being recruited and four remained for the duration of the project (the two men who dropped out expressed difficulty with the technical demands associated with putting themselves on tape and the amount of labour required of them). The four men all met my requirements for consideration as "professionals", although they were not strictly film and television actors. Toronto is home to the third largest theatre district in the world after London's West End and New York's Broadway (Angelini, 2011) and many actors divide their time between theatre and film. While all of my participants work in film, both Constant and Nick trained and worked often in musical theatre, while Jim divided his time between theatre and film. Bob was the exception and considered himself primarily a comedy writer, although he has worked on camera in commercials, in comedy sketch shows (onstage and onscreen), and continues to work in commercials and performs small parts on the television show he writes for (the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*).

Sample size is small by conventional standards for a qualitative research project, but my intention was to collect a much larger data set from each participant to obtain an in depth, rich qualitative snapshot of their lives. As Marshall (1996) asserts, an appropriate sample size for qualitative research is one that answers the research question and if a study achieves a high level of detail good use can be made of even a single figure. Arguing against equating representativeness and generalizability, Gobo (2011) advocates for theoretical sampling in which

representativeness of concepts takes precedence over representativeness of units (or individuals). Purposive theoretical sampling is cumulative, in that concepts should continue to be analyzed and amassed from data until theoretical saturation has been achieved for a given category (Gobo, 2011). Because of the considerable amount of labour I received from each participant I was able to amass enough data to speak in detail about the theoretical underpinnings of the research.

I chose video as my method and the men were tasked with creating video diaries (or "vlogs") both for reasons of convenience and as a way of adding another layer of qualitative detail to my work (Bancroft et al., 2014). Conducting the research in this way saved me from the costs of having to travel to Toronto for fieldwork, a necessity given that this study was not fully funded. Seeing that access to digital cameras is ubiquitous thanks to cell phones and other personal devices (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010), participants were asked to use their own cameras to record one vlog entry per week, averaging a total of four hours of footage per participant. Every week participants uploaded their footage to a "box.com" account, a secure online file-sharing service. I reviewed the footage and sent additional direction according to the needs of each participant. In an effort to let the participants set the terms of their labor, I wound up with a varied pace of vlog submissions, with one participant taking only one month to complete the work while another took nine months.

The interviews that formed the video diaries were based on four thematically organized schedules of questions that I provided in succession. As one week's entry was completed by a participant, I would then email them the following week's questions as a way of sustaining interest in the project. Week one sought an account of the men's general experiences and backgrounds in the arts, week two addressed questions of embodiment and fatness, week three was about gender performance and identity, and week four the men were asked to reflect on their

experiences participating in the research as well as an opportunity for me to ask follow-up questions when this was warranted. Participants essentially conducted four self-taped interviews and reflected on the performance aspects of their work as actors that formed their embodied and gendered identities, and how they interacted with other industry professionals in both the audition process and their work on set. This approach enabled them to chronicle their daily lives and their work as performers over an extended period, thereby giving more qualitative depth than just a brief "snapshot" account of their everyday embodiments that a traditional interview format might capture.

One of the aims of having the men conduct the interviews by themselves was that the videos take on the qualities of keeping a diary (Bancroft et al., 2014). Understanding a participant's perspective on the social structures and relations they find themselves a part of was made possible by the diary aspect, which acts as both an artefact created by an individual and a product of the social world it comes from (Bancroft et al., 2014). Diaries are social, spatial, and temporal; they are *context driven* and material artefacts. In this study, the diaries produced by the men are visual artefacts of the research that record the aesthetic labour through which the men perform the self, allowing for documentation that could be conducted without my being present (Bancroft et al., 2014). Having the men record without me in an environment that they felt comfortable in is a successful element of the video diary method as the vlogs take on a confessional tone, as evidenced by one of Constant's reflections, who compared the recording of the videos to a therapy session.

Diaries as a research tool are often used as a collaborative tool between researcher and participant, incorporating participants in the creation and interpretation of data (Bancroft et al., 2014). In this collaborative spirit, participants are considered co-creators of the video project and

were made privy to the objectives and assumptions of the research project and received a filming guide that gave an overview of the topics and basic technical considerations in order to help direct the recording of the data (*see appendix*) (Richie and Lewis, 2003). In addition to the general research guidelines outlined in the filming guide and the weekly schedule of questions, participants were given creative license to visually present their narratives as they saw fit. My rationale for this was that I was not necessarily interested in participants adopting a specific presentation format or filming style, rather I was interested in how participants might have chosen to present themselves on camera. However, this aspect of the video method was not as dynamic as I would have hoped, and although all of the men admitted that they reflected on the way that they presented themselves on video, this took the form of, for the most part, a conventional head and shoulders camera shot. In the end this turned out to be a happy accident of sorts since, as Blackman (2008) notes, the "close up" face shot is more efficient at transmitting the details of affective communication that are the foundation of human connection and interaction.

One of the key features of the study design is that I have forsaken the traditional face to face interview and had the men record themselves without my physical presence. I had hoped this might provide insight into how the imagined other (Cooley, 1902) is conceptualized when we perform the self. Removing myself from the equation did not appear to alter the ability of the men to conjure up what Cooley (1902) referred to as the "imagined other"; the men all spoke directly to me through their cameras which effectively acted as my proxy. That said, my absence and the silent gaze of the camera also potentially afforded the men more space to reflect and go into depth during their responses. This was advocated by Poland and Pederson (1998) who believed that qualitative researchers should offer moments of silence to interviewees and not

always try to fill up space with conversation. In effect, the camera is always silent and this likely was an advantage in this scenario.

Although I do not have relationships with these men outside the research, they did have some exposure to me via a short Skype meeting prior to putting themselves on tape (except for Nick with whom I have only ever had email correspondence). I would also assume that my contacts who put me in touch with them would have offered them some background on me, and they could have made inferences about me based on the project itself and the supporting documentation that I provided. Other than that, they would have had limited knowledge about me or how I might respond to them or interpret their answers (although I admit that they might have looked me up on social media as well). The facility with which they adjusted to the artificial constraints of the study design demonstrates how the social world is internalized and readily informs the imaginary other (Cooley, 1902) as we reproduce the features of social interaction in the absence of another person or when speaking to a camera.

It is important to acknowledge that the responses I got and the performance of the men in the videos is perhaps reflective of the epistemological underpinnings of the research – namely that the design and framework of this study follows what could be termed a Western Modernist paradigm whose roots trace back to European Enlightenment ideals concerning scientific research (Alldred & Gillies, 2011). From the theorists with whom I have engaged, to my writing style, to the methodological design I have adopted, I have been influenced by this worldview in no small way. This type of inquiry also treats as its object of study a rational, bounded, linearly progressing research subject (Alldred & Gillies, 2011). This then would also have bearing on the way that my participants engaged with the research, as their own preconceived notions of the objectives and aims of scientific research likely influenced the subjectivities they produced in

their videos as they sought to be "good" research participants (Alldred & Gillies, 2011). This was made evident in the noticeable goal among the men to produce "authentic" responses to my research questions, indicating a desire to produce research that was truthful and objective.

I have approached my analysis of these videos as though they are autobiographical narratives, following Bruner's (1991, 1995) foundational work on the narrative construction of reality. Bruner (1995) claims that life is a continual interpretive autobiographical process in which we interpret and re-interpret our lives given our intentions, the genres available to us for telling, and the cultural and linguistic parameters of our contexts. Autobiography can be explicitly (e.g. a written narrative) or implicitly produced, implicit in that we are not always aware of engaging in narrative interpretation that is not formalized (for example, recounting one's day to a friend, justifying a choice to an employer, defending one's beliefs in a debate) (Bruner, 1995). Implicit autobiography can also be a narrative trap, in that the general narrative that we ascribe to our lives becomes so taken for granted that it forecloses other possibilities for how we might choose to live our lives. One of my aims with this project is to have my participants engage in *explicit* autobiography by producing video diaries with the hopes that it might offer them some insight into their own implicit narratives and open up the possibility of choice. Bruner (1995) states that "speech acts of self-revelation" form the basis of autobiography and are bound to conditions of genre and intention, but he argues that many forms of autobiography are possible and that as the audience of autobiography it is incumbent on us to interpret and critique the narrative in a manner that perhaps goes beyond the intention of the storyteller and extends to the underlying social norms that shape our stories.

After conducting preliminary viewing of the footage and supplementary note-taking, the video diaries were transcribed, and transcripts were coded and analyzed following a feminist

post-structural discourse analysis framework looking for themes related to masculinity, identity and body-related practices (Wright, 2004; Gavey, 1989, 2011). Informed largely by Foucault and Derrida, and emerging from the fields of structural linguistics and discourse analysis, post-structural methodologies have also been extended to the analysis of video as "texts" whose meanings can be deconstructed and located within their social and cultural contexts, making this a useful approach to analyzing the video diaries (Wright, 2004). A post-structural informed stance appealed to me as a way to interrogate regimes of power that the men are embedded in as well as a means of contesting and subverting truth claims relating to normative constructions of health, the body, or gender (Wright, 2004; Gavey, 1989). That said, although I looked for broad themes that spoke to my theoretical framework in the transcripts and in the performances of the men in their videos, like Gavey (2011) my interest in this line of inquiry was not primarily in literary forms of discourse analysis but rather how the details of human experience are conditioned by and resist the normative cultural parameters that form our existence. Themes that arose among the four men were cross-compared and analyzed to uncover inconsistencies, contradictions, omissions, and commonalities. Given the narrative, auto-biographical character of the videos, a post-structuralist sensibility allowed me to examine how language and embodiment is mobilized by these men to make sense of their worlds in relation to various discourses (Wright, 2004). The point here is not to extrapolate some objective account of the industry as such, but to draw on the performances in the videos to illuminate, as Wright says, "[…] how selves are constituted, how power-knowledge relations change across times, places, and in the context of different social, political, and cultural contexts (p.36)".

After my thesis is deposited, the video footage I amassed over the course of the project will be edited by me to create a series of short (approx. 10 minute) documentary films (Banks,

2008). I chose the documentary format to disseminate the data obtained through the filmed interviews for the purpose of potentially reaching a wider audience outside academia. By targeting the general public, I hope to continue to broaden the discussion surrounding men and body image. In addition, the subject of the male body and its role in an artistic discipline that is primarily visual will be complemented by the use of film, allowing for a richer depiction of the participants' experiences and to augment the effectiveness of the narratives. The overall narrative of the film will focus on the lived experiences of a working actor, as well as the multiple gender identities that the men are negotiating and constructing as they are asked to portray competing and subordinated masculinities in their professional and personal lives. Although I will act as final editor of the piece my participants/co-investigators will be given an active role throughout the creation of the film, as it is my intention to honor the narratives of the participants and their experiences.

My own position as an insider within this population, the personal investment of participants in the creation of the vlog, and the capture of minute visual detail on video allowed me to come close to the in-depth qualitative fieldwork advocated by Goffman (1989). Removing myself physically from the interview process undoubtedly affected the data I received although I am only able to guess at exactly how this might have influenced my results. Because fat actors are always performing scripted masculinity on film, involving the participants directly in shaping the research not only afforded the actors the opportunity to co-construct their personal narratives, but hopefully encouraged reflexivity among the participants in relation to the subjectivities they perform in their artistic and personal lives (Bancroft et al., 2014). In devising this inventive method (Lury & Wakefield, 2012) I have attempted to balance the incorporation of rigorous procedures that are well grounded in established research methods traditions while leaving space

for fluidity and adaptability as I analyzed the lives of my participants. Although criticisms that post-structural frameworks are too vague are not unfounded, as there are no strict sets of scientific procedures for discourse analysis beyond a careful, detailed reading of the "text" (in this case, videos) (Gavey, 1989), I have drawn from the principles of these frameworks as a means of locating the “self” within the networks of power that constitute the “social”. I feel satisfied that the in-depth qualitative data my participants provided me with, along with my careful reading of their video diaries, has satisfied the requirements of a purposive theoretical sampling method and sufficiently speaks to the theoretical considerations of my thesis.

"The Funny Fat Guys"

To begin, I will provide a brief sketch of each participant based on the characteristics they displayed in their videos and their descriptions of themselves. All four men referred to the importance of the "funny fat guy" trope in their lives and described how this had impacted their experiences as actors and as fat men more generally. While each man acknowledged that this trope was noteworthy insofar as they all used humor as a go-to strategy for managing their identities, they also resisted adopting a strong personal identification with this trope. Nevertheless, against the backdrop of this archetype, each man's personal identity emerged as the recording of the videos progressed and four distinct narratives personalities came into focus.

Jim: "The Chubby Cis White Straight Man"

> "I'm a guy who is the best friend type, the guy who doesn't chase after the girl, the guy that is in love with the main girl in the movie but even so helps her with her boyfriend problems and in the end, he gets a new laptop and is happy about that. I play the guy who is an underestimated slacker but who comes through in the end in a way you haven't expected. These are things that are in my brand and they are things that I thought about. One of the things you ask about is marketing materials and one of the things is a demo reel. Recently I shot a bunch of scenes for my demo reel and I thought about my marketing. I found a scene with a goofy slacker, something where I get my heart broken. I think getting my heart broken on screen is I think part of my brand, is something I portray well." (Jim wk. 2/vid 1/p.5)

One of the striking features of Jim's videos in relation to the other men was his use of language. Jim distinctly engaged in the rhetoric of social justice activism throughout his interviews, using terms like "cisgender", "white privilege", and "racialized", and was the only participant to self-identify by explicitly using the word "feminist". He often reiterated that he was a white straight man and that part of his responsibility in identifying as such was to listen to marginalized groups. My sense of this is that Jim likely used this language and described himself in these ways to signal his alliance with marginalized communities. It appeared he was making a concerted effort not to be construed as inconsiderate or say anything offensive (which also could have been a result of his imagining who I am while he performed his interviews, given that I am

an academic who is researching identity). He declared a strong personal identification with femininity, and a preference for socializing and working with women.

Jim did not shy away from showing emotion while he recounted his experiences in the industry, particularly with respect to being fat. His self-reflections would tend to be quite critical and he was candid about his struggles with negative body image. He claimed to not be happy about being fat, or "chubby" as he frequently referred to himself and had been struggling to reconcile himself to this part of his identity. Jim is married and credited his relationship with his wife in helping him work through some of his body image concerns. He was self-deprecating and quite hard on himself at times in his videos.

Jim shot his videos in the bachelor apartment he shares with his wife and stated that he intentionally changed the background for each of his videos to give the impression that his apartment is larger than it actually is.

Nick: "The Positive Thinker and Misunderstood Outsider"

> "I can name maybe three characters that I could be like, when I play those characters I'm playing a character, but it is coming from a place of like, I fully understand. And those are Horton the Elephant in *Seussical*, Shrek in *Shrek the Musical*, and Barfée in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Three characters, all different. Horton is just kind of like a misunderstood kind of dude, has his own beliefs of like, hearing things and like, sticks by them. Shrek is the epitome of how many times you get told 'no' before you kind of harden your shell. And then Barfée in Spelling Bee, he's the type of character where he's just all defense. He's all defense all the time. That's just his environment. And so all three of those characters I speak to in some aspect." (Nick wk. 2/vid 2/p.15)

In his videos, Nick portrayed himself chiefly as an optimist who put a positive spin on everything. His self-described brand was being positive (although he concedes that this is not sustainable in every moment of his life). He made numerous assertions that change in the industry and broader culture towards greater diversity and equality was possible, had occurred, and must continue to occur. Alongside his striving for positivity, there were moments where he did express his anger, especially when it came to discussing size discrimination. But when Nick

spoke about being typecast based on his size, he asserted that he never worried about it and found a way to put a positive spin on the situation.

Nick's videos were the shortest in length of all four men, and what he did not say and what he hinted at were undoubtedly meaningful silences (Pederson & Poland, 1998). For example, Nick made no mention in the interviews of identifying as a "bear" (a subculture of large, hairy, masculine gay men), and yet he uses bear hashtags frequently on his Instagram page, something that he did describe in his videos as an important outlet for expressing his identity. Nick hinted at what he described as "taking control" and changing his body but chose not to elaborate further on what that meant. Unlike the other men, who did not hold back when it came to defining themselves, Nick would frequently use vague language. Although he did use "big", "bigger", and occasionally "fat" when referring to size, he would also use vague or coded language (e.g. "a person like me" "person of a bigger stature" or "I don't have the correct physical attributes"). Where the other men frequently relayed sometimes deeply personal stories about their lives, Nick offered fewer anecdotes from his own life, preferring to stick to his opinions about generalized hypothetical scenarios. In his videos, Nick actively rejected being fat as part of his identity ("it's not who I am"), distanced himself from fatness as a category, and spoke about other fat people in such a way that indicated he considered himself outside this category.

Nick lives with his family, although he chose to film his videos at a friend's house.

Constant: "The Sassy Sexy Big Guy in Charge"

> "I think I have the ideal body type for the funny uncle type, best friend, secondary featured character who brings down the house with the 11 o'clock number. Great. Done. It's me. Fat boy. Shows up, does the splits, everyone loves it, goes home." (Constant wk. 2/vid 1/p.10)

"Walking with purpose" was Constant's declared mantra and how he summed up his way of approaching life. He did not portray himself as someone who wanted to go unnoticed. He spoke

of how he confidently takes up physical space with his body and with his outgoing personality, although he was also conscious of modifying this as the situation demanded. Constant saw himself as a fat man who defied expectations; he described himself as physically active and proficient at sports and dance. He was decidedly not willing to concede the negative stereotypical portrayal of fatness. This is a man who set out to defy other people's expectations of him throughout his life and framed himself as being in control of the decisions he makes. He had a large letter "C" (for "Constant") and a mirror hanging over his bed, which is where he filmed his videos.

Constant used lots of gay slang in his videos ("twink", "fishy", "large and in charge") and being a gay man was evidently a significant part of his identity (as an actor, playing gay roles was cited as part of his wheelhouse). He was the only man to overtly portray himself as a sexual being, asserting that he is worthy of love, that he was an attractive man, and that he could make people desire him despite his size. That said, he could also be pessimistic in the way that he spoke about seeing change and progress in the industry, particularly with respect to representations of sexuality and fatness on film ("I don't think people are ready for that").

Bob: "The Schlubby Comedy Writer (and Sometime Actor)"

> "I think I'm at heart I'm a schlubby type person. Not that I always go to auditions in a schlubby outfit, I don't usually. But I think it's easier to see that when I come in because I just embody that. And I'm not saying schlubby as like a derogative. I'm fine with that. It's a certain type. (*laughs*) And that's just kind of who I am. I'm not beating myself up, I'm fine with that." (Bob wk. 2/p.9)

"Schlubby", or "schlub", was Bob's preferred way of referring to his embodied identity. Although the word literally means "a stupid, worthless, or unattractive person" (Merriam-Webster, 2018), Bob appears to have reclaimed this word and used it as a catchall to refer not only to his fatness, but also to his clothing, general attitude, and gender performance. It was a flexible label in terms of its meaning, and this meant that it could be deployed by Bob however

he saw fit. It could be a negative or positive description, and given importance to varying degrees, and was a way that Bob claimed agency over his identity.

Rather than identifying as an actor, Bob characterized himself as a writer. As a performer, Bob had mainly worked in commercials and as a comedic actor and improviser. He trained in the comedy program at Humber College in Toronto and is a staff writer for CBC's *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Although he would point out during his videos that he no longer considered himself an actor, he does still have an agent and occasionally goes out for commercials and does walk-on parts for *22 Minutes*.

Bob asserted that his body was not the defining feature of his identity, although admittedly he had been obsessive with respect to body image in the past. Bob disclosed that he is a former anorexic and was very forthcoming about his struggles with anxiety and depression. He talked about being in therapy, and the topic of mental health figured prominently in his videos. Bob cited a complicated relationship with food that informed a central part of his identity.

Bob is straight and lives with his girlfriend. He shot his videos in various rooms in his house.

Presentation of the Self

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of self presentation was a fundamental analytical concept in shaping my research as it illuminated how male identity, fatness, typecasting, and stigma are experienced by these men. This framework was also a useful way to consider the performative acts in the interviews that are, at their core, a linguistic exercise (Ahmed, 2016). The men reflected on how they went about presenting a "personal front" (the intimate aspects of an individual's identity performance that are derived from normative dictates) in their personal and professional lives, offering a "backstage" glimpse into how they engaged in a dramaturgical construction of the self. Simultaneously they were creating another performance through the process of creating a video diary, and this "backstage" performance served as a front intended for a specific audience, namely me (Litt, 2012). Goffman's (1959, 1963) work was also useful in interrogating how these men conceptualized their own agency, as the presentation of the self speaks to how identity entails making choices in any given context for the purpose of being received by another, indicating the social nature of identity construction (Cooley, 2017).

Performance of the self can offer insight into how an actor might play a role, particularly given the emphasis on "authentic performance" and being "real" in the context of creative professions (Strasberg, 1988; Svejenova, 2005). As Goffman (1959) insists, our social performances must be received as authentic by another in order for them to be appraised as successful. Examining how these men presented themselves in their videos can also give us insight into how they might perform "authenticity" as research subjects (Alldred & Gillies, 2011), further troubling the line between character and actor. I would argue that, as Bob noted, there is always an element of an actor's identity embedded in the characters that they play. If it is true that actors, particularly those who are still trying to make their mark, are typecast and, like

these men, are not typically offered a wide variety of roles, then it would stand to reason that the permeable boundary that delineates between character and actor is further troubled when actors are persistently typecast.

In the following section, I will unpack both how the men described the ways that they performed the self in their personal and professional lives, and how they presented themselves in the context of their respective video interviews.

The Looking Glass Video

Tasked with the performance of putting themselves on video and constructing a coherent narrative out of their identity for me, the researcher, the men demonstrated how an imagined "other" is easily drawn upon in an artificially created conversation (Cooley, 2017; Litt, 2012). There was a meta-awareness of participating in the project, what it might be intended for, and who I am even though I was not physically present to interview them. That said, I think that my absence makes the presentation of the self all the more interesting here because the imagined "John", the graduate student researcher, is largely a construct of the participants themselves. The men only knew me on a superficial level, based on the minimal information that they had about my background. While I attempted to be as transparent and clear about the aims of the research, interacting with me directly was brief at the start of the project and so the process of self-taping required some imagination in terms of how they might interact with and present themselves to a virtual stranger. Although the intimate and confessional format was akin to keeping a video diary (Bancroft et al., 2014), and the feedback from the men was that they spoke candidly about things they considered to be quite personal, it cannot be ignored that this manufactured process was mediated by me.

In addition to the diary framing, the videos were also framed as interviews and this introduced another set of social rules or "framing" (Goffman, 1974) for the men to follow in terms of how they presented themselves. When recording their videos, all the men addressed me and spoke directly to me as though the camera was my proxy, whose unwavering eye served as a stimulus for the men to monitor themselves in the videos and heightened their awareness that this performance would eventually be received by another person. For example, Jim and Constant would both correct themselves when they said things that weren't true or could be misconstrued as offensive, indicating their awareness of the performance and a desire for it to be successfully received by an audience (Goffman, 1959). Conversely, Nick reflected on how speaking only to the camera, instead of a real person, had affected him and speculated that because of this absence he was less self-conscious and engaged in less self-editing while recording, indicating that there was a blurring between the intimacy of the diary format and the mediated public performance of an interview. In this instance, my conspicuous absence facilitated an "authentic" performance from Nick that was unencumbered by self-consciousness.

All four men told me that they had tried to present what they deemed to be an "authentic" version of themselves, likely part of an effort to provide me with what they thought would be useful data and being a "good research subject" (Alldred & Gillies, 2011). Interestingly, what the men deemed to be an "authentic" self was not synonymous with "best" self, as their "best" self might imply putting more care into physical presentation or acting on one's best behavior according to social norms, while an "authentic" self would capture their character with all of its inherent flaws and contradictions. For instance, striving to present themselves as authentically as possible dictated some of the aesthetic choices the men made in their videos. Bob thought that he might have dressed up more had I been present to interview him, but had he done this it would

not have represented his most authentic self and so in his videos he dressed in a casual masculine aesthetic (hoodies, t-shirts, ball caps). On the other hand, Nick felt that putting a well-groomed "best" self forward *was* his most authentic self, and that looking his best reflected who he really was. Interestingly, Nick pointed out that he had purposely not worn a tank top, claiming that this would somehow not have been appropriate (he wore casual t-shirts in virtually every video). The prospect of his body being seen by other people seemed to dictate how Nick presented himself, as he expressed a desire to embody what he understood to be "presentable". Unlike Bob, Nick felt his truest self was the most "presentable" (i.e. groomed, looking good) and he even went so far as to shower before making his videos even though, as he pointed out, I wouldn't be able to smell him.

My presence as a researcher (or lack thereof) also influenced the content of what the men said, as they presented themselves according to what they considered their most "authentic" self with a heightened awareness that at times led to self-surveillance. While recording their responses in the interviews, if something was deemed to be inauthentic or they caught themselves inadvertently lying, the men would correct themselves. This happened when Jim caught himself making a joke about drinking backstage while performing, something he immediately distanced himself from:

> "I like being the guy who comes in with two, three scenes, and maybe comes in and steals the scene for a bit and then goes backstage and drinks. (*whispers to camera*) I don't do that. But, yeah, oh this goes back to things being healthy. I said that I don't do any drugs, I don't drink that much either. I might have 2 beers in a night if I'm being very excited. File that with, you know, healthy behaviors. I'm very moderate with such things. I would say once every six months I have fun with things, and other than that I stick with one or two drinks, tops." (Jim wk. 2/vid. 1/p.3)

This appeared to be a correction of what Jim believed was a social slip up (i.e. making a joke about drinking on the job, clearly not something that most people would find socially acceptable), indicating that my imagined presence made him want to redeem his character from a

poorly executed joke. Goffman (1971) refers to this as "remedial work", a form of damage control intended to affect others' responses to lapses in our behavior but also as a way of tempering own responses. Through remedial work we seek to transform an immoral transgression into an acceptable form of behavior and to make up for his misstep, Jim quickly proclaimed that he is in fact a "responsible" drinker and actor. Still, for the most part the performing self on display in the videos and the recollections of self that were reflexively constructed through the men's narratives were congruent. The performances on video appeared to be aligned with how the men perceived themselves, suggesting the repetitive nature of identity that goes into the construction of a consistent and coherent performance (Bruner, 1995).

Presenting the Professional Self

While an actor's job is arguably to consciously perform the self in any given situation, the audition context is of particular significance because it is an instance where the actor must not only present (and sell) the imaginary character they are playing but also must present (and sell) themselves. The audition is where an actor's aesthetic labor is initially brought to market and offered up as a commodity to be bought by gatekeepers in the industry (Dean, 2005; Zimmerman et al. 2003). An audition is also an attractive site for analysis because presentation is paramount, and decisions are made based on typecasting that result in booking or losing a gig (Dean, 2003).

My data suggest that the men thought about their appearance to varying degrees and felt that presenting the self in audition situations generally called for cleaning up one's appearance. The other person in the transactional scenario of an audition (i.e. the casting people, the director, ad agency people, etc.,) function as the imagined generalized "other" for whom an actor envisages receiving their performance. Bob described how he would clean up his appearance depending on the demands of a given audition for the desired outcome of booking the job, "Ok so, I don't ever

go to audition schlubbily, unless like, if they ask, 'he's kind of schlubby', then I will. I mean it doesn't take much to look schlubby for me because that is uh, sort of my go to. But I'll uh, you know, I'll try to look a little more presentable. I don't bike a lot to auditions because I don't want to be a sweaty mess." (wk. 1/p.5) The importance of putting thought into the aesthetic labor being performed was sometimes downplayed by Bob, but nevertheless clothes and aesthetics affected how identity and embodiment were experienced. Presenting oneself well also encompassed an affective component wherein the men felt proud as a result of their appearance being successfully received by another person, one of the self-feeling emotions identified by Goffman and Cooley (Scheff, 2005).

Discussion around how the men presented themselves at auditions also demonstrated how their self-efficacy might be contingent on their ability to successfully accomplish the self through interaction (Goffman, 1959). Given that actors are often reliant on others in the industry to dictate the parameters of their employment (West & Zimmerman, 2003), performance of their professional self was one instance where they could achieve a degree of control over the choices they made at an audition. Constant described a reflexivity and conscientious performance of the self that incorporated the meta-narrative of his identity in which he saw himself as a highly confident person: "I try to walk in, I try to walk through life with a purpose because I feel like I have a purpose, and I want to have a purpose. and I think that translates." (wk. 2/vid. 1/p.9) So much of an actor's life is spent navigating the unbalanced power dynamics of industry relationships, and yet there was a sense of being able to control or navigate the social environment of the audition room or casting house on one's own terms that characterized how the men saw their public personas. For Constant this also meant putting his "best self" forward (e.g. being groomed, prepared, etc.), which included adjusting his gendered behavior depending

on the person he might be auditioning for, "[…] sometimes I walk into an audition room, and I read the room, and I pull it back a little. And sometimes I'll walk in and I'll be as fabulous as I want to be, and as strong and masculine, and…confident as I want to be. Because at the end of the day that's how I feel in that moment. and if I can't be myself what's the point you know?" (wk. 3/p.27) While on the one hand, Constant declared a sense of control over his self-presentation when interacting with colleagues that allowed him to be true to himself, he also admitted that this presentation could be dictated by a need to placate others in the audition room who might not be as receptive to his outgoing (fabulous) persona.

Another way the men spoke about presenting their personas was in discussing how they developed a public persona in the context of professional settings outside of acting that demanded a high degree of personal interaction (industry events, for example). Expectations that they always be performing whether onstage or off from industry colleagues and audiences meant that for some of the men they cultivated a public persona that was always "on". Nick discussed turning the performance of his professional self off and on depending on the demands of the situation, which was similar to Constant who also found that there was an expectation placed on him by audiences to be the same entertainer onstage as well as off. Both men maintained that there could be considerable effort involved in maintaining their public personas and occasionally this could be draining. Nick recounted a story about a fundraiser he had co-hosted in which the energy it took in maintaining his professional and personal personas was brought into stark relief:

> "I hosted an event and I'd just had rehearsal and I was exhausted. I was like, so tired, and I knew I had to go host this event. And on the drive there I realized that, yes, Nick Settimi is tired, but Nick Settimi is hosting a job. So, it was like, not that I acted, because it was a fundraiser for a very good cause I find very near and dear to my heart, but I was like, I have to turn on the Nick Settimi that people are expecting. And I did, and we laughed, we had a great time, it was amazing. Once it was done and everyone had left I collapsed at a table and had a beer (*laughs*). But yeah, that is how I feel about performing. People see you onstage and I think they have this preconceived notion that

that's what you are all the time. And you have to remind people, no, that's not what I'm like all the time." (Nick wk. 2/vid. 3/p.8)

Although clearly Nick did feel that he needed to deliver the "Nick Settimi that people are expecting", indicating that reminding people that he is not his persona might not be as easy as he insists. In contrast to the public persona that Nick and Constant described, Bob, a professed comedic performer and professional comedy writer, asserted that he intentionally does not continually crack jokes in his personal life, and felt some disdain for performers who are always "on". While Bob also found the expectation placed on actors to perform a public self exhausting, this was due to his dislike of "schmoozing" at industry events, a performance which he explicitly rejected while regarding his professional persona in far more introverted terms than Nick and Constant had:

> "I mean, I am sort of an introverted person, so I keep to myself. I'm not, uh, I'm not like the guy that's always turned on. That's some bad phrasing, but I don't turn it on in public all the time where I have to make a joke and everything. I find that kind of annoying a little bit because I like to be a person that is able to be taken seriously and is sincere, but not someone who is thought of as taking things too seriously. I like joking around with my friends, but I don't need to have a punchline for everything. I'm an introvert so I also like more introspective - is that the right phrase, is that the right word? I'm a writer and I should know these things. Um, I like uh, talking to people on a deeper level that's not just surface stuff, small talk." (Bob wk. 4/p.21)

Of course, Bob did slip a joke in regarding being "always turned on", but this was delivered in a dry, acerbic style, not the goofy, overtly joking way to which he objected. While these two formulations of public personas, extroverted and introverted, may seem to be at odds, they both suggest that they are the product of a conscious decision to perform identity in specific way that conforms to expectations imposed on them by the industry.

The distinction made between these two types of personas raises an interesting question: why would Constant and Nick, two fat and (relatively) effeminate gay men conform to a pressure to perform a public persona, while, Bob, a fat and (relatively) masculine straight man would reject this pressure? Although counter-intuitive, I would suggest that an energetic flamboyant public persona might indicate a strategy to minimize the stigma of being gay. As gay men, being

extroverted - funny and sassy - could be a way of diffusing the tension that is anticipated when interacting with strangers who may or may not be homophobic (in addition to fatphobic). Whereas being introspective, someone who is regarded as serious, someone who claims to speak on a deeper level and not on a frivolous level, citing these characteristics could arguably be indicative of a type of hegemonic masculinity that on the one hand might compensate for feelings of social anxiety, but on the other hand distinguishes men as people who should be taken seriously in comparison to the feminized other – be they male or female.

Masculinity and Gender Performance

"I never honestly put much thought into gender identity before." (Bob, week 3/p.15)

In the classic feminist turn as pioneered by De Beauvoir (1949), masculinity functions as the "unmarked" normative standard in relation to the "marked norm" of femininity, differentiating masculinity as an unexamined majority category that escaped definition and critique relative to the minority category, femininity. According to this principle, masculinity derives its power in part from the unassailable ubiquity of its character. The hidden quality of masculinity, exemplified by the above quote from Bob, was a common theme throughout the participants' videos, and as they answered the interview questions it became apparent that articulating how they performed gender as actors and in their personal lives was sometimes a difficult task. This suggested that gender, and masculinity in particular, was something taken for granted, something that had become so routine that it had faded into the background of their lives.

From their perspective as actors, the men could explain how playing explicitly gendered roles (a father, for example) might call for a certain amount of conscious thought around what it might mean to play a male character, but the men all professed that thinking about gender was not part of their approach to the craft of acting. Rather, acting technique was thought to be predicated on a combination of playing the psychological motivations of a character in the given circumstances of the script, while bringing personal life experience to the role in a way that gave their performance the semblance of being "authentic". When discussing acting craft, gender did not appear to have any particular bearing for the men, and instead took a back seat to the context of and dramatic action being played in a scene. Arguably this is suggestive of the taken for granted performative nature of gender and identity that has been "rehearsed", to borrow from

Butler (1988), throughout one's life to the extent that it becomes a given fact of the actor's identity in such a way that it does not have to be intentionally played, it will just "be". As Nick said about playing gender: "Yeah, the gender identity with playing a character. Um, well yeah, like, I'm a male, my character's a male, so we already have that thing in common." (wk. 3/vid. 2/p.15) Male actors don't have to focus on how to perform "as men" since they have a lifetime of experience playing a gendered role (themselves) that they bring to the table for every job. Playing a man is automatically understood by these actors because their gender is so familiar to the point that it effectively disappears from sight.

Despite the apparent non-status that gender seemed to occupy in the lives of these men, it was nevertheless continuously produced by means of performative speech acts that were uttered throughout the interviews. Since the men were narrating their lives in response to interview questions, all the videos possessed a performative quality as the men produced their gendered identities through speech. Masculine identity was enacted via the way that the men spoke about themselves, claiming membership to the category of "man" in a variety of ways. This was sometimes done explicitly, as Jim asserted in his week three video entry: "I am a cisgendered man. I, I was born with male genitalia and I feel that I am a man and wish to be represented that way in the world." (wk.3/p.13) Despite clearly demarcating his gender identity by citing a normative identity categorization, the way Jim used this language also indicated that he was familiar with gender-based activism, and in declaring his gender identity in this way he simultaneously assumed an activist identity as way to signal himself as a male ally. In this instance language was deployed to establish Jim's identity in a way that set him apart from other men (who may not consider gender to be a social construction). Rather than troubling the notion of gender categories altogether, I would argue that Jim's meta-awareness of gender categories

also has political undertones here in that there is also a claim to legitimacy in demanding that this normative identity be respected ("I wish to be represented that way") despite its constructedness.

When asked to cite male gender norms more generally the men were easily able to identify many of the stereotypical aesthetic and behavioral traits associated with the concept of hegemonic masculinity. While there were differences in how the men characterized traditional forms of masculinity, there were also similarities across their depictions. From a behavioral standpoint, Bob remarked how in general men are thought to be "able to build things" and are seen as providers, aggressors, and protectors, traits echoed by Jim as well who felt that these norms were part of the culture on film sets that he described as a "hypermasculine" atmosphere where "there is a lot less room to be weak". In terms of physical appearance, the idealized male body was depicted as muscular, tall, athletic, and conventionally attractive, a description that all the men considered to be the basis of what, for them, formed the image of the "leading man" aesthetic in the industry. Interestingly, all the men clearly saw themselves as outsiders to this category because of their fat bodies, which precluded them from embodying this specific brand of hegemonic masculinity on (and off) screen. Deciphering the categories of subordinate and hegemonic masculinity were also understood through embodied encounter, as Jim described how he observed hegemonic masculinity enacted through competition between the bodies of male actors on set: "[..] and you know actors are always talking to one another about all the reps I did on this and like, oh yeah. I've got lots of actor friends who, when we've done shows on the set, have done chin up competitions with each other. I don't do chin ups. You may have guessed." (wk.2/vid.2/p.6)

While the men may have felt they did not measure up to the normative aesthetic of the leading man ideal they described, they still identified with hegemonic masculine qualities in their

personal lives. These moments of self-identification were often reflexive and clearly recognized the masculine trait in question as emblematic of hegemonic norms. This identification with hegemonic masculinity was not necessarily indicative of a recuperation of masculine power but was often problematized as a source of difficulty. Bob spoke of being emotionally detached and prone to suppressing his emotions, something he saw as an explicitly masculine trait (i.e. men as rational beings who are not driven by their emotions). And yet there was acknowledgement of the restriction and limitation that these norms imposed on him, as Bob felt that this trait had caused him some distress in his life resulting from the tension between having to adhere to expectations that as a man he must eschew his emotions while nevertheless navigating the emotional complexity of his life. In contrast to Bob's reflexivity, Jim, a self-described feminist, described using Twitter as way of promoting himself as an actor but also for discussing professional sports (particularly hockey), noting that sports make up a significant part of his online professional identity. While professional sports certainly are not the exclusive domain of men, they are a stereotypically masculine domain, and it is interesting to note that this part of Jim's image went undiscussed as a part of his gender identity.

Occasionally the men would grapple with how they made sense of gender relations, and their responses would evolve so that an initial take on a question might be revised once they had spent some time reflecting on their experiences. In terms of how they perceived gender relations in the industry, it first appeared as though all four men held the stereotypical belief that women were more nurturing, and that men were more cutthroat. Nick and Jim stated that they were aware of the differences in their interactions with male and female casting directors, expressing a preference for dealing with female casting directors whom they saw as relatable, and more open than their male counterparts. The greater feelings of comfort the men described in their

interactions with women might be the result of contrasting this openness to the perceived aggressive comportment of some men in the industry, but it also speaks to the unspoken emotional labor that women are expected to provide (Hochschild, 2015).

Yet as the men considered their responses further, their depictions of gender differences in the industry often became more nuanced. At first, Bob remarked that gender was not something he thought about in his interactions with others in the industry, casting directors for example. Although he initially stated that he might be more comfortable around female casting directors, after reflecting on the question he remembered an instance when he had felt more nervous with an important female casting director but believed that this was likely due to her high status in the industry rather than her gender. Constant expressed similar sentiments that he found the women he worked with more approachable but added that he had also had experiences with intimidating female directors and nurturing male directors, and that gender relations were not nearly as straightforward as he had initially portrayed them. While the men initially appeared to stereotype women in the industry according to roles as caregivers and emotional laborers, upon deeper reflection they did seem to realize that this was not necessarily an accurate characterization for all women in the industry. Despite the gendered complexity they ultimately revealed, they nevertheless were left with an abiding impression that women were more nurturing, indicating the power of gendered norms in our culture.

The men struggled to reconcile the unmistakable significance of gender in their personal and professional lives with the belief that gender does not, or at least should not, matter. One of the running themes asserted in the interviews was that gender no longer held the same importance that it once might have, that somehow society had entered a sort of post-gender moment and that as a concept gender had lost some of its relevance. Bob and Nick both

expressed this idea in response to the question of whether they believed gender was necessary to serve the story being told on film, both answering that they did not believe it was necessary. But they also acknowledged that gender was in fact an important aspect of the work that they did as actors and was a fundamental piece of how roles were written and played. This tension could be the result of their desire to see roles in the industry as less defined by stereotypical notions of gender and characterised by an increased inclination towards more diversity in casting, something expressed by all of the men. In response to the question of whether gender was important to storytelling, Jim initially stated that he did not believe gender was necessary but quickly revised his answer as he considered that: "[..] gender is very much all over our life, so I guess gender has to be all over our craft." (wk.3/p.16) In his initial discussion of how he defined gender, Constant also stated that he felt that gender had become "dated" and shouldn't be a measure of someone's worth. However, gender expression, in his case as a feminine gay man, had greatly impacted him on a personal and professional level, even to the extent that: "I've never gone in for a masculine type of role, a very butch role. It could be my very high voice." (wk.3/p.20) Not only had gender and sexuality impacted Constant professionally but he also felt as though the industry's bias towards heteronormative representation on screen was so deeply engrained that seeing gender norms profoundly shift in the roles he was asked to play, at least in his lifetime, was unlikely.

Normative expectations based on gender and sexuality also characterized their interactions with other men in the industry, encounters which were perceived to be fraught with conflict. These struggles were often characterized as being rooted in asymmetrical power dynamics between men, in which the participants felt pressure to live up to hegemonic expectations of them as men and compensate for their subordinated masculinities. Again,

Constant pointed out how his gender and sexuality intersected as an effeminate gay man and potentially affected how he might interact with a male casting director: "When I do go in for a role, uh, I think I am treated differently. If the guy, usually if it's a very macho guy on the other side of the table, I can sort of feel the vibe. I have to crack a few jokes to lighten up the air." (wk.3/p.27) This pointed to the uneven power dynamic that already exists between casting directors and actors being compounded by gender, as Constant felt the onus of responsibility for diffusing any tension that might result from his flamboyant personality. Jim, who claimed he had difficulty relating to aggressive men, hazarded a guess as to what might be underlying his feelings of uneasiness around other men who he perceived as hostile because of their gender:

> "[…] it's harder for me to relate to a man. And I think part of that is also my gender identity and their gender identity. There could be something standoffish when two men are together. That is ridiculous. That doesn't need to be there. There can be a taboo about getting too close to another man. And yeah, I've always thought of myself as not exactly a frightening sexual predator, so I don't feel self-conscious getting close with women, because I think I give off a vibe right away of 'don't worry, I'm not trying anything'. Is there, inherently, that, that homophobic thing going on where like you can't get too close to another man? I don't know, like that could be in there." (wk.3/vid.2/p.21)

As Kimmel (2004) argues, masculinity is simultaneously threatened and constructed around the central principle of homosexuality, which can be understood as the embodiment of the feminine rather than simply a sexual act (although that, too, is part of the configuration). It is notable that Jim was aware that masculinity was threatened by homosexuality, echoing Butler's assertion that gender and sexuality are mutually constitutive, and that the "original" of heteronormativity is forever haunted by the "copy" of the queer other. This palpable discomfort resulting from the instability of masculine identity also hinted at the potential for subversion as the need to restore the balance of power that both Jim and Constant acutely felt could indicate the unstable ground that their feminized identity roused in other men.

Understanding one's own gender identity was predicated not only on how these men perceived themselves in contrast to others, but also to the extent that others perceived their

gender and reflected it back to them (Cooley, 1902). In this sense, gender was seen as an accomplishment arising from interactive processes, the outcome of doing gender with another person. Illustrating how the reception of gender expression is an important aspect of a felt sense of identity, Jim noted: "I certainly feel that there is a sense of two people to gender identity in that there's how I see me and there's how you see me. there's how I see you and how you see you." (wk.3/vid.1/p.14) While Bob, on the other hand, might not have always been directly aware of how his gender presentation was affected by his personal interactions with people in the industry, the roles he found himself cast in certainly revealed to some extent how he is perceived by the industry, or at least how he imagined he was perceived by others in the industry. For example, he cited "dads" and "office workers" as his likely go-to's in terms of casting, indicating an awareness around his own "hit" and how his gender was tied up with the aesthetic labor that stemmed from the labels that were imposed on him via the casting process. As mentioned earlier, Constant's gender expression was also closely tied with his sexuality and he described how this expression could be a hindrance to his professional life, recounting a story where his femininity was outright rejected by a casting director:

> "I recently had an audition where the character was dying and got a diagnosis of um, terminal cancer. And I just took it as myself. It said 'a gay man, could be large, is finding out that he's going to die in about four weeks', something like that. And I just played myself. I played myself the way I would, and the casting director said, 'Yeah, it's great, awesome, great work. Can you tone it down? Like the mannerisms? Yeah it says that he's gay, but we don't have to like, see it.' (*laughs*) And I was like, yeah, I guess. If you want to say you have a gay character in your series and you don't want him to appear gay, that's what it is. And then I did it super straight and she looked very satisfied." (wk.3/p.24-25)

Constant's embodied femininity (including his voice, something he claimed "gives me away") is intrinsically linked to his sexuality, effectively functioning as a discreditable stigma symbol that he is asked to adjust in order to accommodate the expectations of casting. Not only that, but his discreditable gayness underscores his gender identity as being an untenable subject position, his masculinity is spoiled by his femininity, his homosexuality, and his failure to express himself

according to gender normativity and compulsory heterosexuality. This story is disturbing in that it not only demonstrates the homophobia and what Sedgwick (1991) terms "effemiphobia" (i.e. the fear or hatred of femininity in men) that the men encountered in the industry, but that actors might be asked to "correct" their gender performance and effectively closet themselves to fulfill the requirements of a role. The story also shows that the content producers in question are so fearful of presenting anything on screen that is too outside the norms of acceptability such that even gay characters have to act straight and displays of hegemonic masculinity are so important that they are deemed to override sexual orientation. In other words, men are allowed to be gay – thereby transgressing heteronormativity – but they aren't allowed to transgress hegemonic masculinity which is, in this regard, the *master status* – as sociologists would say.

Despite acknowledging the impact that gender norms had on their personal and professional lives, the men also spoke of gender as a fluid performance that could be deployed as the situation demanded. In this sense they were able to accomplish "doing gender" in a range of contexts, demonstrating the adaptive nature of masculinity (Atkinson, 2011). These adaptive performances also gave the men a sense of agency and free will in terms of their gender expression as men and as actors. While discussing how he performed gender in various contexts, Constant explained:

> "[…] so when I speak to a bunch of bros at the gym who are lifting weights um, and it's bro this and bro that, you know, I'm not gonna go "Heeey, how's it goin'?" No. But that's survival. When I'm approaching a group of people, you sort of want to marry yourself to that group and eventually I'm going to be myself and if they don't like it who cares? But I think coming off strong is a sign of over insecurity. When you can just approach them, I'm not gonna approach them saying "bro" and stuff like that, but I'm also not gonna – it's gonna be different approaching that group of guys than it is approaching a group of girls shopping for mascara at Mac. If my girlfriends are there I'm like, "hey boo!" You know, it changes. And I think it changes with different groups of people. I'm an actor, I'm adaptable. That's just the way we are." (wk.3/p.21)

Also, in this example it is noteworthy that Constant again spoke of modifying his performance of gender to accommodate the normative demands of a given context, and that when he is with

stereotypically masculine men ("bros") he makes a concerted effort to conform to the hegemonic ideal. I took this to be an effort on his part to manage his spoiled identity, but rather than subvert this interaction, he performed remedial work (Goffman, 1971) in an attempt to cover his discreditable attribute, in this case minimizing his femininity and homosexuality by playing "butch".

Not only was masculinity understood relationally, the comparison the men engaged in also spoke to the concept of mimesis, and of gender categories being composed as much by what is excluded as by what is contained within (Butler, 1993). This talk echoed Kimmel's (2004) assertion that the feminine other is constantly threatening our manhood and the flimsy coherence of our masculinity must be reiterated over and over. The men understood masculinity through the lens of their own perceived failure to embody a masculine "ideal", the "original" against which they compared themselves. Social comparison with other men was a source of anxiety for Bob as he saw himself as being deficient in his own embodiment of traditionally masculine qualities compared to other men: "I'm not like a man's man, I'm far from it. […] I'm not good with tools, I can't build a shelf, I can't do - I'm not good with my hands. I'm not really a provider, or I can't fight, not a fighter. Um, I mean I'll try to protect people but boy, I am not good at that so…I struggle with that because I'm like, those are all traditional ideas of what men are." (wk.3/p.15) In failing to measure up to these particular forms of traditional masculinity that he sees in others, Bob's own masculinity is revealed as the "copy" of masculinity in comparison to the "original" and something which is understood as a deviation from the norm. While the tension and struggle that arises from failed performances of masculinity is also the grounds from which we might disrupt the idea of the original, in Jim's example cited earlier about not participating in chin-up competitions on set, Jim used humor to diffuse possible tension, but at his own expense. By

slipping in this self-deprecating fat joke, Jim beat me to the punch, diffusing any objection he imagined I might have had to the "absurd" notion that Jim might have participated in these contests. This is not parody that might allow for resignification, but a reinforcing of his body as "other" or "copy" that is the result of his own internalizing of social norms.

Considering their perceived failure to live up to hegemonic ideals, there was a tendency among the men to claim that they actively embrace their apparent subordinate masculinity and to some extent reject hegemonic masculinity. Rather than conceding a spoiled identity, the men pushed back against the pressure to present a certain way and embraced their status as outsiders, framing traditional gender norms as antiquated and useless. When describing how he perceives traditional masculinity, Bob added the caveat that: "I don't relate to any of that. So am I not a man? or…? Like, you know, it's all old ideas. It just never fit me that much." (wk.3/p.15) This was an interesting moment in Bob's videos as he subversively questioned the coherence of the category "man", creating a moment of degrounding in which he asserted the notion that traditional masculinity had become obsolete. Jim described himself in a similar fashion to Bob, stating that he had never felt a real connection to masculinity and going so far as to describe himself as being a man trapped in the body of a middle-aged woman. But while Jim recognized that subordinate masculinity could cause him difficulty in his relationships on set, he also reclaimed this perceived weakness and framed it as something he aspired to portray as an actor. For him, weakness was the more interesting quality to play as an actor, rather than being a "badass", effectively reassigning the potential loss associated with subordinate masculinity as something that might be sought after. Being emotionally available was something Nick identified with but also saw as being at odds with masculine stereotypes of stoic or taciturn men, stating: "I am one of those people that shares it to the world. I can't keep it in. I know some people are

great at it. I cannot, it's just not in me." (wk.3/vid.3/p.16) There was also something subversive in this, as Nick was pushing back against the social expectations that he should express himself in a particular gendered manner. Yes, he framed his emotional responses as something outside of his rational control, but this was not intended in a negative sense. Rather this emotional availability as a man gave him an outsider or unique status (like the three outsider characters he identified with the most: Shrek, Horton, and Barfée), the excluded outside constituting his character in a manner he embraced. According to Nick, there are some people who are just not able to adhere to the normative expectations placed on them, and rather than hold it in, Nick *shares* this peculiarity with the world like a gift of emotional availability he cannot help but let out.

Masculinity as a concept is, as Bob remarked, "complex". The gender binary, with its rigid two-party system was seen as inherently oppressive and limiting. In these interviews, however, gender was characterized more broadly as a spectrum in which there are varying subdivisions of potential masculinities, and these masculinities play out both in the professional and personal lives of the men. While all four participants could be said to ascribe to various forms of non-hegemonic masculinity, their gender identity should not be relegated to a lower rung on a conceptual hierarchy. These men may not be at first glance the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, but they do not completely eschew traditional masculinity either. They are caught between a desire to conform to normative expectations of what it means to be a man and rejecting these ideals as oppressive imperatives that inhibit them from fully expressing the complexity of their experience as humans. The paradox of being large and imposing and yet soft and sensitive (Norman, 2013) is exhibited in the ways they describe themselves as men and reflected in their bodies.

Fatness/Embodiment/Food/Exercise

When it comes to men and talking about their bodies there is a shared sense that, as Bob put it, "Men don't, because I think the perception is that nobody cares." (wk.2/p.10) There is a cultural expectation that men do not worry or care about their bodies, as this is the purview of women and not how men behave (Norman, 2011), and yet a clear relationship exists between male identity and fat identity, insofar as fatness can – as Gilman (2004) notes - be alternately seen as signifying femininity (the unruly soft flesh of a fat body) or masculinity (the large imposing fat body that dominates the space it inhabits). Given that, as Cooper (2010) noted in her overview of the field of fat studies, fatness as an identity category is ambiguous and manifold, the question becomes if in fact a "fat identity" exists, what exactly *is* it and who lays claim to it? Similar to how stereotypical hegemonic masculinity colored the experiences and perceptions of the four men, stereotypes about fatness (that intersected with, among other things, gender norms, race, disability, age, etc.) also had a considerable effect on their lives. Gluttonous, lazy, pathetic, sexless, unlovable, and moral failures were just some of the familiar stereotypes about fat people that informed the discussion around anti-fat discourse in the interviews, while at the same time the men attempted to reconcile these negative characterizations by reframing fat identity in positive terms.

One of the main routes by which these men came to understand their bodies was through fatness as a performative practice. While fatness as an identity category might evade precise definition (Cooper, 2010), nevertheless the fat body was understood and brought into existence as an objective fact by classification under the Body Mass Index (BMI). Classifying their bodies by height and weight gave these men scientific, quantifiable descriptive language to construct their fat identities, and the fat body was then symbolically produced by the speech acts

performed by the men. This was one of the ways that the fat body was brought into being through the enactment of a norm (i.e. the standard "normal weight" category and all other weight categories that are measured against it and deemed outside the norm). As Jim bluntly put it: "I am an actor whose BMI lists him as obese. That is a fact." (wk.2/vid.2/p.6) Constant also felt like the word "overweight" contributed to how his body might be categorized, by himself and others, as he stated: "I'm overweight. That's the one. I'm overweight. you know? The way that you think I'm going to be, at 6'2, 33, I'm overweight." (wk.4/p.32) For Constant, it was not simply that he was "overweight", but that this classification was in concert with other people's expectations of how someone who looks like him *should* be classified. Even though the BMI is a widely contested measurement of health (Campos et al., 2006; Okorodudu et al., 2010), the power of its classification system was given credence by Jim—like the biomedical establishment more generally--who stated that he felt he would always be "less able" because he is considered overweight. The fat "other" is rendered abject in comparison to the "so-called" normal body, once again producing the mimetic binary of delegitimized "copy" and legitimate "original" (Butler, 1993).

And yet critique or at least objection to classification by size was also expressed, with this strand of the discussion hinting at another important component to identity, embodiment. Classification by the BMI was felt to be an arbitrary system that did not account for the sensory experience of living in their bodies. While labelling the body in a particular way did produce material consequences for the participants, these discursive definitions were called into question by a felt sense of their material bodies. As Constant noted, while the implications of classification and measurement were a devastating blow to his self-concept, they were also at odds with his own perceived physical ability:

> "I was over 400 lbs. at one point in my life and I refused to believe it, because that was such an obscene number to me. When I was a kid, I was like, 'oh my god someone's over 300 pounds, that's like, how do they function?' And then the doctor was like, 'yeah, the scale stops at 400, so you're over 400.' And I just remember crying to myself in my bedroom thinking, there's no way, there's no way, that scale is wrong. I didn't want to believe it**.** I didn't think it was possible that someone could be 400 pounds and do all the stuff that I did." (wk.2/vid.2/p.16)

There was a real disconnect for Constant between the lived experience of his body and the implications of weight measurement on a scale, as though this type of fatness is utterly unintelligible, thereby marking the end or impossibility of the subject. Nick had similar feelings about his size, and rejected the notion that weight classifications could be tied to health:

> "Obesity and overweight I think are labels, yes. One tends to mean something worse than the other, but…I'm sure if I was to do the numbers, if I was to go to the doctor and I was to get all the numbers and everything done, I would probably be considered obese. And I don't feel obese, nor do I health-wise feel like I'm obese. But because we add numbers to the labels that, that gives you what you are. And I just don't like 'em, either of 'em. I think they're stupid." (wk.2/vid.4/p.10)

By rejecting the quantification of the body by the BMI and what he felt was an arbitrary classification system while asserting his own felt understanding of his body, Nick circumvented the productive power of discursive categories and defined his own subjective identity through his lived embodiment. And if these men could contest the validity and authority of the BMI, while opening up possibilities for knowing the body in other ways based on their felt experiences, then they could trouble the legitimacy of these categories on multiple levels and come closer to being able to subvert the categorizations imposed on them.

Embodied identity was also understood by the men as a reflection of how others perceived their fat body, as it was through their interactions that the men could understand how their body affected others. Like gender, the fat body was accomplished through interaction and the men came to learn about their bodies through others' perceptions and judgements reflected back at them, and further to this, like gender, the fat body could also be managed. Because of the way that gatekeepers, like agents and casting directors, might perceive an actor aesthetically, some of the men experienced their fat bodies as obstacles to securing work. Jim recounted how one

potential agent had pessimistically seen him as merely another fat guy, in keeping with how dominant groups tend to deny a full range of subjectivities to those in marginalized groups, which ultimately led to him signing with another agent:

> "I think I mentioned in talking about relations with agents last week how I had an agent who was interested in me but was also sort of like 'well you know there's not a whole lot of roles, like there's Sean Cullen […] and there's" and she named like four other overweight guys and then she's like, "and you've got to try to get in the room against them". [..] And yeah that was pushback, that was a big red flag for me and part of why I didn't sign with that agent. There was no creativity there, there was no…idea that I could be good for something that doesn't come BOOM stamped with the fat label." (wk.2/vid.3/p.12)

While identity might be a relational process, we are not necessarily bound to the perceptions of others as Jim demonstrated by contesting the "fat label", rejecting this agent's limited perception of him, and choosing another path. In this way, Jim can be seen to exercise a kind of embodied agency that allowed him to accept some of the interpretations imposed on him by others and reject other interpretations that did not align with his own self-concept.

Tension also arose from being subject to the occasional unruliness of their fat bodies and the desire to put forth a "best self" to gatekeepers in the industry, indicating that there are limits to an actor's agency as they attempt to secure work. The unruliness of their soft flesh and their desire to contain it (through clothing, diet, exercise, etc.) also demonstrates the problem of what Grosz (1994) would term the abject femininity of their fatness which threatens the men's masculine subject positions, resulting in anxiety that compels the continual management of the body. In addition to agent relationships, the audition room was an important space in which attempts were made to manage the body, and Constant talked about putting forward a "best" embodied aesthetic in which his fatness played an integral role. He remarked that if he was distracted by an unruly part of his fat because his shirt did not fit properly, or if he was not feeling confident about his appearance, then this could adversely affect his performance in an audition. In this sense, his fat could become an impediment, an obstacle to embodying his "best"

self. However, the unruly fat body was not always necessarily construed as a negative, as Constant also noted how taking up space with his body could bestow a competitive advantage in that it set him apart from other actors: "I've been gone from the city for 5 years, and every time I come back people know my name. People say […] there's not that many big guys out there. And I think being a big guy is its own brand and you don't have to advertise yourself as much. Because when you walk into a room they're like, "Oh! It's one of the 3 big guys in the city." (wk.2/vid.1/p.12) Constant characterized his large body with its unmistakable physical presence as something that made him a unique commodity, and in an industry whose labor market is oversaturated (Newhouse & Messaline, 2007) he felt this could translate to greater chances for employment.

Another important (albeit ambivalent) facet of the embodied identities of the men was their relationship with food, which was often seen as the underlying cause of their fat bodies and was framed as both an enemy and as a source of comfort or pleasure. For Bob, his relationship with food was also gendered as he connected it to an important male role model in his life, his father, who was also big: "I wanted to be like my dad. My dad was a big guy, so I ate recklessly. I ate junk all the time. And we sort of had like, a very, um, our diet was, you know, like came from cans and boxes a lot. […] I was raised on junk food. And I still have a taste for it. So I think that also contributes big time to who I am as a person." (wk.1/p.2) Bob's association of specific foods with someone he loved deeply demonstrated how identities are also derived from the affective associations we have with food. Additionally, all of the men noted how food was yet another source of deep ambivalence towards, and anxiety about, their bodies and the difficulty they felt trying to control their fat. As Constant put it: "Do I worry about what I eat? I think my body does the worrying for me. Sometimes there's almost like a guilty feeling associated with food."

(wk.2/vid.1/p.6) Here anxiety in relation to food is experienced as profoundly embodied, and the unruliness of the body is exemplified by appetites that were seen as out of control, with the men tending to put more emphasis on food than exercise as the source of their fatness. This framing also meant that they assumed others were negatively judging their eating habits which led to anxiety about diet being carried over to being on set, as Jim talked about how he had worried that other actors or crew members might judge him for eating and so would stay away from the craft services table: "I joked earlier about craft services. I'll eat less than I would on set because I don't want to be seen as the fat guy who can't help himself at meal break." (wk.2/vid.2/p.6) Shame around food and eating also led Jim to binge eat in secret so that he could avoid the anticipated judgment he assumed would be directed at him if he was caught engaging in anything that could be construed as remotely gluttonous or out of control. This of course speaks to the double standard faced by fat men, in that their muscular counterparts would be seen as fueling their hero bodies whereas the fat man eating on set would be met with judgement for being a failed neo-liberal subject.

All four men had faced considerable stigma in their lives as a result of being fat. Stigma was understood as imposed on them from without, and the way that others perceived them and judged them according to their body type was a source of shame and dejection. The industry contributed to this felt stigma in direct and indirect ways. Constant described how a casting breakdown he had encountered showed just how brutal the industry could be:

> "(*laughs*) I did a commercial once and they wanted an 'ugly fat guy'. And my agent submitted me, and I booked the audition, and I almost didn't go because I had such a hard time. But you need money, you need the gigs, so you just go. But, ugly fat guy? Really? Like that's how we're going to describe this? In the description if you want to say he's not particularly attractive and he's overweight, then that's fine. But why isn't he named Tom? or Dick? or Harry? Like why does he have to be Ugly Fat Guy? UFG is probably what that person had on their trailer door that day." (wk.1/vid.1/p.2)

Although it was undoubtedly demoralizing to come across a casting breakdown (the shorthand character descriptions used to cast a project) that was so blunt and demeaning, the story was not relayed in a depressing way by Constant, who laughed throughout and played up the absurdity and humor of the situation while telling this story. Despite the various strategies they used to reconcile the stigma they faced, other people's opinions did negatively affect their self-esteem. Bob admitted outright that he does care about what other people think, and that this has been something in the past that has troubled him: "Um, I, it's not to say that I don't care what people think of me. I struggle through that whole thing, but you know, my whole life. But, um, I guess when it came to schlubby, and I remember feeling really self-conscious about being schlubby at work. Um, but I think I, when you do something long enough you just get used to it." (wk.4/p.22) After years of internalizing his schlubby image, Bob eventually yielded to this part of his identity.

Another source of stigma that the men identified was from the association between fatness and humor, and what was implied by expectations for fat men to be funny. Fat people were consistently used as the butt of a joke, a practice the men felt was widely socially accepted. As Jim explained: "Fat people are the people left that it's ok to laugh at. People get called racist when you make fun of other races. No one cares if you make fun of a fat person. I've auditioned for a role where someone's looking for something and they can't find it and it's like, 'ha-ha it's stuck in your arm fat'. I hated auditioning for that. People are ok with making fun of fat people and that sucks." (wk.2/vid.2/p.9) Not only did Bob, Jim, and Constant experience ridicule from other people (Nick insisted that he had never encountered explicit negative judgment, saying, "I've never had a person say it to me like, oh, you're fat." [wk.4/p.22]), but they were exhorted to ridicule themselves. As Constant observed, this was even expected of him as an actor: "The

thing that sucks about being big and being a performer is that usually to book the gig, we have to be ready to make fun of ourselves. To make fun of the fact that we're fat, we're quirky, or we play the nerd." (wk.2/vid.1/p.11) When not encountering outright hostility towards their bodies, the men spoke about how they frequently dealt with concern trolling in the form of subtle discrimination from people making disparaging comments couched in concern for their health. Bob argued that although this harmful practice might be seen as justifiable tough love, to a fat person this could be detrimental to their mental health as: "[…] nobody is beating themselves up more than that fat person." (wk.4/p.25) From a symbolic interactionist perspective this points once again to the fact that the body – and the experience of the body – are constituted in and through interactive exchanges (Barlosius & Philipps, 2015). In this way, the body is never just one's own but is radically public too, as expressing objection to the fat body is seen as an unassailable right.

The men also described how the discrimination and resultant shame they encountered because of their bodies could become internalized. Body discrimination can be internalized and perpetuated by fat people themselves (Durso & Latner, 2008), and the men struggled with their own feelings of self-hatred because of their bodies. When discussing how he felt about the negative connotations associated with the word "fat", Bob spoke of a double standard: "[…] I mean I've used fat as a weapon against myself. So, I have to make those changes too." (wk.4/p.25) Not only did these men experience internalized self-loathing, but they also then felt shame about the fact that they felt shame in the first place. Jim remarked how he is hardest on himself when it comes to body shaming, despite his efforts to counter these feelings:

> "The person who pushes back against my efforts to do well as an overweight actor the most is me. Part of that is echoing the world that I've lived in for my 34 years. Part of that is I truly believe that everyone sits on their own well of shame and that guides far more of their day to day lives than they would care to admit. And I try to as much as possible to acknowledge mine to take its power away, but it still has it." (wk.2/vid.3/p.12)

Here, Jim was obviously very candid about the deep shame and self-loathing that could sometimes affect his self-esteem, illustrating how he had internalized stigma to the degree that it was something that was often dealt with in isolation.

In their personal lives, the men made sense of their fat identity in relation to their experiences of romantic love, in terms of feelings of worthiness, their current relationships, or anxiety that they would be excluded from finding love because they were fat. Given the rampant "body fascism" in mainstream gay culture (Padva, 2002), it was not surprising that Constant and Nick both acknowledged love as a source of anxiety and grappled with feelings of unworthiness that stemmed from internalized shame about their bodies (although both also asserted that they did feel that romantic love and being desirable was something attainable and something for which they longed). Jim spoke of how he too had worried about finding love, but that meeting and marrying his wife had helped him resolve his insecurity as he could see himself reflected back as desirable through his relationship with her. Bob was also in a relationship and had a girlfriend with whom he lived, and while he didn't discuss anxiety around his love life or sexuality in the same terms as the other men, interestingly he described his romantic life as also being tied up with dieting as a bodily practice, one that is initiated by and practiced with his girlfriend ("she does a better job than me"). In this sense, romantic love informed Bob's embodied identity, as he recounted how he worked on his body in concert with his relationship.

As actors, and often in contrast to their own life experiences, the men were often asked to play roles in which they failed at finding love, thereby precluding the aesthetic labor derived from their fat bodies from signifying successful romantic love. When discussing putting together his acting reel (which is a series of clips on video comprised of an actor's work, commonly used as a promotional tool) Jim believed that having his heart broken was part of his wheelhouse as an

actor: “I think getting my heart broken on screen is, I think, part of my brand, is something I portray well. I’ve picked these roles based on what I know I can bring strongly to the table, so if someone looks at it they can go, ‘oh man, I want to see that guy get his heart broken in my project.” (wk.2/vid.1/p.5) This characterization spoke to the notion that fat people do not deserve love, that it is impossible to love a fat person, which had implications for how the men saw themselves as individuals outside the roles they played onscreen. Nick spoke of a conversation he had with a friend of his that changed his perception of how he could symbolize love on screen:

> “I was kind of talking to a friend, I was saying how, ‘oh, I would love to play this part but unfortunately I don’t have the correct physical attributes’. And she kind of looked at me and she is, you know, a person of a bigger stature, and she’s like, ‘Why? I fell in love.’ Which made me think, ‘yes, I guess that’s true’. At the end of the day we all fall in love, it’s just the perception of what society allows to fall in love. Because people like myself, we would find a relationship, we would find a partner, but on stage and screen we don’t want to see that? It’s really bizarre.” (wk.2/vid.2/p.6)

This anecdote demonstrates two important considerations: that Nick experienced his identity as relational, as his friend mirrored back to him that fat people can be loveable, and the importance of representation on screen, in that if we don’t see ourselves reflected in ways that aren’t negative and stereotypical, it becomes harder to imagine that we could be anything else. And yet why would allowing more fat actors to play proper romantic leads translate into people thinking that the show or film in question is “letting the fat actor of the hook” for being fat? Is this form of representational exclusion a form of symbolic punishment for being fat? Perhaps the notion of the unlovable fat person is so taken for granted that there is an implicit belief that representation of this kind would be so unbelievable to audiences as to threaten the legibility of the narrative.

Despite the apparent significance of the fat body in shaping the identity of these men, there was occasionally a deliberate distancing from the body, even an outright rejection of their embodied fat identity. At various points during their interviews, Nick and Bob both dismissed

being fat as a significant part of their identity and saw it rather as an incidental physical trait that did not necessarily define them. As Nick stated: "[…] that's not my identity. My identity is me, I'm not going to - my identity is not my size. People can identify me by saying, "Oh, there he is, cause he's the bigger guy", but that's not my identity – as a person." (wk.2/vid.4/p.10) Nick's ambivalence about his size was indicated in the fact that he admitted that yes, he was categorized by others who saw his size unmistakably, and yet he also rejected fatness as an identity category. Nick considered his size to be merely a physical descriptor, not something that defined his personality or the essence of who he is, indicating a separation of the self from the body. Conversely, Bob acknowledged that generally speaking his size was part of his identity, but that as an auditioning actor he did not considered it too deeply: "So, my size, my height, my weight, my body type, I don't feel like it's ever really dictated what I do in the audition as far as who I am. I don't have it as part of my identity. […] I think I have it as part of my identity in general, but I don't think it's ever brought to the table when I'm auditioning, you know?" (wk.2/p.13) Because Bob considered his physical size as effectively always coupled with his identity it was almost taken for granted. Like being a man, being fat was not something he felt needed to be consciously brought forward to play a part, it was just a fact of who he is, a kind of willed and subjectively productive mind/body dualism.

In contrast to the dismissal of the fat identity, the significance of fatness as part of one's identity was also something that the men expressed, some willingly and some more reluctantly. The men acknowledged and affirmed their size in the videos as something meaningful to them on a personal and professional level. For Constant this was an integral part of being an actor and not something he shied away from: "[…] it matters a lot, your size. It has to, it's who you are. It's who you are. You can't walk into a room and you're like "don't look at my body, only look

at my talent". That's not going to happen, and that is your identity as an actor, it is your tool." (wk.2/vid.2/p.17) Bob took a more pragmatic attitude towards body acceptance as an actor, something he didn't necessarily think of in a negative sense but approached as a realist: "[I'm] pretty overweight so not a lot of Mike and Molly type situations out there. People like to see beautiful people. And listen, I'm not taking myself apart it's just that's the reality of it." (wk.1/p.5) Jim on the other hand admitted that being fat was not something he wanted as part of his identity but was resigned to accepting it regardless: "I didn't want to be the fat guy. I still don't want to be the fat – I don't want my identity to be the fat guy, but I don't want to hide who I am. This is something about me, great." (wk.2/vid.2/p.6) Despite his inclination to reject being fat as part of his identity, Jim conceded that this was something he could not shed, and he had worked hard to become more accepting of his body.

Over the course of their videos, a paradox became evident in the way that the men spoke about embodied identity: that the body was something that could be at once inescapable and mutable. If the fat body defined so much of who a person is and could not be hidden but still could be physically altered so that the body was no longer fat, then it followed that this aspect of one's identity could be rejected if one chose to lose weight. As Nick argued:

> "I wouldn't say it's my identity, because being fat…You can't change how tall you are. You, you know, can't change your masculinity, like that kind of thing. But you can change, you can change your fat size. Does that make sense? Question mark? You can change that, by exercise, by taking control, like I said. So that's not going to identify me because once I lose that I'm still me. I'm not going to be a different person because I've lost x amount of pounds. um…yeah" (wk.2/vid.4/p.10)

Nick believed, as he mentioned, that this could be achieved with exercise and diet, but also by "taking control", something he mentioned twice but pointedly would not elaborate on. But as Poland and Pederson (1998) maintained about qualitative interviews, silences can be strategic. Still, that the fat body could somehow be corrected was an attractive idea, as this meant that if one were to lose weight and change their body there might be more acting work available to

them. As Jim observed: "Yes, there are more roles out there if you are leaner. So that's just a fact of the industry. Probably if I lost 50lbs I would be more castable. So that is a pressure because I'm an actor." (wk.2/vid.2/p.9) Rather than asking the industry to change how it treats actors and represents body diversity, it was up to Jim to correct his body so that he could secure a "thin advantage" in the industry. But while Jim was anxious about being thin enough, there was also anxiety in that if one was successful at changing their fat body, then their value as an actor might diminish. As Constant remarked:

> "There's a part of me, and I don't know if this is an excuse for me not to stop eating food […] There are so many times I would say to myself I need to go to the gym, or I need to lose weight. And then there was a voice in my head that would say yeah, but if you lose weight are you going to book gigs? Are people going to want to book you? Are you good enough to be a skinny actor? The answer is yes. (*laughs*) The answer is if they don't want to book you because you're not fat, then they were booking just the fat person, they weren't booking you; they were booking your body and that was it. Not your talent." (wk.2/vid.2/p.15)

Again, there is an apparent separation of the body from identity, that one's talent as an actor is what should secure employment, not the embodiment of a marketable fat aesthetic. Constant's feelings of anxiety that he would not be as sought-after as a thin actor were telling, indicating that the fat identity has value.

The notion that the fat body could be commodified as an aesthetic labor practice was evident throughout the videos as the men talked about their work. Fatness was certainly taken up by these men and marshalled as a commodity, but for the purposes of storytelling the type of fat identity that enacted the norms of society clearly held the most currency as a commodity. And this link between their embodied identity and commodified aesthetic labor was accepted by the men as a normal part of the job. Sometimes the men rationalized their mistreatment in the industry because they felt that they could not turn down a job and that they were driven by their economic circumstances. As Constant declared: "[…] there's always something off about the character. and I'm fine with playing that. And I'm so happy to do it if you give me that pay

check." (wk.2/vid.1/p.11) Because most storytelling in film and television does not ask for an alternative reading of fat bodies, it is the enactment of the norm, rather than the subversion of the norm, that is demanded of these men and confers value on the worth of their performance and, in many respects, their value as human beings.

Typecasting

> "I do believe in this time and place right now our bodies, our physical attributes and everything, do play an important part in what roles we get." (Nick, wk.2/vid.2/p.6)

Typecasting was seen by the men as a reality of the business, as something that was an inherent part of being a working actor ("that's just the way it is" – Constant wk.3/p.22). The men deemed typecasting to be a necessary evil in an actor's career, but something that could also have positive effects. As Zimmerman et al. (2003) claim, typecasting can be restrictive for established actors who are known for a particular type, but beneficial for actors who are still relatively new to the industry and are not yet associated with a type, a finding echoed in this quote from Jim: "People talk about typecasting. It's your enemy if you are working a lot, it can be a blessing if you are trying to break in. You want someone to say, 'It's that guy, I know exactly what he does, I need someone to do that thing, bring that guy in'. You want to be specific about who you are and what you can bring to a role." (wk.2/vid.1/p.5) In discussing how they were cast and how typecasting affected them, it was clear that the men had very clear and specific ideas about what they thought they were capable of and what the industry thought they were capable of.

Often the concept of typecasting was framed in terms of a perceived "leading man/character actor binary", with fat men occupying the "character actor" category. This was arguably a clear articulation of the hegemonic masculinity/subordinate masculinity binary, with the leading (hegemonic) man carrying the film or series and enjoying the privileges of being the primary focus of the story. Obtaining status as a leading man was attributed to the actor conforming to normative beauty standards, and Bob's understanding of what makes a leading man was also predicated on seeing himself as an outsider to this category: "I mean, I'm not ever going to be

the star of something. I'm not a leading man. I'm a supporting player. […] I'm not super handsome. I mean I do ok but I'm not, you know, Hollywood handsome." (wk.1/p.5) According to Nick, categorizing actors under a "leading man/character actor" split was common practice: "In the arts and performance, there's categories. And you kinda go down that checklist, and it's like, are you that? Are you this? And that makes you a leading man. Are you bigger? Comedic timing? And funny with voices? Oh you're…a character actor. We're all characters, but that's another story." (wk.2/vid.2/p.6) Nick felt that as an actor, citing an identity category was an inherent part of the job, and much like how subjectivity is predicated on citing a gender, becoming an actor is predicated on citing a type. When an actor claims a type, it brings them into focus for other people in the industry, paralleling the process of gender identification that renders one's specific identity legible and coherent to another person (Olson & Worsham, 2000).

However, the concept of mimesis should not be seen as constituted simply or straightforwardly by a binary schema. Instead, the concept opens up like a kaleidoscope from the so-called "original", unfolding and giving rise to a multitude of potential "copies" (Butler, 1993). From the leading man to the character actor to the fat actor to the old actor to the young actor, there are many possibilities for conceptualizing the original/copy dichotomy. And yet the original is always defined by what it is not (i.e. the copy) and while the men might play a variety of characters, being a character actor most often meant being a "supporting actor". When asked about what their casting "hit" was, the men responded that they primarily saw themselves playing secondary roles, and as their previously cited introductory quotes revealed, Bob, Constant, Jim, and Nick all described themselves as most often playing supporting characters who were comedic in some form: Bob, who is a comedy writer with a dry sense of humor, described himself as a comedic straight man, Constant described himself as the uncle, best friend

type who is also a physical performer and dancer capable of doing tricks, Jim described himself as the cute best friend who doesn't get the girl, and Nick described himself as the quirky funny friend or goofy sidekick. None of the men expressed a strong aversion to being thought of in this way, and in fact Jim and Constant both observed that playing a supporting character could be an opportunity in which they might be able to steal the show. As previously quoted, Jim had joked: "I'm rarely the lead in anything. I like being the guy who comes in with 2-3 scenes and maybe comes in and steals the scene for a bit and then goes backstage and drinks." (wk.2/vid.1/p.5)

All four men cited the "funny fat guy" trope as being a prevalent theme in their careers and had all experienced playing this in one shape or form in their work. Being funny was something intrinsically linked with fatness, and often this was because fat men were called upon to embody the butt of the joke. As Jim described it: "The overweight guys are always the funny guy. Often the funniness is related to being overweight. 'Ha-ha, how many milkshakes can this guy drink? Don't drink too many milkshakes, you'll throw up!' Not that I know (*laughs*)." (wk.2/vid.3/p.10) Although they had often been called upon to play this archetype, not all the men strongly identified with this this role and expressed a desire to play something else. Constant didn't necessarily object to playing comedy but did see its limitations: "I'm ok with being the funny guy. That's not a problem because I am funny, and I like making people laugh. I'm also a romantic guy. I'm a lover. I'm also someone who can be very confident. Why is that not being shown?" (wk.3/p.28) On the other hand, the expectation to be funny was something Jim said he struggled with and felt like there was a discrepancy between how the industry saw him and how he saw himself: "[…] it's taken me a long time to accept the fact that being funny is something I should embrace. because a lot of me resents the fact that in this industry you're supposed to be funny if you're fat. […] sometimes it feels like you can only do this if you're willing to be funny.

and I love being funny, but I've got chops to do serious stuff too." (wk.2/vid.2/p.9) The men all felt pressure stemming from a perceived cultural expectation that because they are fat they are expected to be funny, with the "the funny fat guy" identity being dictated to them from without. Because humour is often used as a way to convey things that would otherwise be considered unacceptable or offensive, it is perhaps unsurprising that fat men are so linked to the comedy genre – as though comedy allows producers to treat those with fat bodies in ways that would otherwise be deemed unsuitable (Gulas, McKeage, & Weinberger, 2010).

The corollary to the "the funny fat guy" trope was "the pathetic fat guy" trope, and both Bob and Jim considered this to be the other side of the coin in terms of how they were typecast. Obviously, this was not considered an attractive alternative to "the funny fat guy" trope as both possess extremely negative connotations. Bob described this alternate type as the "sad sack" or as Jim wryly put it: "Sometimes the other object is pathetic. Fun." (wk.2/vid.3/p.10) The men felt that acting roles for fat people appeared to be contingent on the moral failure of the abject fat body being punished for transgressing normative body expectations. Aside from some notable actors who could be considered exceptions that evaded reductive typecasting (Benson-Allott, 2012), in this study fat men were not only seen as being denied a nuanced portrayal but were always made to appear as less than. Constant observed how these impacted expectations others had of the roles he was asked to play: "I think as an actor I have the ability to play the small guy, the undermining sort of recluse guy, the sweet soul. But people don't want that unless I'm being bullied in the show." (wk.2/vid.2/p.17) What Constant was hinting at here is that audiences also play a part in typecasting in that these portrayals also must be received and accepted by the people watching them, and in this sense, tropes about punishing the morally failed fat body are born out of collectively shared ideas that then inform typecasting (Gilman, 2004; Forth, 2013).

Interestingly, all the men acknowledged the fact that they are typecast and admitted that the roles they were given were narrowly defined, largely around their body size (but also intersecting with race and gender). Nick, Constant, and Bob all explicitly stated that they were not asked to play diverse roles, and Bob described how being a fat man put him in specific categories: "I'm not asked ever to play any sort of diverse range**.** I'm, you know, a chubby white guy, so I typically play dads, dads now. I don't have a kid, but I will play a dad occasionally. Or a dumb guy. Or yeah, it's like office workers, a lot of office workers." (wk.1/p.5) Bob's "hit" as an actor led others to perceive him this way and he felt that this defined him to the extent that he is then cast based on this perception. However, this was reconciled by expressing resignation to this perception, saying: "I'm fine with that," and insisting he did not feel pigeonholed. Making peace with being asked to play to type was seen as necessary to "survive" in the business, that an actor would have to uphold the status quo to a certain extent if they wanted to sustain a career. As Constant saw it: "I think we, to survive in this business, we have to play to our types. Maybe 1% of us get to play themselves. Which is awesome. Good for them. But for most of us we have to um, bend to the rules and just keep doing what we do. You know, what we do best. I think some people find a niche, and that's who they are and that's who people think they are forever, you know?" (wk.3/p.28) Typecasting is the rule, not the exception, for "jobbing" actors (Dean, 2005) from marginalized groups, and high-profile actors are considerably privileged in that they have a modicum of control over the kinds of roles they play and are not principally beholden to their body size (Benson-Allott, 2012).

Although talent and personality were not discounted as necessary for securing work as actors, the men recognized the primacy of their bodies in casting. Fundamentally, typecasting was seen as a process predicated on snap judgements about an actor's appearance and that this

was a fact of being an actor. Constant affirmed this by noting: "Listen, when you're a big guy, you're cast as a big guy. You're not cast as a scrawny little kid. And when I walk into the room, that's usually what they see first. They see a big guy, a fat guy. […] And if that's gonna land me the role, great, awesome, let's do it." (wk.2/vid.1/p.8) Nick asserted that being fat was never a source of anxiety because he always knew that he was brought in for auditions because his size fulfilled the aesthetic of the casting breakdown, remarking that: "I don't necessarily worry about going into auditions because what I'm going in for is usually catered to my body type and what I do as a bigger performer." (wk.2/vid.2/p.6) While this might have been how the men typically experienced casting, Constant admitted that occasionally he would be brought in as a contrast against the specified type in a casting breakdown, and that this could actually be a frustrating experience:

> "One thing that I hate about casting is that they usually bring in a […] counter-type to sort of give a different take on the role. So you'll get there, and I don't know if this has happened to all the chubby guys out there, but I'll walk in and I'm like, 'oh, these are all skinny versions of me'. And then you're the only one that's the chubby guy, and you walk in and they laugh, and they're loving you, and like, 'Oh, you're just not right for this role but thank you so much for coming in'. That's the feeling that I get at the end (*laughs*) and I'm like wait, what?" (wk.1/vid.1/p.2)

While it may have appeared as though there was an effort being made by the casting director to go beyond the initial dictates of the casting breakdown, ultimately Constant's talent and personality could not prevent his size from discounting him.

Typecasting not only affected the jobs the men were considered for, but also had a negative effect on how the men perceived themselves in their personal lives. Given the relational aspect of identity formation it would follow that typecasting would encourage the men to see themselves through the eyes of others and then internalize this. Constant expressed this perfectly stating:

> "It's interesting that typecasting can mean so much on one level, you know? On the level of my professional career and how much work I'm getting and the stress that that causes and blah blah blah and not being able to go for all the

> parts because I'm a plus size guy. But it also has an underlying tone of, how does that affect my life as a human being? As a day to day person dealing with people, you know? If people can't see me as a human being who can be in love, who can be a super hero, who can be a rock star, do I see myself as that? And then that translates in my everyday life. If I can't see myself as a rock star, if I can't see myself as the super hero, or the lover, then how does that affect my interactions with other human beings?" (wk.4/p.30)

In effect typecasting as a practice could be experienced on both a personal and professional level, further breaking down the line that demarcates actor and character, as the actors took on how the industry projected an image at them of what it means to be a fat man. This could even lead them to make career choices based on typecasting and the resulting imagined perception of how others viewed them. As Jim confessed:

> "I think one of the big impediments that my body serves in terms of casting can be, not exclusively, but is in me. You know, it's not unusual for me to see an audition breakdown and I look at it and I ask myself 'Is this a role they would give to a chubby actor? would I cast a chubby actor in this?' And it's not unusual for me to decide not to apply because I don't think someone's willing to cast a chubbier actor doing that. Now, I like to think the actual industry is a little more forgiving than I am of myself." (wk.2/vid.1/p.3)

Jim let the industry off the hook by internalizing his assumption that others would typecast him and exclude him from certain roles because he was fat, ironically limiting himself in terms of booking work. Internalizing this self-limiting view is not surprising, given that if actors were to critically interrogate the industry as being responsible for typecasting they would have to admit that they possess little leverage to counter this practice. Sometimes there appears to be no recourse, as Nick stated: "The industry. Does it affect me as an actor? Um… and you hate to say it, but sometimes you gotta grin and bear it. […] and you do the job. even if it kills your soul, because you have bills that have to be paid." (wk.3/vid.3/p.18)

Despite clearly experiencing the limiting impacts of typecasting and understanding its underlying mechanisms in the industry, nevertheless the men still claimed that they could play a wide range of characters. Was this resistance? Was this an attempt to call into question the typecasting categories that are imposed on them? Or was it a survival strategy that minimized the impact of being typecasting? Both Bob and Constant remarked that they could play "anything"

and that they considered themselves versatile actors. To be fair, it is not that playing a wide range of roles would be unthinkable, but that the narrow range imposed on them by the industry wields such power as to preclude them from other opportunities. Interestingly, Constant's agent had encouraged him to think outside of the supporting character actor box and to imagine himself as a leading man, indicating that, at least from the perspective of an agent, thinking more broadly about his type and ability could translate to more work. And yet making these claims in spite of the fact that it would be highly unlikely for them to be asked to play against type demonstrates that being a fat actor requires that one also perform complicated mental gymnastics to minimize the harmful stereotypes that are imposed on them.

Managing Stigma

As mentioned earlier, the men had dealt with considerable stigma because they were fat and had to contend with their spoiled identity on a personal and professional level. It is important to consider that part of the conceit of these videos was that I asked the men to describe their lives and identity in detail and to reflect on how they experience and make sense of discrimination. Given this, the men also managed their spoiled identities throughout the performance of recording their videos and I would argue that this narrative exercise of describing themselves on camera demanded that they construct their lives and identities in a way that made rational sense to them (Bruner, 1995). Because fat stigma is rooted in powerful norms that lay claim to scientific rationality, appointing abject status to fat bodies relies on the appearance of legitimacy derived from a discursive medical objectivity whose body of evidence may not be as clear cut as it is often assumed to be (Campos et al., 2006; Gard, 2010). Taking into account this contradiction, it becomes clear that our purported objectivity around fatness is based on moral and symbolic grounds (Lebesco, 2004; Murray, 2008), and if morality imposes meaning on the fat body while deliberately overlooking the weaknesses in the scientific arguments, this does not amount to a rational conceptualizing of the fat body. Therefore, it was incumbent on the men in this study to attempt to strategically restore rational order to their lives in various ways (e.g. subverting, parodying, resisting, reframing, recuperating, ignoring, etc.).

The identity that the men presented in their videos, the very way that they recounted their stories of themselves in the world, were tangible examples of how power was brokered to manage their identities in their everyday lives. Some of the strategies employed by these men were attempts to make others feel comfortable with their spoiled identities, and at other times the men took a more defiant position and confronted discrimination head on. Not every strategy was

an attempt to trouble and subvert the category of "fat actor" but could be read as an attempt at recuperating the power that was denied to them as men due to their spoiled fat identities. These were not just instances of managing stigma, but also how the men contested or conceded the powerful norms that dictated the parameters of their identity categories. Not every aspect of their identity was spoiled by their body size; these men are obviously not lepers, they are merely fat. Thus they could retrieve power and mobilize parts of their identity in service of working against discrediting norms. With that being said, the qualities that they gave importance to - "schlubby", "loveable", "confident", "positive" – were also the aspects of their identity that allowed them to manage and mitigate their feelings of stigma and shame regarding their bodies. Further, it was in the moments where there was silence, avoidance, humor, or identifying the irrational nature of the discrimination that they faced, where it became possible to see the full impact of living with a spoiled identity.

"Good Fat vs Bad Fat"

One strategy taken up by the men to counter the limiting stereotypical perceptions other people had of fat people (Barlosius & Philipps, 2015) was to defy the expectations imposed on them. If, as is commonly believed, fat may be equated with being unhealthy (Rail, 2008), then simply entering a room as a fat person automatically qualifies them to be appraised and pathologized by others based on their appearance. Fat actors must do whatever is in their power to resist and disrupt the symbolic norms inscribed on their bodies, something that can be partly accomplished by being as physically capable as possible. Being able to move his body and perform at a high capacity was Constant's way of overcoming the discredited stigma symbol of his body, stating: "We need to represent our society, and that's why I'm always excited when a big guy shows up and does stuff on stage that you didn't expect. […] I'm a big guy who can

move and that's exciting, and we need more people like that to break the stigma in our society, in the community." (wk.2/vid.2/p.18) Constant believed that representation of fat people in film was too often a one-dimensional portrayal, and surely opening up this category to recognize the fact that fat bodies are written off as disabled or pathological would be a step towards greater diversity. Conversely, privileging the bodies that defy expectations also could be seen as confirmation that fat people are somehow fundamentally a failure who must be redeem themselves by correcting discredited characteristics.

Taking up the project of working on the body to correct the shortcomings of being fat was not only seen as something that could counteract stigma, it also characterized the men as "good" fat people. Because fatness is seen as a failure of personal morality (Zanker & Gard, 2008), demonstrating that one was in good health and could perform physically corrected the moral failure of fatness and denoted that one was "good". This could even be satisfactorily accomplished simply by asserting that one was aware of their physical shortcomings and was working on the body with diet and exercise. Bob spoke about how he was trying to improve his diet: "[..] It's just like now, I feel like everything I eat, it's either fueling a strong car or I'm fueling a bomb. It's one or the other of the two, you know what I mean? I'm more conscious of it. does that change how I eat? (*laughs*) Not so much, that's the problem. Because the instant gratification seems to dwarf what will happen later down the road." (wk.2/p.8) Bob may not have been entirely successful at his attempts to eat differently, but his claims to making an effort still categorized him as "good" because he was aware of his habits, characterized the negative traits as being in need of correction, and gave assurance that he was at least attempting to change his "bad" qualities. And while this might alleviate some of the stigma they might face, this strategy to put oneself into the "good" category could not be considered subversion as the attempt to

redefine the category resulted in the creation of yet another binary, that of "good" fat and its corollary, "bad" fat.

The notion that there could be a "good" fat person was dependent on the contraposition of a "bad" fat person, who was comprised of any number of stereotypes (lazy, sedentary, someone who had "given up") and reinforced the mimetic categorization of the abject copy and the normative original that is constructed over and against the abject (Butler, 1993). Here, clearly, the "good fat" category was haunted by the other, with the imaginary "bad fat" scapegoat being invoked to reaffirm the contrast between the two. Constant defied the cultural expectations of the "bad" fat person, albeit at the expense of other fat people and endorsing anti-fat stereotypes to move away from being included with the deviant group:

> "[…] it's hard sometimes because there are some bigger people out there who lead a very lazy lifestyle just because that's how they were brought up, or they're unhappy and they don't feel they deserve to do something more exciting with their life, or for whatever reason that's the kind of sedentary lifestyle they lead. And that's fine for them it's just sometimes I think it gives a bad rap to all fat people who can lead a very active lifestyle even though they are big people." (wk.2/vid.1/p.6)

By framing himself against lazy fat people who lead a sedentary lifestyle, Constant implied that both good fat and bad fat people have a choice to make that can either save their spoiled identity or relegate them to moral failure. Rather than troubling the norms that underpin both the "good fat" and "bad fat" categories, the strategy here was to further marginalize those who do not meet the expectations of exceptional performance or fail to engage in a clear undertaking of corrective measures.

However, there were moments in the interviews when the men did attempt to contest and renegotiate the terms that dictated their bodies, particularly with how they reclaimed language and subjugated the negative connotations associated with words that were used against them. This was a linguistic struggle to define the terms of their existence, by which the men negotiated

the meanings associated with the language that produced them as fat subjects and called into question the very norms that mark them as abject. When asked what they thought of the language that was used in the study itself, particularly the use of "fat" and "plus size", all the men spoke of how they had experienced language being used against them by others (and that they had even used against themselves). It was agreed that words were afforded power over others, but that it was also possible to take power away from a word by reclaiming it, for example the negative associations with the words "fat" and "obese". Bob spoke directly to this:

> "I mean, I'm not offended by…uh, fat. That language, I think it is used to hurt but you can take the power away from that kind of stuff. It's like any word, you can take power away from it. And so, when you say stuff like plus-size or overweight, obese, sometimes it feels like it's just giving more power to the word fat as a weapon. It just sounds so clinical half the time. But I understand that [..] everybody thinks of it as a bad term." (wk.4/p.24)

The men felt that using language that was too careful could lead to the unintended consequence of giving more power to the stigma associated with fat. Being too cautious when deciding whether or not to use "fat" renders it an unspeakable word and serves to underscore the notion that fat is a terrible thing to be. Using the word "fat" was something none of the men objected to in their responses to the question I asked them about language, indicating that this reclaiming strategy was something all the men engaged in to some extent.

But the main strategy used to manage stigma by these men was humor and they described how they used humor to their benefit in their lives and often made jokes in their videos. While using humor was frequently described as a strategy to recoup their spoiled identities, the men also derived pleasure and satisfaction from being funny. This was a strategy that made them feel good *and* led to positive reinforcement, something Bob had learned at a young age performing in a school play and what initially led him to pursue comedy as a career: "I guess I was the comic relief. And I remember like, being so proud to be cast as this character. And uh, when we performed it I would get laughs and it was, I think that was the first time where I was like 'that's

what I want to do'." (wk.1/p.3) Additionally, humor was used by the men as a means of deflecting negative criticism or from having to acknowledge painful feelings that were upsetting to them. Humor had the dual purpose of both averting the attacks of others and protecting the men from discrimination or negative interactions. As Constant stated: "Whenever it gets really deep, I'll make a joke to lighten things up." (wk.2/vid.2/p.14) Humor fulfilled the dual purpose of providing an escape route from uncomfortable moments in their lives while placating those around them.

Using humor on the one hand could arguably provide the means to what Butler (1990) referred to as "parodic displacement", but it could also be deployed simply as an adaptive strategy that did not seek to contest power but was used to deflect from stigma and oppression. In the videos, the men spoke about comedy as something that could be used to put others at ease, rather than subvert ideas about fat people. The frequent reliance on the former motivation was not surprising given that they felt that being funny was expected of them as fat actors and this strategy was in keeping with the "funny fat guy" trope. Nick talked about using humor to disarm others because his fatness might make them uncomfortable; this was another manifestation of trying to be a "good fat" person as Nick managed his fatness for the sake of those around him: "I'm the first one to make a fat joke. I'm the first one to self-deprecate about myself. But it's always in a way that's like, I'm kidding. Like, I'm joking. […] And you know, honestly, I feel like it gives other people an opportunity to, you know, be ok with talking about it [being fat]." (wk.4/p.22) Similar to the earlier quote in which Jim joked about how he does not do pushups, there is the sense here of beating people to the punch and diffusing the discomfort that Jim and Nick's bodies might incite in others. But then there is also an element here of Nick attempting to break the taboo of talking about fatness. Much like how the men objected to tiptoeing around

using the word “fat”, Nick was able to break the tension that the unspoken but unmistakable fact of a fat body might cause in a social setting by cracking a joke.

Stigma Fatigue

For some of the men, dealing with stigma had become so routine, and facing criticism from others because of their size occurred so frequently, that they had developed what could be construed as stigma fatigue. The men described becoming resigned to the stigma they faced, and acceptance of stigma became a strategy in itself. Jim took a common-sense approach to accepting stigma by considering his fatness “a fact”, and believing that because his Body Mass Index would list him as “obese” that this was an incontrovertible part of his identity and that in order to reconcile himself with it he must accept it as such:

> “I think at some point I said, ‘Well, this is me. If you’re going to cast it, you’ve got to know it’s there’. Certainly, fresh out of theatre school I always had this image that I was going to lose the weight any day now and then I wouldn’t have to worry about it. I mean I would still love to lose the weight, but I know that I haven’t yet and that I don’t have a big reason to think I will tomorrow, so I should just accept this is me.” (wk.2/vid.2/p.6)

Jim’s ambivalence about body acceptance – on the one hand wanting to lose weight and cease being fat while feeling social pressure to try and accept himself – hinted at how the concept of body positivity could also become a regulating norm. While it may be true that Health At Every Size (HAES) movements and the like have produced a counter discourse to anti-fat rhetoric (Gard, 2011), they are also arguably restrictive in that they preclude fat people from acknowledging that sometimes people hate their bodies. Should we be given the space to have negative thoughts and feelings about our bodies? Trying to love your body every second of the day, to always be positive about your size, especially when the world is constantly telling you that you are wrong, is certainly exhausting. It is reasonable to imagine that sometimes one would get tired of being a fat angel dancing on the pinhead of body positivity.

Although the men felt they had agency over their identity in many respects, there was also the sense that there was a limit to the choices available to them as they felt compelled to conform to industry expectations. The belief that one had free will but had to make choices that constrained them was one way of rationalizing the imbalance of power experienced by these actors, and Constant acknowledged that achieving success in the industry could mean downplaying parts of himself in his professional interactions: "You know, you can be whoever you want to be, but in order to survive you have to suppress your inner self to be able to make it through." (wk.3/p.22) That there are certain encounters that one must "survive" as an actor came up several times, not only for Constant, but for Nick and Jim as well. Conforming to others' expectations was seen as a valid way of surviving the harm of stigma and trying to rectify a spoiled personality, not an unreasonable response. Why should fat people have to deal with so much stigma *and* be responsible for changing the world? This is a tall order for anyone to bear, and it is no wonder that there might have been fatigue or a desire to take the path of least resistance which, although it may have constituted an acquiescence to power, was nevertheless effective at fending off external criticism to a degree.

There were also moments in the videos where the men dismissed the stigma they face as inconsequential, insisting that they do not invest energy engaging with feelings of body shame, minimizing the criticism directed at them or shrugging it off. When asked about how others viewed him, Bob insisted: "It's not a big deal" (wk.4/p.22) Bob saw being Schlubby as one of many facets of his identity but did not feel as though it necessarily took precedence, claiming that he could merely shrug it off if anyone tried to use the Schlubby label against him: "If somebody said you're schlubby, I would be like, 'well yeah (*laughs*)'. I mean, I'm wearing uh, jeans made out of yoga pant material and a Tragically Hip hoodie and uh, a Primus t-shirt. But

I'm comfortable, and that's how I like it. I mean, I've never been into, I've always dressed for comfort and that just is basically like, schlubby kind of stuff. And I'm fine with that." (wk.4/p.22) In a sense, the strategy here is one that is shaped by ideas about masculinity, as Schlubby is framed in terms of a masculine aesthetic (i.e. the rock band shirts, the yoga pants) that distances itself from appearing too preoccupied with adornment by prioritizing comfort over style. No doubt that Bob is sincerely choosing this aesthetic because he feels more comfortable in these clothes, but they nonetheless carry gendered meaning. The masculine aesthetic Bob adhered to allowed him to both acknowledge the negative perception that others might have of him and mobilize hegemonic forms of masculinity to reclaim this aspect of his identity, transforming it into something that he, in fact, liked about himself.

Rather than reducing their identities to something defective and merely waiting to be reconciled, the men often spoke about their lives in an affirming and positive manner. While the men certainly acknowledged the difficulties they faced, their reflections on negotiating discrimination were counterbalanced with optimism throughout their videos. Both Nick and Jim remarked that they preferred to "see how things are getting better" (Jim, week 2). Outside of the typecasting that he experienced, Jim contended that overall his experiences in the industry were positive: "I have never felt anyone disrespect me on account of my weight in this industry. I've probably been fortunate that way, and while I'm sure there are a lot of negative stories out there, I think there's also a ton of good people out there that you could find." (wk.2/vid.2/p.9) Nick echoed this positive slant on the industry and spoke about his strategies for dealing with conflict:

> "When somebody says something that's a bit off color or inappropriate, you don't get mad, cause like, anger and negativity doesn't, just festers negatively and negative energy- you've gotta just be like who cares - No, let's have a conversation and let's educate. And that's how we'll move forward. like, you can't, you can't fight two negatives. You have to come in with a positive attitude and be willing and come to explain things to people. Cause not everyone's gonna see the same ideas that you see, and I fully understand that. And I am of the mindset of like, at the end of the day you see your way and I see my way and the sun will rise tomorrow and we'll both wake up (*laughs*).

> Like, that's just how I feel. And if I don't change your mind today, maybe I'll change it tomorrow. And if I don't change it tomorrow, maybe I'll change it next month, or maybe the next year. But there will be, it's just, communication and education." (wk.3/vid.3/p.19)

Despite the negativity that he encountered, Nick was adamant that he could overcome other people's prejudices through one on one communication and a positive attitude. While it may not be immediately clear how this micro approach might target systemic oppression, as an act of subversion contesting the negative terms by which he is characterized could be seen as akin to the interactive negotiation advocated by Brickell (2005) as a way to adjust and destabilize normative frames of meaning. However, Nick's optimistic outlook that he could contest and ultimately change the terms of his categorization, while perhaps an effective stigma management strategy, overlooks the difficulty of falling victim to recuperation by engaging in such negotiation (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994).

Overall the men thought about the world around them optimistically, although Constant was the only participant to discuss his own body in explicitly positive terms in his videos. This took the form of affirming himself as sexually desirable, someone who could change the minds of potential romantic partners who might be inclined to dismiss him because of his size. Loving his body and learning to embrace himself as a sexual being was something Constant had come to realize later in life, and this newfound appreciation was partly due to seeing himself through someone else's eyes:

> "Some people are gonna hate, some people are going to look at my body. I don't really care. I don't care anymore. And it took me a long time to understand that certain people think I'm very sexy. Sexier than the skinniest person, or sexy as, sexier than the guy with the six pack. That took me a long time to understand. And once I understood that and once I started loving the fact that I was a bigger guy and that I could be sexy being a bigger guy, I think that's when it really changed for me." (wk.2/vid.2/p.14)

Here Constant used his narrative to redefine "fat" for himself and by reclaiming his body as "sexy", in effect he was producing a new identity for himself, one that was co-created by seeing his desirability reflected by somebody else. Constant portrayed himself as sexually desirable

several times in his videos, which when seen through his claims to "walking through life with purpose" and defying expectations, is not surprising:

> "I sort of embraced the fact I was a bigger guy, and that certain guys really loved the fact, they loved my curves. and I was happy in that. and today I'm happy, and I'll flaunt it, because I know that certain people will think I'm fucking sexy and if you don't think I'm sexy I'll change your mind because- well I'm going to blow your mind when I show up and you want to make out with me or sleep with me. and you'll be taken aback by your first time wanting to have sex with a large man." (wk.2/vid.2/p.14)

And yet, this is also the paradox of the Looking Glass Self, in that seeing ourselves through someone else's eyes means that we might base our identity on our perception of how successfully we satisfy the needs and desires of others (Cooley, 1902). Rather than Constant taking his own needs into consideration here, he is focused on how he can please others and receiving validation from this pleasure. When does his own sexual pleasure get to take priority? Is he able to love himself, or is it simply making himself desirable for others?

Whether or not this sexual identity was a function of celebrating his own sexual self-assurance or defining his worth according the validation of another person's pleasure, it is an interesting detail that Constant was the only one to explicitly locate his happiness in terms of sexual enjoyment in his videos. While this confidence was spoken about in the context of his personal life outside of acting, when recounting the outrageous story of his audition for the "ugly fat guy", Constant stated that he did not book that particular job because, as he put it: "I'm too pretty." This was accompanied by an unmistakably feminine gesture in which Constant languidly framed his face with his hand. I would characterize this small moment as one of subversion, in which Constant resisted the label of "ugly fat guy" imposed on his body by reframing himself as pretty and desirable, simultaneously using parody to trouble gender categorization. Once again using humor to call into question the stereotypical construction of the fat body, Constant challenged me to laugh at the absurdity of the situation while subversively proposing a new framing of his appearance.

The Other

One of the things I asked the men about was how women in the industry might be impacted by gender norms and fatphobia, or how race might factor in to the way that the body is experienced in the industry. In other words, I asked them to compare themselves to marginalized groups to which they do not belong: the "other". There was ample evidence in these videos of an awareness of and a critical engagement with systems of oppression and power by these men. However, I would also contend that the way that the men discussed minorities was in effect another stigma management strategy (albeit an unwitting one) by which lost power due to a spoiled identity was recuperated by underscoring the notion of "the other" (women, trans people, people of color, etc.) as occupying a lower position on a social hierarchy. When considering how other marginalized groups might face discrimination in the industry, the men nearly all framed the experiences of other groups as far worse than their own, particularly those of women.

Does the acknowledgement of social hierarchies reify those same hierarchies, or is this an act of contesting the legitimacy of the category? Perhaps both? Without disallowing these men from aligning themselves as allies with marginalized groups, and despite their often-sympathetic engagement with issues of gender and race inequality, I feel it is incumbent on me to examine why their views sometimes neglected to deeply engage with their status as the 'unmarked terms'. Occasionally this omission was expressed as a desire not to speak for marginalized groups, but this then also limited their discussion of their own privileged identities to a passing acknowledgement. Because of this, their tendency to locate the effects of gendered and racialized power relations elsewhere (i.e., in subordinated groups) functioned in some ways as a distancing strategy – one that sometimes (though certainly not always) allowed them to distinguish

themselves not only from the subordinate group but also from the social processes that makes these groups subordinate.

To be fair, I asked questions that required the men to think about themselves in relation to other minority groups, but in a sense, they "did masculinity" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) when they discussed their fatness by framing themselves over and against women, depicting them as more victimized by their size than men. This was not to say that women are not subject to intense scrutiny and misogyny because of their size, women's bodies undoubtedly are subject to more intense surveillance in and out of the industry (Dean, 2003; Orbach, 2016) and the acknowledgement of this by these men certainly reflected a critical engagement with gender norms. The men did express a shared belief that fat women in the industry have it far worse than fat men, and Constant believed that (similar to fat men) fat women were also expected to “play the funny card” but with considerably fewer jobs available to them (which is borne out by the literature [Dean, 2005]). And yet this framing of women as having less power than men still had the added effect of letting the men recoup part of their spoiled masculine identity associated with feminized fatness by affording them some of the power that was denied them.

Curiously, Nick claimed that while women were far more preoccupied with what they ate because they were under greater pressure to be thinner than men, men in some way were able to “get away with” not worrying about what they eat (wk.2/vid.2/p.5). But do fat men really “get away with it”? All the men expressed a sense of shame and anxiety around food in their videos, and other than this comment by Nick it did not appear that anyone felt that they were getting away with something, quite the contrary. What, then, is the payoff for making a statement that discounts the insecurity and distress that men experience and is not in line with other statements made about the discrimination they face? Perhaps by insisting that men are able to evade

concerns about their body image and are not held to what they perceive as the trivial aesthetic concerns that women take so seriously (Norman, 2011) we can see how hegemonic masculinity might be called upon to recover a spoiled identity. On the one hand, the men were aware of the inequitable gendered power relations in the industry and broader culture, but "guys get away with it" also seemed to function as a distancing strategy that denied the extent to which weight stigma existed for men, thereby relegating women to the status of victimized "other" and alleviating the stigma and pressure Nick (and other men) faced by denying it outright.

While some of the men could not always pinpoint exactly what it meant to "play masculinity" as an actor, one way they were able to bring clarity to this conundrum was in recounting instances where they had been called upon to play women. In fact, gender was easily described when it was in terms of depicting the "other"; being male might fade into the background, but what it meant to be a woman was brought into stark relief. These were all examples where the men had been required to perform in drag. Bob in a Burger King commercial, Jim in a revival of a WW1 variety stage show, and Constant in a children's Christmas pantomime. Again, the idea of mimesis was evoked, and the original and the copy were brought to life in a profoundly literal way by means of these performances. Playing the other was more pronounced than playing the norm, and there was an implied awareness that these performances could border on being problematic. Bob described how he approached his role in the Burger King commercial:

> "It's a guy who's taking out a girl on a date at Burger King, and we see that the girl is basically the guy dressed up as a woman. So, he's on a date with himself essentially. So, I played a man and a woman in this commercial and it was tough because I didn't want to play the woman as a giggly Valley Girl type. But if you watch the commercial, she doesn't come off that smart. (laughs) And that was not my intention. But it was, that's what was in the script, and um, you know, uh, also I do not make an attractive woman at all, and I think that's probably why I was cast, because I was a hideous woman. I honestly do think that." (wk.3/p.17)

Here the "copy" was Bob's parody of womanhood, which was also where the humor in the commercial was meant to lie. Rather than subverting the category of gender, Bob's performance of (failed) femininity bolstered the "original" of his performance of masculinity. In comparison to Bob the woman, Bob the man was clearly a man, it was a "natural" performance that was clearly not marked out as a parody. Although Bob may not be leading man handsome, the contextual specificities of the commercial transformed his subordinate masculinity into a more hegemonic one – albeit temporarily - insofar as it was put in the service of dominating the feminine other. Further, I would argue that this was an instance of hybridization that relied on transphobic stereotypes of failure to "pass" in order to reinforce the norm. Perhaps the men had not fully considered the negative impact of portrayals like these for trans women, or indeed for cross-dressing men. To the extent that they had considered this, they did admit feeling conflicted about portrayals that made them uncomfortable but maintained that they felt compelled by the industry to perform in order to get the gig. But one thing that remained clear was that gender in these performances was vivid and accessible to their imaginations.

Similar to the unmarked norm of masculinity against which femininity is constructed, white identity derives its meaning from its encounter with the "other" (i.e. racialized groups) and claims a so-called "universal" white identity whose ubiquity and variability makes it difficult to give an exhaustive descriptive account of the parameters of whiteness (Nakayama & Martin, 1999). As far as discussing racialized groups in the videos, there was an uneasiness among the men around these questions, and an intentional qualifying of answers so as not to assume that they could speak to a marginalized group's experiences. Both Jim and Bob were hesitant to speak to experiences that they saw as outside their own lest they be perceived as trying to make themselves out as "experts" and pointedly stated that they did not feel qualified to speak for

minority groups. As Bob said, “Um, I don’t want to get too big into race because that’s just not my experience. I’m not a woman and I’m not white. I’m a white guy. So I don’t know if I can really comment on, or feel comfortable commenting on the race factor. So yeah, I’m not going to. I’m not going to touch it.” (wk.2/p.10) At the heart of it, I think this was indicative of a desire on the part of the men to be sensitive to potentially loaded questions as well as to be a “good research subject” (Alldred & Gillies, 2011) and not speak to experiences to which they felt they were not able to give seemingly objective expert responses. Nobody wanted to be seen to be contributing to the problems of discrimination that exist in the industry and broader social context, which was certainly a reasonable objective for these men.

That said, the reluctance to engage with these topics meant that there was occasionally a missed opportunity for the men to further examine their own privilege and experiences of whiteness. And although the question asked of them was about how “race” might impact the body, I did not exclude whiteness from this framing. Jim did acknowledge his whiteness and that his experiences in the industry were likely made easier because of his race but went on to qualify that he could not authoritatively speak to this claim because he is not a person of color and so did not speculate any further. And as previously stated, Bob was the only one who refused to answer the question about race entirely, as he felt that as a “white guy” he could not speak to how race might affect an actor’s experiences in the industry. Rather than tell me about his experience being a “white guy” in the industry, Bob chose to skip to the next question, likely as a way to acknowledge the privilege of his own positionality and to not speak out of turn on the subject of race. Still, these omissions and evasions were tantamount to what Poirier and Ayres (1997) referred to as meaningful “silences”, meaning that the silence under which whiteness and maleness operates, whether this is intentional silence or not, nevertheless reveals something

about the effects of these categories (although they strongly caution against interpreting the meaning of these silences as they are essentially "black boxed" and, by extension, inaccessible to the researcher). Ultimately, what became clear was that explaining discrimination in terms of the other appeared to be more readily available to the men in terms of women and people of color, rather than speaking to how the unmarked norms of whiteness and maleness shaped their experiences (Supriya, 1999).

Nevertheless, the men were not always reticent to critically engage with how fatness intersects with the subject of race. Similar to their perception of the limitations imposed on women, Constant, Jim, and Nick all thought that it would be harder for a person of color in the industry. Nick even spoke to how whiteness operates without framing it in academic terms explicitly when he inadvertently described how whiteness functions as the "unmarked norm" when it comes to casting white actors: "You can throw them in wherever." (wk.2/vid.2/p.7) The implication being that embodying whiteness as an actor means that you can play any role in film and television while being an actor of color meant only playing a very limited range of stereotypical characters. Nick thought that this problem would be particularly compounded for actors of color who were also fat.

However, Constant had an interesting story about being a finalist on the television show Canadian Idol that spoke to how the intersection of race and fatness could challenge the perception that whiteness went unmarked. After one of his last performances on the show, he was told by a judge that he would never have a career as a singer because he was too fat. When it was brought up that a past winner of American Idol was a fat man, Reuben Studdard, the judge protested that because Studdard was black this was an acceptable kind of fat. Constant was aware that the distinction being made by this judge between "white fat" and "black fat" was a function

of racism, but he could not quite articulate why the judge might have felt this way. My own interpretation of this would be that stereotypes of fat black men are linked to racist tropes relating to masculinity in hip hop (e.g., Lafrance, Woods & Burns, 2017), violent black hypermasculinity (e.g., Gross, 2005) and the highly problematic assumption that fatness is simply a part of black culture (Sender & Sullivan, 2008). For the Canadian Idol judge, then, Studdard as a fat black man was congruent with these images. Constant's flamboyance and open sexuality further accentuated his own fatness as feminized and the product of a failed masculine identity, giving his "white gay fat" a distinct identity when compared to the black fat of Reuben Studdard.

Frequently the questions I asked about race and gender were interpreted by the men in terms the experiences of minorities. Rather that speaking about how privilege might shape their experiences in the industry, the men often defaulted to speaking about oppression in terms of women, racialized groups and trans people. The readiness with which they could bring to mind other marginalized groups, but had difficulty articulating their experiences as men suggests that given that the unmarked norm is by definition obscured from sight, constructing themselves against an "other" was a much more easily accomplished rhetorical task. I feel another caveat is necessary here: the extent to which their responses reveal anything significant about how they might be complicit in perpetuating systems of power is questionable, as I included these questions rather perfunctorily and did not ask for further clarification or expansion on the answers that they gave (although despite the questions around women and race being minimal in the study design, there was, in general, still depth and thoughtfulness in the responses the men did give). And yet in trying to be respectful towards minorities, the ways we engage with notions of the other perhaps inadvertently reinforce social hierarchy and this begs the question: to what

extent can we say that acknowledging difference functions as a critique or a reinforcement of norms? Perhaps in these videos it accomplishes both.

Progress/Belief in Change/Representation

When acknowledging that discrimination and marginalization exist in the industry, all four men would mitigate this with a professed belief in progress and that the industry was moving towards more diversity and inclusion. The men felt that by and large conditions for minorities were changing in the industry and that people were working to create more employment opportunities. While initiatives to increase diversity in film production and greater representation onscreen by Canadian performer labour unions (ACTRA, 2017; Equity, 2017) demonstrate that there is some political will to create opportunities for minority groups, reports from the industry show that income inequalities are still prevalent (Equity, 2017) and there has been little change (at least in the United States film and television industry) in representation over the last decade (Smith et al., 2017). Regardless of actual change occurring in the industry, the perception of a steady march towards progress that the men hold does make sense as a coping strategy; naturally over the course of talking about being impacted by discrimination it would be reassuring to believe that progress is possible and occurring.

While there was a tendency towards optimism, the rate at which progress was thought to be occurring in the industry was something the men differed on. Constant stated that he felt pessimistic about change being possible as he did not feel that the world was ready to rethink how minorities are represented onscreen. Constant believed that a generational shift was necessary, but that this might not happen in his lifetime (although he did maintain hope that it would). Jim believed that change was possible but was a slow, incremental process in which people sometimes must be "dragged kicking and screaming" along (wk.2/vid.2/p.7). Jim saw change as a recent phenomenon in the industry, claiming there had been an advent of "interesting people" taking the place of beautiful people in television and film work that is being produced

now. Similar to Jim, Bob characterized progress as a slow process, although he felt that the industry was: "[…] wildly different than it was even ten years ago." (wk.3/p.19) Nick, on the other hand, believed that things were actively changing, and people were working towards progress. He displayed a lot of enthusiasm for this change, saying:

> "It is time. I can't wait. I'm super excited. I'm, you know, talking to a group of colleagues and we're all having this kind of same discussion of why? Why isn't this happening? Where is this change? Why hasn't this started? And we're kind of wanting it to start. So, it's super exciting. Like, I'm so thrilled to be a part of a group that wants to do this. Cause it's time. It is so time. Ugh, it's going to be great. Once it starts, it's going to spread like wildfire." (wk.2/vid.4/p.12)

Nick, Jim, and Bob all expressed a sense that linear progress was being achieved, and they saw social change as something that society was heading towards or had already arrived at, often citing the current date as evidence of a kind of benchmark being reached (i.e. "it's 2017!" – Jim wk.3/vid.3/p.24).

Gender representation onscreen was seen as having evolved to such a degree that the men described what could be characterized as a "post-gender" moment. This was often expressed as a belief that gender is incidental to storytelling, or that we now live in a time where gender no longer matters. As Bob stated: "I personally don't feel like gender is important to the story." (wk.3/p.16) Bob also spoke about gender in storytelling being "interchangeable", which appeared to be an assumption that gender performance on film could be more nuanced than it had been previously. Bob demonstrated this with an assertion that it would not seem out of place nowadays to see an all-female cast of a "dark, gritty, crime film", although, it is worth mentioning that the example that sprang to Bob's mind is of women occupying traditionally masculine roles in storytelling, and not men being cast in "feminine" roles. However, Bob did bring the conversation back to portrayals of men, claiming that there had been real progress allowing men to be represented on film as emotionally nuanced characters. Obviously, Bob's

depiction of change is anecdotal, but it does reveal how he perceives the industry is changing, how gender is represented, and that this change can be characterized as “progress”.

Body diversity, on the other hand, was seen as a kind of “last frontier” where barriers still needed to be overcome in terms of stereotypical traditional casting. There was hope that there could be more nuance in terms of how men might deal with body image on screen, but that ideas about traditional masculinity in the industry and society writ large were holding this back - although again, things were thought to be slowly progressing. Bob felt as though more body diversity was needed in the industry, and that non-traditional body types needed to be brought in off the sidelines and put in the spotlight. He also believed that, given the marginalization of larger bodies in society in general, onscreen representation in and of itself was a political victory for body diversity: “So whenever I get on screen I feel like that’s sort of a victory.” (wk.2/p.14) Jim also noted that the slow progression of larger bodies being represented on film was associated with casting: “You still almost never see a fat guy in a drama who isn’t already mildly famous from having been hilarious. And that’s just the way it goes. Once you get known you’re more trusted. But until then you’re a fat guy” (wk.2/vid.3/p.10) While “progress” was considered possible and that there might be a happy ending in which the “funny fat guy” actor would be cast based on talent and not on typecasting, it was felt that this would likely only occur after achieving a certain amount of success and recognition (borne out in the work on typecasting by Zuckerman et al. [2003]).

Given their own experiences of discrimination and those that they perceived others faced within the industry, the men agreed there was work to be done to increase representation and diversity on film. Constant believed that representation in film could be encouraged as a desire to reflect reality, as the purpose of film and theatre is often thought to be to “hold the mirror up to

nature" as Shakespeare said. Jim felt encouraged that marginalized groups who had not traditionally been represented onscreen had been speaking up for better representation, but he believed that it is incumbent on content creators and those with power in the industry to create change. Further, Jim tied the idea of greater representation on screen to economics, given that the industry is just that: a capitalist industry: "I believe the ultimate power in this industry is the people who have the money. So if there's people who think there's profit in showing a more diverse selection of people playing, they will." (wk.2/vid.3/p.11) Similarly, Constant also pointed out that it is money that drives important decisions about how representation happens in the industry: "Yes, casting directors, directors, producers can try to bring in diversity. But at the end of the day, they will sign off on what will bring them money." (wk.2/vid.2/p.19) These statements that link the possibility of change in the industry to larger social structures and to those for whom the balance of power is tilted is interesting given Butler's (Olson & Worsham, 2000) insistence that power can easily be recuperated. If Jim is right about who is responsible for creating change, then it would follow that those with power must relinquish some of it. Whether or not this is a likely proposition is another question.

Conclusion

One of my primary goals for this project was to find a theoretical way to relocate subjective action in the performance of identity – largely through acts of subversion (Butler, 1993; Brickell 2005) – and to reconcile this with performative identities that are pre-determined by power relations (Brickell, 2003). It was my hope that I could uncover moments of subversion in the accounts of these men and I think there is evidence of this – although I am not convinced that I have found it to have a lasting effect here, at least not in the short term. I tend to agree with Butler that subversion is not a calculable effect (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994) and that the negotiation that must occur whenever an identity category is contested or destabilized is likely to result in the recuperation of power. That said, the videos produced for this project can be seen as a negotiation of the terms of categorization as the men grappled with my questions, trying to define themselves in a coherent fashion and struggling to reconcile the categories they might cite for themselves (for example, as men, as fat, etc.). There was a negotiation with me as researcher, the imagined "John", certainly, but also with themselves as their narratives became contradictory, and as they corrected themselves or amended their answers. The strategies they engaged in might resist or conform to social norms, and were successful to varying degrees, but ultimately there was unresolved tension that arose from this variability. The struggle to reconcile themselves with how others perceived them and how they perceived themselves was complicated and ongoing.

These actors face enormous demands on their selfhood from the industry in terms of typecasting, but also the public persona they are expected to perform as laborers. Not only did they identify how ideas about fatness, gender, race, etc. were being imposed on them as reductive stereotypes, that they also felt as though they were expected to present themselves as

"professionals" in their off moments demonstrates how the performance of aesthetic labor continues beyond performances on camera and as a response to structural constraints. Unquestionably there are huge performance demands being made of actors, as evidenced by the tension arising from the idea that actors present themselves as "authentically" as possible onscreen (Thomson & Jaque, 2012). This authenticity is then extended to their "real" lives as they feel compelled to deliver a performance that they think others are expecting of them in their professional interactions, expectations that are clearly linked to the typecasting they face as fat men. Although the men saw themselves as being in control of their narratives, self-determination appears to be compromised in an industry characterized by scarcity of employment and intense competition (Newhouse & Messaline, 2007) that compels these men to present themselves in a way that is highly calculated to secure employment. To one degree or another we all manage our performances of the self, but with actors there does seem to be added pressure resulting from the intertwining of their radically public selves and the labour conditions of the industry.

An interesting trend in the narratives of these men was the shared belief in progress towards equality and liberal ideals, despite evidence that change in the industry is at the very least moving at a terrifically slow pace, if at all (Smith, Pieper, & Choueiti, 2017). The men cited anecdotal examples of more diverse representation in movies and in their personal lives, but do these examples obscure how limited this change is? Is the tendency to believe in linear change just a common fallacy by which we live our lives? Dean and Jones (2003) maintained that female actors are not autonomous, nor do they have the ability to affect change within the industry; and where they do have agency over their working conditions these changes have been extremely hard won. Like Dean (2004), I am not attempting to comment on the existence of progress or change in the industry, other empirical studies have done this and their findings are not terribly

encouraging (Smith, Pieper, & Choueti, 2017). But as Dean (2004) pointed out, there has undoubtedly been profound change in the industry from the time that theatres became gender integrated during the reign of Charles II in England, as the roles minorities now play onstage and off have grown in scope and quantity. But is this reassuring idea of progressive change also taken up as a strategy for managing stigma that one faces in the industry? In these videos it would appear so.

I would also like to add a caveat, which is that the moments that I have chosen to highlight in this thesis were selected to speak to the theoretical underpinnings I sought to illuminate. I would reiterate that these narratives are the product of the manufactured context of these video diaries and obviously should not be considered an exhaustive account of the lives of these men. My focus has been on how the narratives can help to illuminate the theoretical considerations guiding the research (Gobo, 2007), and from this respect I would argue that the data obtained from these four men satisfactorily accomplished this goal. Importantly, I wanted to investigate how there might be a purposeful playing with identity by these actors, which could be viewed as both a context-driven rearticulation of hegemonic masculinity as well as a radical subversion of expectations around the gendered fat body. Beyond the management of a spoiled identity, I was interested in how actors are seemingly able to switch identities and personas in the professional and personal spheres they inhabit. I would contend that this phenomenon was often described such that it could be considered akin to a liquid “pastiche” masculinity (Atkinson, 2011) that derives power through adaptation. But this is not necessarily a straight forward accumulation of power, as masculinity in this instance reasserts its dominion over another as a way of recouping a spoiled identity or marginalized identity. In this sense, the men engaged in a

kind of “code switching” as they recounted their various identities, which also acted as a strategy for pushing back against oppression.

To once again return to the concept of mimesis as it relates to body size and subversion, I have argued that "normal" bodies are the original, while fat bodies are the "copy" or the aberration from the norm (Butler, 1993; Brickell, 2003). Following this argument, the copy threatens the coherence of the original and therefore the fat body would threaten the coherence of a normal body (Butler, 1993). But does the mere presence of a fat body subvert the norm, as Bob suggested in his week four entry? I would argue that mere presence does not achieve subversion, although this would depend on how the fat body is received by an audience, much like how a successful performance of the self is dependent on how it is received (Goffman, 1958). If an audience reads the presence of a fat body through the lens of stereotypical norms and recuperates the degrounding that the fat body might initiate, then the presence of the fat body is not sufficient to achieve subversion (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994). However, if the fat body in some way calls into question the coherence of a normal body as the “original”, or a fat person contests the normative reading of their body, then the presence of a fat body could be considered an instance of subversion even if its attempt at renegotiation is refused by an audience (Olson & Worsham, 2000). Although a performance may not successfully achieve its intentions (i.e. an attempt at subversion), following Butler the important outcome is that a negotiation has been proposed (Olson & Worsham, 2000). It is this negotiation that is entered into over and over again which is the politically subversive field Butler (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994) believes we must engage in so that the “original” is continually destabilized and radical reconfiguration of the norm can occur.

In this project, subversion most often took the form of contestation of normative constructions of the gendered body through narrative – for example challenging the claim that a fat body is inherently unhealthy or hegemonic notions of masculine embodiment – though in describing their lives the men appeared to be constrained by their own circumstances as "jobbing" actors (Dean, 2005) and have little recourse to subvert typecasting in the workplace. This is unsurprising since, as Dean (2004) noted, although there are more job opportunities for male actors, they are nevertheless impacted by oversaturation and extreme competition in the labor market. Again, I should emphasize that my intent has been not to infer or comment too much on actual conditions within the industry at large given the limited size of my sample, but rather to explore how the men perceived and constructed their personal narratives within the context of an interview and how they engaged in impression management vis a vis intentional identity performance in an interview setting. Through their participation in this research and their video diaries the men were given the chance to intellectually engage with how they might subvert the normative image of the fat man and reframe the category of fat in ways that rejected the stereotypical, negative depictions they were frequently asked to embody. I interpreted these narrative subversions of the category of "fat" as counter reactions to the men's admissions of discrimination and fat stigma prompted by my questioning.

Constant arguably pushed the idea of subversion furthest with respect to how he reframed the idea of a fat male body as vital, sexual, and desirable. Although Constant felt pessimistic about real world change, in response to my questions about lack of onscreen representation of marginalized groups, Constant imagined a scenario in which two fat men could fall in love and embrace in a big Titanic style blockbuster – which was certainly a subversion of what typical portrayals of fat men onscreen allow: "I'd love to see two big guys kissing each other, falling in

love, and one falls into the very cold (*laughs*) iceberg ridden sea, and I scream his name, you know? That's the dream but I don't know if I'm going to see it in my lifetime." (wk.3/p.23) In her research about labour conditions for women actors, Dean (2003) argues that there is "potential for politicization" in the industry, as evidenced by the talk of progressive politics among performers. But as Dean (2003) points out, "the individualized nature of the business" (p.320) inhibits actors from taking action as they must acquiesce to power to ensure their continued employability. Dean (2003) also felt that meaningful analysis of structural level effects on the industry were difficult to assess in a study of micro level processes and while this may also be a limitation of my study, the narratives of these men could reflect broader shifting cultural values relating to gender and embodiment. In my estimation there were moments of subversion in all the performances contained in these videos, arguably making the contribution of these men significant at least on a micro level, with the possibility of reaching a wider audience through forthcoming research dissemination an ongoing prospect.

In terms of the videos themselves, the biggest methodological discovery I made was with respect to the tensions that arose between producing a video research document and a written document. Of course, this is not terribly surprising given that these are two different mediums which offer fundamentally different ways of organizing, interpreting, and presenting data (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010). After I had transcribed the videos and written the first draft of my results/discussion sections, I then went back to the video footage to select a few short clips for a presentation I was preparing to give on the project. Coming back to the videos after living with the transcripts for so long was revelatory! The videos were so much more complex than I remembered, and my interpretation of the transcribed text was different than watching the video. Looking at text on a page can be an advantage in one respect, as it allows for deep analysis of the

words that have been spoken and this can be quite illuminating. What becomes lost however, is the embodied aspect of speech; the facial expressions, the tone of voice, the pauses and inflections, all of which can alter the meaning of a phrase in a way that is not always captured by the written word. There are limitations and strengths to both media but returning to the videos after having distanced myself from them by writing for so long brought that difference into stark relief.

Using video as a research method was also an attempt on my part to have the men take ownership of their contribution and include them as collaborators by acknowledging the co-creation of knowledge that was undertaken. My intent was that self-produced video diaries could be a means of redistributing power in the researcher/researched dynamic, giving participants greater agency and creative input to the production of research artefacts (Gibson, 2005). However, as Bancroft et al. (2014) noted, research that uses crowdsourcing techniques can never be a completely participatory endeavour, as the researcher ultimately controls the major decision making in the project. I am not totally convinced that this was necessarily a downside for this project. Power dynamics should surely be critiqued, but traditional research relationships wherein expertise is privileged can of course also produce successful work that might be qualitatively different than work that seeks to totally democratize research. That said, if we attempt to change the power dynamics and role designations of our research teams, then how can we continue to work to disrupt the power dynamics so that participants have even more input? This will be something I will explore further as I develop the video project, involving the creative input of the men throughout the editing process both as a way to involve them in knowledge production and to ensure that they retain agency over their narratives (Gill, 2014).

With respect to my role as researcher, using video as a research tool was both a drawback and an advantage to this project, as my physical absence became an absent presence while the men recorded their videos (Gibson, 2005). Certainly, using technology was an economical way for me to conduct research at a distance (Bancroft et al., 2014) and was a successful way for me to examine the role of the "imagined other" (Cooley, 1902) in the performance of identity. During their videos, whenever the men wondered out loud whether they were going on about a subject too long, or whether the things they had said were useful to the research or not, they indicated that they were always conscious of me and the research. They did not receive the same immediate feedback that they would have had I been there physically and mediated their perceived gaffes to preserve their integrity as "good research subjects" (Alldred & Gillies, 2002). Perhaps this element of the study design allowed for more personal accounts because my absence could not unintentionally constrain their responses with my own interventions as an interviewer. Conversely the presence of an interviewer might have facilitated their answers, given that there could have been help from another person and probing into answers that might have encouraged them to develop their answers more deeply. Unfortunately, while interesting lines of inquiry, these hypotheticals will have to remain unanswered in this project.

Another difficulty with conducting research at a distance was that I found following up with the men over the course of their participation quite stressful. Because the men were tasked with recording multiple interviews, I was worried about fatigue and attrition. At the beginning of the project my anxieties appeared to be confirmed as two of my initial participants withdrew citing the labor and technical difficulties associated with research at a distance. However, the four men who completed the project were highly engaged and committed. That said, while I tried my best to give them space to do the work on their own time, this meant that the fieldwork

process was lengthy (as long as nine months) and I was nervous that if I hurried them along they would get fed up with the process and drop out. Fortunately, that never happened, and the men were very reassuring that the amount of labor they were being asked to perform had not felt excessive to them. But were I to use this method again I would build in scheduled follow-up to the study design explicitly so that my participants would be expecting me to give them prompts as the research progressed.

Ultimately, I have attempted to keep my goals for the outcomes of this project on a relatively small scale. My aim was to look at how masculinity works in subtler ways to uphold patriarchy (Moller, 2007), but also to bring to light a discussion around men and fatness that sometimes gets overlooked (Norman, 2011). Fundamentally, I think art and storytelling are crucial to the human experience, something I have in common with all four of these men. Seeing ourselves reflected in the stories we tell and the cultural products we create is undoubtedly vital to our healthy sense of self-concept (hooks, 1992), and maybe this project will help to continue conversations about representation in art, including the often-overlooked dimension of the fat body. I hoped that this project would give these men a chance to reflect and maybe reconsider their own privilege as men and how they might be able to create spaces and opportunities where other kinds of embodiment might find room to breathe.

I will end with a final quote from Constant's week three entry:

> "I'm gay, I'm a big guy, I'm balding, and I think I'm handsome to a certain degree. I don't think I'm that conventional sort of drop dead gorgeous that people would expect, but at a good selfie angle I'm pretty decent (*laughs*). And I have stories. I have stories to tell and I have stories to live. And I wish that my stories could be on stage and could be on film, could be on television. And I hope that we get to see these stories. Not just me, but everyone else out there who doesn't feel like they can identify with anything that they see on the screen, you know?" (wk.3/p.28)

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Appendix - Interview Guide

The purpose of this interview guide is twofold: first, to give you a general overview of the research being conducted and some of its assumptions; and second, to give you some basic technical guidelines for the recording of your video diary.

Who Am I?

I am a graduate student at Concordia University, pursuing a master's degree in Sociology. This project comprises the fieldwork component of my thesis. I am also a professional actor who has worked in theatre and film across Canada, primarily in Winnipeg and Toronto. I am a graduate of George Brown Theatre School (2006) and a member of both Canadian Actor's Equity Association and ACTRA. My own experiences navigating body image, masculinity, and identity in the context of the industry led to my interest in the research questions I am posing.

Research Overview

In this study, I am conducting research on how male "character actors" (i.e. "plus size" or "fat" men) who work in film and television create and maintain their identity, particularly in terms of how their body size and gender impact their personal and professional lives. While research on representation in film and television indicates that actors are often type cast based on reductive physical types (Zuckerman, Ukanwa, & Von Rittmann, 2003), research on the lived experiences of men and their body-based practices and body ideals remains sparse in the research literature (Norman, 2011; Monaghan & Malson, 2013). This project aims to gain greater insight into men, identity and their bodies through a series of video-recorded diaries or "vlogs" produced by film and television actors themselves. These video-recorded diaries will be used to create a short (approx. ten minute) documentary film. Given the lack of research on men and their bodies, multiple, semi-structured interviews will be employed to allow men to describe in their own words how they negotiate their personal identity in light of the demands of their work as performers. This project has particular significance for me, as I am a former professional actor and have experienced first-hand the unique demands that are placed on men in the performing arts in their search for employment. I bring with me a keen understanding of this community and I am sensitive to the challenges faced by these men.

This research project aims to address the gap in research around men, identity and embodiment by exploring how fat male actors experience their bodies. Arguably, the body is central to men in the performing arts when seeking out employment and as such this group of men's ideas about identity, body size and shape offers potentially rich insight into how different groups of men experience their bodies and body-related practices, such as eating and exercise, particularly amid pressure to present a particular image during the audition process and the jobs they are hired for.

The video diary/documentary format has been chosen in order to disseminate the data obtained through the filmed interviews for the purpose of potentially reaching a wider audience outside academia. By targeting the general public, I hope to continue to broaden the discussion surrounding men and body image. In addition, the subject of the male body and its role in an artistic discipline that is primarily visual will be complemented by the use of film, allowing for a richer depiction of participants' experiences. Adding this visual component to the research will augment the effectiveness of the narratives. However, the intent underscoring the use of a video diary format is to honor the narratives and experiences of the participants.

A Note on the Word "Fat"

The descriptive term "fat" is an emotionally charged term and for many people it is considered to be a pejorative. When I use this term, I am taking my cue from activists and researchers that have made attempts to reclaim, and even celebrate, this word. This research project is being conducted in the spirit of body diversity activism, based on the assumption that our bodies carry symbolic meanings (i.e. what it means to be "fat") and that this is not always a function of our biology, but rather the culture that we live in. That said, I respect that this is not a word that all people want to embrace. Please let me know if this is the case for you and I will respect your wishes.

Filming Guide

In this study you are being asked to keep a personal video diary (or "vlog") that will encompass several semi-structured in-depth interviews. Over the course of one month you will record a weekly vlog that will center on a different schedule of questions that will be provided to you for each week (see Appendix B_Schedule of Questions), with entries lasting between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours, depending on how much you have to share. You are being asked to reflect on how the interactions you have with others in your work as a professional actor might form your self-identity, and how you interact with other industry professionals in both the audition process and your work on set.

Given that access to digital cameras is made fairly common by cell phones and other devices, you are also being asked to use your own camera to keep the vlog. You can record the entire entry in one sitting, or over the course of the week. Each week when you have finished your vlog entry, you will upload the footage to "box.com", which is a secure (multiple levels of encryption) online file-sharing service, and I will review the footage and send additional direction as needed. The content of the fourth entry (and associated questions) will be determined based on the

review of footage for the first three weeks. Your total involvement in the creation of the vlog should be approximately 6-7 hours of your time, depending on how much you have to share.

Although I ask that you answer the weekly questions I provide for you, I would encourage you to be creative with how you visually present the vlog. I am also interested in how you might choose to present yourself visually so please take that into consideration.

Technical Considerations

Here are some tips for shooting your vlog:

Basics:

- if you have access to video equipment (studio lights, microphones, etc.) and want to use it, terrific! but this is not necessary for our purposes
- use a webcam, iPhone, Android, digital camera, or whatever camera you have at your disposal
- be careful that you have enough memory! if you are using an iPhone or an Android, you will need to adjust the video quality in your phone's settings menu; shoot at 720p HD at 30 fps (frames per second); at this setting, you will need approx. 3.5 GB of memory for one hour of video
- keep an eye on how much memory your video is taking up while you're filming; you may need to record part of the video, upload it to box.com, then delete the video from your phone to create more space
- if you're using a phone, **flip the device onto its side and shoot in landscape mode** (NOT in portrait mode)
- clean your lens!
- if you have a selfie stick this can be a great way to steady your camera and change up the angle you're shooting

Lighting:

- you need a light source, and natural light is the easiest way to light your video
- morning light is great for shooting video (but keep in mind that natural lighting will shift with the sun)
- shoot close to a window and find a location that is getting indirect light (rather than direct sunlight); this can help give you a clear, even picture.
- remember that the closer to the light source, the brighter you will be, and vice versa.
- *iPhone6s*: use "AE" (automatic exposure) by touching and holding an area of the screen when you have your video camera open; the "AE" icon will pop up, slide the sun icon at the side of the yellow frame up and down to adjust the exposure; from this point the exposure should be locked and will be consistent throughout the video, even if you move around; this can be useful to brighten up your image if you are shooting yourself with a light source behind you

Sound:

- phones typically have adequate sound recording capacity, especially the closer you are to your camera's microphone.
- the further away from your device you get, the sound will increasingly echo.
- if you're filming outside, you want to be very close to the mic and remember that wind will really distort your sound quality.

Film a test shot to see how the light and sound are operating before you begin.

Have fun!