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# The Metamodern Man

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# **THE METAMODERN MAN**

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Liberal Studies*

*by*

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*May, 2018*

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## Abstract

The first time I heard the term, “Metamodern Age,” I was actively involved in a discussion about the various themes in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. The setting was a Master of Liberal Studies class (Rollins College, MLS 604), entitled “Modernity” taught by Dr. Tom Cook. It was October of 2015. *Frankenstein*, also known as *The Modern Prometheus*, is a masterpiece and a solid sample from the Modern Era. Following approximately fifty years of Postmodern Era sludge, we are now in what could be identified as the Metamodern Era. Our Modernity class speculated confidently that the current Age of Metamodernism is a positive societal rebuild in the terrifying wake of 9/11. I strongly identify with metamodernism, as opposed to postmodernism, and believe that the Metamodern Age began to mature as the internet became culturally dominant in the 1990s, prior to 9/11. I am intrigued by the concept of metamodernism – an age born, unofficially, the same year as I was, 1975.

In June, 2016; I took a trip to Amsterdam with fellow Rollins’ Master of Liberal Studies students, past and present. My curiosity erupted into fascination with metamodern thought as I connected it to my personal masculine identity struggle in our zeitgeist. It is a Post-postmodern Era wherein masculinity is too often seen as toxic. For the first time in my life, I traveled abroad and talked about culture, politics, and gender expectations with anybody and everybody who had experiences and opinions to share. Amsterdam humbly lent itself to my curiosity in defining metamodern masculinity, and thus **The Metamodern Man**.

On June 18, 2017 (Father’s Day), I began to organize my massive pile of MLS notes and mentally filter my Amsterdam experience, in order to concentrate on my MLS thesis. With the

consistent support of my wife and children, I decided to focus on my midlife masculine place in our current zeitgeist, and commit to writing about the metamodern man. I put pen to paper on Labor Day, 2017, after talking to my boys (ages 6 and 14) about what it means to be a man in metamodern society, specifically in America. We discussed what the future holds for masculinity. The potential is positively great. This thesis paper is my attempt at comprehending midlife masculinity and defining the reality of what being a successful metamodern man means.

## Preface

The first time I heard the term, Metamodern, I was actively involved in a discussion about the various themes in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The setting was a Master of Liberal Studies class, entitled "Modernity" taught by Dr. Tom Cook at Rollins College. It was the fall of 2015. Our class discussion centered on how we would label this new turn-of-the-century era. While *Frankenstein* helped solidify the Modern Era, the internet is hugely responsible for our new, Digital Age. Everything is being redone and reworked. Taking something old and making it new and improved can be classified as metamodern, we acknowledged collectively. Our class agreed that postmodernism is dead. We concluded that a macro-approach to societal issues is the tone of our current era. I latched onto the metamodern classification, embraced the intricacies of the cultural drift, and began to look inward at my metamodern masculine self.

The following summer, I took a trip to Amsterdam with fellow graduate students to study the Golden Age of Amsterdam. We immersed ourselves in the great history and intellectual freedom of what was the wealthiest city in the world during the 17th century. My curiosity erupted into fascination with metamodernism as I connected it to my American male "Generation X" identity. I was raised on cable television, both of my parents worked full time jobs, and I still think that Seattle is where it's at. I like to question logic with pessimism. I'm a midlife Gen Xer for certain. While in Amsterdam, however, I didn't feel like a boring midlife man. I felt like I was in the metamodern age. For the first time in my 42 years, I traveled abroad sharing the good, the bad, and the ugly with anybody and everybody who had experiences and opinions to distribute.

This led to downloading *Notes on Metamodernism: A collection of books and essays on the demise of Postmoderism* by Dutch theorists Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker. I began doing social media research, and Googling “metamodern” every day. I wanted to identify my place in this identifiably Metamodern Era, more specifically the zeitgeist in America. Over the next school year, as I completed my class load for the Rollins MLS degree, I collected sources in anticipation of developing my thesis project on metamodernism.

In June 2017, I sorted through my MLS and Amsterdam experiences to ascertain what I would focus on for my MLS thesis project. It seemed appropriate that on Father’s Day, June 18th, I decided to focus on my genuine interest on my masculine place in our zeitgeist, and commit to writing about *The Metamodern Man*. I sat through the box office reboot of *Wonder Woman*, and I indulged in the most eye opening books I have ever read: *The World Split Open* by Ruth Rosen and Hanna Rosin’s *The End of Men*. These books were informative, timely and humbling. As “toxic masculinity” made headlines, I didn’t feel connected to the guilt. I watched and listened intently as middle-aged men everywhere became the scapegoats for a very frustrated, changing American zeitgeist.

After being over-sourced for months, I put pen to paper on Labor Day 2017. My motivation to do so came after an innocent trip to the mall to buy school clothes for my young children; aged two and six. The t-shirts available spoke volumes about our current worldview and echoed my concerns as a metamodern man. The shirts offered for my two year old daughter: “Girl Boss,” “Girls Can Do Anything,” “Girls are Great,” “Unstoppable,” and “Fierce.” For my six year old son: “Gross” and “I’m not Lazy, I’m in Energy Saving Mode.” This felt like the tipping point to a new movement. Early metamoderism needs a new coat of paint.

Masculinity and its positive virtues are essential to society but they are under severe scrutiny. Metamodern men came of age in the 70s, 80s, and 90s and most have fully supported the empowerment of women. Many of us were even raised by feminists, but we support building confidence in young men too. There was not a single empowering shirt for boys in the store that summer day. Men are absolutely relevant, if not vital, to the successful advancement of our society in this Metamodern Era. Positive masculinity is everywhere. Putting toxic masculinity out in front of the positive energy that men have is very counter-productive. I left the store empty-handed and was immediately inspired to begin my thesis project. I owed it to myself, and my three children, to define what The Metamodern Man is made of and to explore the importance of his role in this metamodern-day society.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

A generation of men, born in the Postmodern Era, have been struggling with their masculine identity, myself included. Now that postmodernism is in the past, post-postmodernism has a new identity: metamodernism. The Metamodern Age is a reboot of modernity, thanks especially to the current Digital Era. With this new-era upgrade comes transition struggles and complicated growing pains. The frustration emphasizes a masculinity drift that is affecting men like myself, born during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Metamodernism has seen a powerful influx of feminine values in the early twenty-first century. Our culture now emphasizes compassion, intuition, and social patience above rationality and reactivity. Metamodernists have become less self-centered and have morphed into social justice warriors. Culture change is inevitable and very often for the best; but not everything improves and not everyone is better off than before. In the case of metamodernism, masculine middle-aged men have been blamed for societal frustration. The aggressive and threatening late twentieth century model of metamodernism is being revised with peaceful protests and social media zealots.

With the modern reboot, metamodernism is quickly and strictly defining itself as feministic. Men who have come-of-age between 1975 –1995 are lost. Some metamodern men mistakenly thought they could fake satisfying contentment by being completely unselfish. Metamodern men would be expected to be good listeners and communicate much better than the

generation of postmodern men. The masculinity drift was unstable. It has not worked. Everyone is frustrated. Our fathers' generation "overcorrected too much" (Penny 2). Metamodern men typically have a father who was "determined to prove he was more sensitive than his father, and a mother who was determined to prove she could do anything a man could" (Penny 2). So we grew up being sensitive men who respected our mothers more so than our fathers.

Masculinity has been sacrificed for the perceived betterment of society. Condemning masculinity as toxic has limited the growth and success of a generation of masculine men. Middle-aged men have been left frustrated and all too often silent. The time has come to tip the zeitgeist back to where and when men could present their positive masculinity in a composed manner. Men thrive on competition, not compassion. Metamodern men have empathy and physicality. They are much, much more positive than they could ever be negative. Current midlife males are traditionally masculine and inherently good. Society is ready for the return of masculine men – remixed as **The Metamodern Man**.

## Chapter 2: Metamodernism

“Metamodernism is the marriage of extreme irony with a deep, unyielding sincerity.”

- Hanzi Freinacht

First introduced in 1975, by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, metamodernism is the cultural philosophy that follows postmodernism. Some say that post-postmodernism began in 2005; as YouTube was born and the iPhone was being conceived, however, metamodernism is a “word academics periodically used throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, but it’s only lately become the sort of thing regularly discussed on popular websites” (Abramson 1). The transition into metamodernism was in motion as the Internet became overly accessible in the mid-1990s. Most would say that the Metamodern Era began soon after the September 11th attacks on America, but I say that metamodernism began with the decline of postmodernism before the turn-of-the-century, as young adults redefined gender roles and expectations in the midst of an all-consuming Digital Age.

Like Romanticism, Victorianism, Modernism, and Postmodernism before it; Metamodernism will be best understood and identified decades from now. Today, metamodernity is commonly described as a combination of “a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony” (Akker). Sometimes described as “This New Feeling,” metamodernism is “not artistic, it is about what is being produced” (Akker). Metamodernism “isn’t smug or deconstructive. It is reconstructive” (Abramson 1). When we reconstruct anything, “we acknowledge that they once were in pieces, so metamodernism certainly acknowledges postmodernism in this way” (Abramson 1). The Metamodern Age is a positive reconstruction of the postmodernism; a reboot of modernity.

Some contend that postmodernism came to an abrupt end due to digital revolutions and terror attacks. However, the transition was murkier than that. Postmodernism was an era of individualism that ran from approximately 1940-2000. It was an age of critical questioning with an emphasis on politics. It was a reaction to the excitement of modernism which rejected the universal norms that came about during the Modern Era. Science was considered to be similar to philosophy, open to debate, in the Postmodern Era. Postmodernist thinkers were very political and society became skeptical about modern truths, such as scientific knowledge, experimentation and technology. Making things new became irrational to legacy thinkers.

The Metamodern Era is “not about rich vs poor or young vs old. It is about the past vs the future. It’s about whether we settle for the same divisions, distractions and drama that passes for politics today or whether we reach for a politics of common sense and innovation” (Akker). This structure of understanding is vividly metamodern. It is beyond the inherent selfishness of postmodernism; it is what metamodernists consider to be a reboot of what worked before the Postmodern Era. Metamodernists acknowledge that “postmodernism is dead...but something altogether weirder has taken its place” (Searle 1). The weirdness is moving us ahead in positivity. Metamodernism “collapses distance, helps us take stock of the experience of the world many of us are having now, and in doing so gives us a chance to transcend our present experience and move forward with the aim of creating positive change in our communities and the world” (Abramson, 2).

Metamodernist thinkers believe in carefully reconstructing previous norms: “They sensed that we had to push past the irony, cynicism, and world-weariness of postmodernism” (Abramson 1). Metamodernists want to fight the despair and reestablish hope but they often stall. Metamodern America is over-sourced by the social media and frustrated by the inconsistency. Yet, most

metamodernists continue to show optimism in reworking the previous cultural philosophies: “When a musician remixes someone else’s work, in a sense what they’ve created is dependent upon what someone else has created – and in a sense what they’ve made is something entirely new” (Abramson 4). Metamodernists want to reconstruct the efforts of the previous eras and make new this Metamodern Age.

Among the subcultures that are burrowed into metamodernism, is one that relates to redefining masculine and feminine expectations. Described in the Huffinton Post as the “New Sincerity” (Abramson 1), metamodernism involves far less gender-role cynicism than was typically of postmodernism. It promotes refueling to create a “new school of thought” (Abramson 1). The metamodern era aims to be honest and up front about all expectations and limitations. The new sincerity of metamodernism is collaborative and quickly evolving and the pockets of positivity are growing larger as the rear-window to postmodernism closes completely.

Metamodernism “gives us a lens through which to consider nearly everything that has happened in America since the invention of the internet: political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural” (Abramson 2). Being metamodern means checking the internet daily, for better or worse. In order to live metamodernly, middle-aged Generation Xers must participate, because the Baby Boomers are mostly set in their ways and the Greatest Generation is dying off. The Age of Television has given way to the Age of the Internet, and any skepticism about the world-wide-web has been draped in happy, new metamodernism. Postmodernism had “two decades to help us make sense of Internet culture, and it’s offered us no way to navigate the Internet Age without feeling increasingly helpless and alone” (Abramson 4).

In the metamodern twenty-first century “trends and tendencies can no longer be explained in terms of the postmodern” (Akker). Metamodern movements express hopefulness - everything

seems to contain a bigger picture meaning. There is less pessimism: “History, it seems, is moving rapidly beyond its all too hastily proclaimed end” (Akker). Other possibilities and mentioned terms for labeling this new era or feeling include: hypermodernism, digimodernism, pseudomodernism, megamodernism, automodernism, and altermodernism. I believe metamodernism is the most appropriate and palatable label for this current era.

This new feeling, however, is a cultural philosophy that is uneasy with masculinity. It is an era of empathy and “not knowing what choice to make” (Akker). This leads to the confusion and frustration outlined in *The Listening Society*. Metamodern men have been made to feel as if their natural male virtues are more often than not, considered toxic. Those of us coming-of-age in the Metamodern Era have many choices and too many considerations. Metamodernism is sometimes seen as a “system of logic, that helps us better understand the digital age” (Simpson 1). Simultaneously, it is an era of “reaction as individuals” with a “structure of feeling” (Simpson 1). Therefore the reboot hits a snag, because this creates frustration for middle-aged men who need to express themselves with action and accomplishments – rather than expressive emotions.

Accepting metamodernism allows society to understand the current system of cultural politics. “If we start thinking and creating and solving problems like a metamodernist, we might just start digging ourselves out from the massive cultural, political, and economical hole America is in right now” (Abramson 4). Year 2018 is dynamic and changing faster that we can comfortably comprehend. Rapid change is one of the many identifiers of metamodernism era (the internet gets a lot of the credit for that). Metamodernism is something new. It is our “overarching cultural philosophy or movement” (Abramson 4). Metamodernism is “ultimately a complex philosophy that will take academics and artists years to work through – but it’s new, it’s not jaded, and it puts real people’s real emotions and real lives first” (Abramson 1).

In summary, we are in the Digital-Age, properly translated and identified as the Metamodern Era. Postmodernism is dead. We are swimming in elements of deconstruction, rebuilding previous philosophies and reconstructing prior movements. Metamodernism differs from postmodernism in its positivity. As metamodernism writer David Foster Wallace mentions, “It is a shift away from cynicism towards human connection” (The Problem with Irony). Metamodernism is the digitalized reinvention of modernism, contrasted against postmodern philosophies. The result is a complex modern rebooted. Metamodernism is positively exciting era to identify and revel in.

### Chapter 3: Masculine Atrophy

“I am a feminist. I’ve been female for a long time now. I’d be stupid not to be on my own side.”

- Maya Angelou

In March 2007, American author and poet Maya Angelou spoke at Rollins College. I did not hesitate to get my ticket. I was still single, a little edgier than I am now, and very curious about what this iconic author had to offer a crowd of curious academics. This was before my journey into the MLS program and a very rare evening spent at Rollins when I didn’t have to be on campus (in my role as Director of Campus Recreation). Before I made my way to the gym for the speech, I Googled “Maya Angelou quotes.” The aforementioned chapter quote rang in my head that night and still resonates with me. In response, I say that I am a metamodern man. I have been for a long time now. I’d be stupid not to be on my own side.

Men born in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s are the bridge between postmodern masculinity and their metamodern manhood. Postmodernism dismantled masculine norms and left many men deflated. The Postmodern Age was a cynical, political era. As a result, frustrated and often insecure, men were raising their children into cultural uncertainty. “It’s no secret that we have been conditioned to suppress our fears and project our confidence as men” (Nair 1). While masculinity was weakening and unstable, feminism was a powerful force to be reckoned with in the second half of the twentieth century. It still is. In fact, many metamodern men were raised by women heavily influenced by the feminist movement.

I am a middle aged man who has come of age during the Metamodern Era. I identify with the Generation X subculture, more specifically with men born between the years of 1960 -1990. My greatest role is that of a dad and I am rooting for all dads and men who are finding their stride

in midlife, while being responsible and honest with themselves about that responsibility. It's easy to feel nostalgic for the 1970s and 80s dads, but I am happy to be a metamodern dad: "I don't work 10 hours a day at a job I hate, come home, play with the kids for a few minutes and then crack open a beer in front of the tv" (Brett 1). Midlife is humbling and often emotionally painful. This midlife transition provides "multiple biological, psychological, and social determinants" (Diamond 47) that influence our reality. I have come to terms with my new masculine limitations in middle-age. Metamodern men don't need to "man up," they just need to be honest with themselves and with others. Living metamodernly is about growing and maturing, not atrophy.

Metamodern men value patience, and emphasize action over words. Some have even developed and appreciation for style and enhanced grooming. Occasionally, the term metrosexual is confused with the idea of a metamodern man. The two monikers do share a European connection but the similarities end there. Metrosexual is a noun that is used to define post-modern men as politically liberal and enjoying an appreciation of art and fashion. Metamodern men put very little emphasis on fashion, arts, or politics. They instead focus on self, so that they may be confident enough to help and lead others. Both terms for describing turn-of-the-century men have slowly been making their way to America over the last 30 years. Metamodern men are evolving in their natural masculinity, whereas metrosexual is a shallow description of men who emphasize their fashion senses.

We have not re-defined masculinity for the Metamodern Age. Failure to do so has led to a masculinity crisis. "In the old days, masculinity was measured by (1) physical abilities, particularly strength, but also skill, (2) power/success/wealth, and (3) sexual prowess" (Crisis of Modern Masculinity). Working toward these goals and developing such masculine abilities helped define what it meant to be a man. However, in the metamodern, we are unmeasured. Our urban lifestyle

lacks masculine challenges. The simple life has de-masculinized men and watched as men have atrophied without a reconstructed masculine barometer with which to measure their prowess.

The picture of the traditional American man has been previously dominated by “stereotypes of the Provider, Emotional Rock, Powerbroker, Cowboy, Jock, Good Ole Boy, Macho Man, Mad Man” (Shriver). In the metamodern, however, the updated stereotypes are: “Stay-at-home Dad, the Caregiver Son, the Involved Dad, the Two Dads, the Single Dad, the Happily Married Dad, the Emotional Man, the Caring Man” (Shriver). This masculine identity-shift does not describe the metamodern man accurately. It conveys a negative drift. Metamodern men have retained their positive masculinity in the form of individuality, physicality, and success-drive motivation. Being a modern cowboy is as far-fetched as plausibly being a metamodern caregiver.

According to *The Future of Men* author Jack Myers, the traditional male is dying out. Metamodern men are “not their fathers and they are certainly not their grandfathers” (23). More and more, men grow up in fatherless homes or in homes where the women is out-earning the husband. Myers goes on to say, “Men are being out-performed and out-educated by women” (CBS). Because of this, metamodern men felt anxious, confused and often unhealthy. “Husbands economic dependence relates directly to physical health” (Springer 394) and it’s contagious among metamodern men who are “frequently becoming dependent on their wife’s salary” (Springer 394) to make ends meet and provide for the growing needs of today’s family.

Weakening masculinity has been contagious since the start of the Metamodern Era. Midlife male vulnerability continues to be rampant, even after 9/11 woke us up to the harsh reality of impending violence. It is an attempt to redefine and expand masculinity that motivates metamodern men to define what they are and how they fit into this resulting zeitgeist. From birth, males are expected to be tough. Masculinity is an unavoidably powerful trait; “boys are expected

and pressured to project an aura of autonomy, stoicism, toughness, and anti-femininity and to feel ashamed when they fail to do so” (Hartman 1). Middle-aged men have the burden of channeling their masculinity and considering how their words and actions impact everyone around them. We don’t have excuses. At the same time, metamodern men are being slowed-down, in order to be ultra-conscientious. We are not reaching our potential and our young men are going to bear the burden of the de-masculinization of the early twenty-first century.

A generation of young men are frustrated and confused: “Western men are growing up more and more without healthy masculine role models. Our young boys today are in crisis” (Reeves 3). A legion of middle-aged dads are too often disoriented and therefore are “infusing a new generation of boys with stunted-growth versions of masculinity and femininity” (Reeves 3). Metamodern men are recently growing wise to this deception and gradually making the adjustment. Some evidence suggests that the generation of men that follow metamodern men, millennials for example, are showing themselves to be socially immature. Generation Y continues to wait longer to finish school, work full-time, or get married. Masculine atrophy will continue to worsen if metamodern men turn their backs to a younger generation of nervous gamers and anxious boys. Grown men must be present in the lives of their children. Metamodern men aim to do so.

The Metamodern man needs to create conversation about what it means to be a healthy masculine man in the twenty-first century. Generation Y men need leadership. Metamodern men were expected to learn from their father’s example, but it wasn’t enough. The metamodern man can do better, and lead by example and conversation. Metamodern men are late-bloomers because they didn’t get the hard truths, the honest advice, or the physicality that they so naturally expected. Most were raised with heavy-handed mothers and detached fathers resulting in a delayed grasp of masculinity.

A significant contributor to masculine atrophy is the rise of fake feminism. Described as “seemingly sensitive male feminists,” (Harel 1) fake feminism is a prominent subculture in this angry post-election era. It is “a powerful cultural niche” (Harel 2). The list of men accused of “sexual misconduct keeps growing larger every day” (Vazquez 2) and many of them are fake feminists, such as Matt Lauer and Louis C.K., preaching feminist ideals and blaming masculinity for injustice. C.K. is “the perfect example of the male feminist who speaks out loudly against other men and yet continues his own demeaning behavior” (Vazquez 3). Metamodern men are often the target of fake feminists’ ire. Fake feminism adds to the confusion in this unstable masculinity drift. Fake feminists tend to play both sides; guys accepting “bonus points just for being nominal feminists” (Harel 3) and carrying themselves in a self-congratulatory way. Metamodern men would argue that “the criticism of male feminists is an inevitable consequence of social progress” (Harel 2). I am confident that fake feminism sets masculinity back and has no benefit to metamodern society.

Another factor in the weakening of Metamodern masculinity is how men are depicted in popular culture; including music, film, television, and advertising. Metamodern men are very often depicted as clumsy, over-weight, and dim-witted. Examples from television include Al Bundy (Married with Children), Hal Wilkerson (Malcom in the Middle), Ray Barone (Everybody Loves Raymond), Doug Heffernan (King of Queens), and Peter Griffin (Family Guy). The extreme example is Homer Simpson, on the longest running animated television show in history, *The Simpsons*. “Television fathers do not reflect the positive changes occurring in the institution of fatherhood” (McGovern 40). Popular media is specifically contributing to masculine atrophy.

The entertainment industry is failing metamodern men. “The only way you would see a father in a commercial was when he was causing devastation to his poor family” (Boatman 2). The

negativity needs to cease: “Their funny stupidity, buffoonish mannerisms and lack of spine teaches us – and our kids - that dads don’t really have anything of value to offer their families. No wonder our fathers feel underappreciated and disrespected” (Meeker 1). Sitcoms almost always project the mom as having it all together, while the dad is clueless.

Masculine atrophy has been contagious in television during metamodernism. Popular sitcoms are “populated by out-of-work husbands, meek boyfriends, stay-at-home dads, killer career wives, and a couple of men who have to dress up like women in order to get a job” (Rosin 55). Dads have become the punch-line. Metamodern men have laughed along with jokes at their expense and it has caught up to them. “The whole portrayal of fathers, or men in general, in this light is very harmful to future generations of young men watching these shows” (Boatman 2). Mockery is the antithesis of respect and it is overly apparent in the metamodern world of show business.

Similarly, middle-age men have become especially expendable in the metamodern workforce. Dan Lyons authored a book entitled *Disrupted: My Misadventure in the Start-up Bubble*, about how he was fired from his technical journalism job at age 50. Lyons is married and has two children. His boss told him that “Tech jobs are for Gen-Yers,” and that “Gray hair and experience are overrated.” Examples like this are unnerving and shake men to their midlife masculine core. The working class “feels the end of men the most, as men lose their jobs and lose their will to be fathers, and women do everything alone, creating a virtual matriarchy in parts of the country that used to be the bastions of good old macho country music style values” (Rosin 1). Metamodern men have worked hard to define themselves as men who value their career paths and its successes, without any toxic macho characteristics.

Many men continue to feel unreasonable amounts of pressure and defeat which leads to the ultimate atrophy, death. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, “Men die by suicide 3.53 times more often than women.” Middle-age men tend to especially feel the frustration and react unfavorably by ending their lives. The rate of suicide “is highest in middle-age white men in particular” (AFSP). In 2014, according to Calm Lynx (the Campaign Against Living Miserably), 4623 men took their own life. According to metamodernist philosopher (and ghost writer) Hanzi Freinacht, “most humans are doing better than ever. Yet there is so much confusion, suffering, and bitter resentment” (Freinacht).

As technology improves, the ability to define positive masculinity continues to decline. Men are hiding inside their social media. Keyboard muscles do not elicit hypertrophy. The masculine standard has dropped. Fortunately, we’re not competing with men from a hundred years ago. Modern men were risk-takers, soldiers, and scientists. Metamodern men need to be less comfortable as they adjust to improve, by working harder and smarter. Mediocrity should not be the standard. Metamodernity has set the bar much higher for men. Femininity is not the enemy. Men must be better men, unafraid of their masculinity. The tipping point is now and the results will be forthcoming.

Men in the Metamodern Era continue to battle masculine atrophy. It is a struggle that metamodern men can share with millennial men, in order to bring masculinity back from near extinction. It is a successful blueprint for Generation Y; an answer key that includes positive masculine reinforcement, starting with confidence and honesty. Traditional core traits, such as protectiveness and competitiveness need to re-emerge in order to promote masculine hypertrophy.

#### Chapter 4: Wonder Woman, Madonna, and Jane Fonda.

“The rise of empowered women is not a threat to masculinity.” – Connor Beaton

The future is female. The data supports it. But feminism is getting harder and harder to define. The Metamodern man understands and accepts the uncertainty of his role in the zeitgeist. He is not threatened. There have been three waves of feminism, and this feels like the fourth. Metamodern men have been present and remain positively curious. There are more and more female leaders, bosses, and role-models to inspire everyone. The population is mostly female, women live longer, and college graduates are predominately female. According to the US Census Bureau, there are 125.9 million women in the United States compared to 119.4 million men (2014). Also, there are almost twice as many women (4 million) as men (2.1 million) over the age of 85. AEI.org reports that 58.5% of all college graduates in 2017 were female. My boss is female. I have a wife, a mother, a sister, and a daughter. I proudly support them all, individually and collectively. My wife is a full-time elementary school teacher and mother of my three children. I’m with her.

The chapter quote comes from a “TEDtalk” which I was inspired to listen to in an MLS class (*MLS 520: Writing Self, Other, Culture*) in the spring of 2017. It was a talk on masculinity by author Connor Beaton. *TEDtalk* offers many discussions on current issues to help tech-savvy learners better understand metamodern issues. It is a great source in our age, for information on social issues. In this case, I was motivated to better understand the poignant coverage surrounding female-only showings of the blockbuster movie: *Wonder Woman*. The world’s most famous fictional feminist returned to the big screen and dominated the box office in 2017. It is exciting to

see *Wonder Woman* get a reboot. Any successful reboot is a solid representation of metamodernist-era popular culture. A popular example of explaining metamodernism is attached to the filmmaking process. In cinema we might call the “reboot” metamodern (Abramson 5). Therefore, the “remake is generally a Modernist approach to filmmaking and sequels are postmodern...the reboot is an earnest and dramatic re-imagining of a project” (Abramson 5). Relating the idea of a reboot to metamodern masculinity, we are “caught between trying to be faithful to the original” (Abramson 5) and trying to make something entirely new. Metamodern men intend to evolve intellectually while remaining true to their natural masculine traits.

Released on March 15, 2017, *Wonder Woman* has grossed over \$400 million since its release. The film exceeded critical expectations. *Wonder Woman*'s rebirth into popular culture occurred the previous year (an election year), in which the first female presidential candidate won the popular vote in the United States. The “future is female” felt like much more than a slogan. It felt sincerely accurate. *Wonder Woman* was welcomed back in 2016 and stole the show from Batman and Superman in DC Comics' *Dawn of Justice*. She also appeared in 2017's *Justice League* – in addition to having her own feature. Select movie theatres even offered “women-only” showings of the *Wonder Woman* reboot.

*Wonder Woman* first arrived on the scene as a comic book heroine with superhuman powers, based on a great deal of inspiration from early feminists, in 1941. She is the creation of Charles Moulton – based on his wife, lover, and birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger. *Wonder Woman* is a true heroine: she fights fearlessly for the innocent. She is also unabashedly feminist. In the *Wonder Woman* film, she scoffs at the notion of secretarial work, and yet adores babies. She also makes a remark about men being unnecessary for pleasure, yet she ends up falling for a man.

Strong women need not be anti-man. Metamodern men realize the equal value in exuding intense masculine and feminine qualities.

Outside of a strong presence in comics, Wonder Woman appeared on the cover of the second edition of *Ms. Magazine* in 1971 and was depicted as the focus of the hit television show of the same name from 1975-1979 (the earliest stages of metamodernism). The show is one of my first memories of a strong no-nonsense woman (played by Lynda Carter). Wonder Woman had remained relatively dormant until the recent cultural environment became hungry for an indestructible female action-hero. Metamodern men applaud and support her courage in the same way they respect and admire Captain America and the Incredible Hulk.

It is important to recognize the impact of popular culture on metamodern masculine and feminine expectations. Entertainment mediums have had a significant effect on metamodern masculinity. For example, metamodern men are keenly aware of the impact that Madonna has had on our post-postmodern culture. She has influenced women, men, and how men view femininity and masculinity in the metamodern. Madonna erupted onto the popular culture scene in 1983. Metamodern men know her as the consummate feminine icon, the one who made us all take notice. She is talented, beautiful, strong, and rebellious. She pushed the envelope. She is intimidating and sexual.

Madonna Louise Ciccone was born in 1958, in Bay City, Michigan. Known as the “Queen of Pop” or “The Material Girl,” Madonna broke down any remaining barriers that held women back, sexually or musically, and metamodernism provided a giant spot-light for her to do so. Society embraced how fearless and creative she was. She married overly masculine men, Sean Penn then Guy Richie, and never changed her metamodern approach, managing to keep her

powerful feminine identity. Masculine men have fully accepted and applauded her example of success and influence on the entire metamodern culture.

Prior to Madonna and the masculine drift into the metamodern, Jane Fonda is an example of a woman who set the tone for the shift in metamodern masculinity. She influenced the men and women who would re-determine the roles and expectations that would affect metamodern men. Fonda is a well-known actor, activist, author, and fitness icon. In 1970, as the Metamodern Era was in its infancy, Fonda used her star-power to raise awareness about perceived political and military injustices. In doing so, she has changed the way we view masculinity. Fonda is credited with the beginnings in recognizing metamodern toxic masculinity. She now headlines the International Conference on Masculinities, which has become an annual symposium to encourage men's activism and cooperation with feminism.

An example of a male popular culture influence, born in the postmodern but representing the transition into the metamodern, is David Bowie. He blurred the lines between masculinity and femininity and made us think on it. Bowie was an icon who used his eclectic pop music to promote sexual self-awareness in music videos and with big budgeted concerts in the 1970s and 1980s. Bowie, along with Queen and Iggy Pop, "feminized himself – which in turn made it cool to adore women" (Moss). He was married, had two children, collected art and considered himself to be extremely spiritual. Bowie died in 2016.

Metamodern men are motivated by empowered women. Wonder Woman is an inspiration to men, women, and most importantly; boys and girls. Madonna is a metamodern influence and phenomenon beyond measure. And Jane Fonda has been relevant and unselfish in sharing her experience and knowledge to inform a new generation of metamodernists who can be better

equipped to understand the feminine concerns with “toxic masculinity.” Men and women, fiction and nonfiction, working together to build a positive Metamodern Era.

## Chapter 5: Men, Who Needs Them?

“Men want to carry their weight, and they should be expected to.” - Jack Donovan

Women are no longer dependent on men, but that does not make men obsolete. Metamodern men are as relevant as ever, even though the “current zeitgeist is irrefutably feminism” (Valenti 1). After with the third wave of feminism comes the opinion that men are no longer needed for reproduction. The zeitgeist consensus seems to be that men are no longer needed for reproduction, although women’s involvement is still crucial. Fewer and fewer people are getting married, and those that do wait until they are almost thirty years old to do so. There are gaps in birthrates. These are generational and societal trends, but the truth is, men and women are both necessary for sustaining any traditional culture. The long-reaching realization that the male component of sexual reproduction can be manufactured has led men and women down an uneven path and assumption that men are becoming obsolete.

Women are not just finding equality with men but according to some theorists, they are proving to be the more successful sex. According to *Gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Be it resolved men are obsolete*, “Whether in education, employment, personal health or child rearing, statistics point to a rise in the status and power of women at home, in the workplace, and in traditional male bastions such as politics” (Rosin 14). According to Hanna Rosin, “Women are not just catching up anymore; they are becoming the standard by which success is measured” (Rosin 12). She goes on to reiterate, “Obsolete does not mean worthless. It means outmoded. We can keep whatever we like about manhood but adjust the parts of the definition that are keeping men back” (15). This is a very condescending, but unsurprising take, from the author of *The End of Men*.

In the 2001 book *Stupid White Men*, by Michael Moore, the author writes, “No wonder nature is getting rid of us. If we men had any sense, we’d try to get nature to forgive us by cleaning up our act. You know, do the obvious stuff: quit desecrating the Artic wilderness, pick up after ourselves, stop throwing Whopper remains out the car window” (146). He goes on, “Nature would probably put up with a lot of our guff if we still served some important purpose. For eons we had two things women didn’t have that made us a necessity: 1) we provided sperm to keep the species going, and 2) we were able to reach and get whatever they needed off the top shelf” (146). A popular book that spent eight weeks atop the New York Times bestseller list, *Stupid White Men* was written by a man, at the expense of metamodern men.

This all adds to the momentum of the current fourth wave of the feminist movement that is dominating the media, since Donald Trump decided to run for President. Beginning in the 1990s, third wave feminism was born from a stalled wave of protests during the 1980s. Third wave feminism stressed equality by focusing on female victims and gender-neutral issues. Metamodern Fourth wave feminists prefer to define feminism for themselves by incorporating their own identities into the classic feminist belief system of equality, reproductive rights, and wage gap. This all adds up to a generation of men walking on egg shells.

Early in my thesis research I read a *New York Times* article entitled, “Men, Who Needs Them?” by Greg Hampikian. The article emphasizes how women are sufficient for reproduction and that men are unnecessary. Wild new technology could soon help women have their own babies. No men needed: “Women are both necessary and sufficient for reproduction, and men are neither.” (Hampikian 2). There is essential research being done on fertility treatments and disease prevention, but the implications of using this research to make children from skin cells is damaging and out-of-order. Hampikian also writes, ” men have become less relevant to both reproduction and

parenting. Women aren't just becoming men's equals. It's increasingly clear that 'mankind' itself is a gross misnomer" (Hampikian 1).

In contrast to the Hampikian article, a 2015 article in *The Daily Beast* by Samantha Allen contradicts the idea that men are soon-to-be irrelevant. End-of-men reports are exaggerated and extremely under-developed. In fact, "Men Will Someday Have Kids Without Women" is the title of the article by Allen. "The zeitgeist has begun to include such nonsense as chromosomes exist on a continuum. There are X chromosomes and there are Y chromosomes" (PowerfulJRE 1081, 8:44-8:49). In response to findings that sperm and eggs can potentially be created from skin cells, "there's no telling what human reproduction will look like by the end of the century" (Allen 2). I say that women and men are both required for sustainable healthy procreation and successful human longevity. Either sex being labeled as unimportant is decidedly premature. The world needs men, not just our metamodern society, simply because "you can't negotiate with biology" (PowerfulJRE 1081, 8:14-8:17).

Consequences of the skin-cell research and the elimination of men in reproduction is something from a sci-fi film. Metamodernism calls for consideration in its reconstruction of previous eras. These far-fetched practices stand to "upend almost all of our traditional cultural understandings of gender and reproduction" (Allen 3). Metamodern men are adapting to the cultural shift. We are willing to do more of the childrearing. This proposed technology would complicate family dynamics to the point of no return. Implementing science to create babies outside of the womb, with no father, is too risky: "The pesky thing about babies is that someone has to take care of them once they're born. Gender roles exceed the biological circumstances of childbirth and they are, perhaps, much less likely to change" (Allen 5).

As a result of postmodern pessimism, marriage is being postponed. “Fertility is dropping in all age groups under age forty” (Stone 1). Most everyone can agree that while reducing unintended pregnancy is a good thing, “there have been relatively few innovations in technology or social structure to enable desired parenting” (Stone 1). Men-less conception is unreasonable, usually unwanted, and not necessary for women in the Metamodern Age. Men want to raise the children they willingly and genetically create. Technologies such as “in vitro fertilization, ovulation-enhancing medicines, egg storage and artificial insemination have been around for decades now, and remain extremely expensive in many cases” (Harel 3). These procedures cost thousands and are not often covered by insurance.

The end of conventional childbirth is one possible future. However, metamodernism is not the era of *The End of Men* or the end of traditional families. The modern reboot we are experiencing is one of growth and positive remixing. Metamodern men want the opportunity to see societal improvements all the way through, especially upgrades in responsible family relationships. We are still willing and able to reproduce and follow through with our inherent obligation. “If sex cells come from skin and babies come from tanks, so much of our gendered reproductive vocabulary becomes irrelevant: pregnancy, copulation, surrogate, fertility, donor” (Allen 5). The argument, then, is that both men and women could have children without ever being pregnant. Men of metamodernity want the honor of being a father. Metamodernism encourages willing and successful breeders to make families.

Some women will not need men to reproduce. Nonetheless, traditional masculine values will continue to be highly visible and highly valuable. Some men will choose to go their entire lives without procreating. However, humanity requires that the majority of men and women contribute continually to young lives in order to improve society. Metamodernism promotes

evolving masculine and feminine traits. Metamodern men understand that male domination has ended. We have finally, purposefully, ushered in a new era of gender equality. The value of brute male physicality has waned. In the metamodern, “women are naturally superior. They have longer lives and fewer deaths at all ages; very few x-linked genetic problems; much lower susceptibility to conduct disorders; and they are far less violent” (Konner 1).

Women are just better. “In business and politics, women are better cooperators, less conflict-prone, and much better at getting their own egos out of the way” (Konner 1). Men and women are very different, and as suffragist leader Elizabeth Cody Stanton said, “The reality of the difference will make a better world” (Konner 1). With this comes a large fertility decline. America’s fertility downfall is projected at “3.84 million births in 2017, down from about 3.95 million in 2016” (Stone 1). This is, unfortunately, “far short of what women themselves say they want for their family size” (Stone 1). Men, maybe metamodern America needs you.

## Chapter 6: Positive Masculinity

“It is time to evolve beyond the macho jerk ideal, all spine and no heart. Heart and spine must be united. And this takes a new kind of guts.” – David Deida

The Metamodern Man is caught between being a nice guy and being honest. He accepts life’s challenges and wants to understand the rationale behind them. He wants to be fair about choices and consequences. Above all, he wants to retain his natural masculinity. It’s the machismo that is toxic, not the masculinity. It’s the barbarian that has an appetite for destruction, not the middle-aged dad whose patience is mistaken for passivity. Most metamodern men are brave and are proud to prove it. It is a historically positive trait. Bravery is an absolute example of positive masculinity. Unfortunately, men are not asked to be brave often enough, outside of killing a spider.

Metamodern men feel at a loss in their diminished role in our current culture and looming future society. They feel isolated. Their masculinity has been presumed dormant. Men are back-seat drivers in their own cars. They make fewer and fewer decisions. Their patience has made them seem like cowards, but that is not at all what they want to project. Metamodern men have the ability to lead, listen and care. Listening to others and failing to act or react has led to perceived vulnerability that metamodern men must now overcome. Now is the time for the spread of and deliberate return to positive masculinity.

Most masculine traits are undeniably positive. The negativity is spread by a few, who happen to speak loudly and use words such as “toxic” to garner attention. Masculinity is bringing men back into metamodernism for the sake of strengthening the Metamodern Era. According to YouTube channel, Stacy King, “Men are builders. Men are protectors. Men are fathers. Men are first responders. Men are inventors. Men are creators. Men are risk takers. Men are resourceful. Men are compassionate. Men are problem solvers. Men are courageous.” Metamodern men can be married, single, divorced, gay, straight, black, white, bald, blind, fat, skinny, old, or young. They only need to be positive in their personal expression of masculinity and to challenge the spread of negative conversation that pretends to describe masculinity.

It takes “guts” to be a metamodern man, so says David Deida, author of *The Way of The Superior Man*. Deida is an independent researcher who graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the

University of Florida in 1982. As contentious and almost chauvinistic as the title sounds, it is actually an eye-opening book promoted as a “Spiritual Guide to Mastering the Challenges of Women, Work, and Sexual Desire,” which it is. Deida writes about the complicated relationships between men and women. He often reiterates much of what metamodern men constantly acknowledge, that “women have sprung ahead of men” (35) in our culture. Women have grown faster than men, in the twenty-first century and are “now the superior sex, socially,” Deida says.

Metamodern men are comfortable with and willing to safely admit that “women have become smarter than men” (Deida 58). Men have subtly observed the shift. Metamodern men realize that their competition is other men, not women. Middle-age men have been in competition with their male peers while many women have considered themselves to be in competition with middle-age men. Masculinity isn’t macho, or mean, or extreme. It is a set of qualities associated with being a man. It is not toxic. Masculinity lends itself to rooting for the feminine while trying to out-play our masculine rivals.

Metamodern men echo the ideas of Deida, especially in how his work details the deep need for men to step it up and take ownership of their lives. It should be personal for metamodern men, and absolutely not at the cost of others but to the benefit of others. Masculinity is created biologically and defined socially. It is up to metamodern men to help clarify how society is choosing to define metamodern masculinity. Metamodern men have empathy, along with assertiveness and honor. They are unselfish, even when their actions sometimes seem unnecessary. Metamodern men are protective and project positivity.

Being masculine has little to do with toxicity, in the same way it has little to do with height. Masculine men are not always dangerous and they are not always tall. Metamodern masculinity is expanding and redefining traditional assumptions of what masculinity is. As Joel Stein, author of *Man Made: A Stupid Quest for Masculinity* said: “I’m not ashamed of being a man. We are in many ways the sum of our actions” and those actions are often risky but rarely toxic.

We live in this fascinating, often confusing, era of post-election stress “surrounded by a culture of toxic masculinity today, and that culture is stifling” (Nair 1). I don’t agree with that generalization. The metamodern man has experience and wisdom to share. It is not toxic. Masculine values should not be kept to a whisper. Whispers are harmful. Men have been “conditioned to suppress our fears and project our confidence as men” (Nair 1) but metamodern

men live with integrity. We decide what feels right, and we do it, and we accept the consequences of our actions. The core of the metamodern man is nobility, not toxic masculinity. Anything can be toxic, if ignored or left un-nurtured. Men can harness their masculinity with humility. I believe in humility and that is spreading. Toxic men are not metamodern men, the same way that toxic feminists are not truly feminists. There will always be those individuals that cannot seem to move forward and learn from their mistakes, men and women alike.

The word “toxic” spread like wild-fire over social media in 2017. The digital age is the pillar of metamodernism and it can be both good and bad at the same time. This is a dynamic culture of change. It does not need to be an evil era of blame. Mohit Nair writes, “Our children must be taught to actively take a stand for justice and to be critically mindful of the passive ways in which they may be promoting a culture of toxic masculinity” (1). That promotes fear and no end result. There is no action taken. Metamodern men are thoughtful and ready to respond. We teach our children the good, the bad, and the ugly – all of it.

Many metamodern men, like myself, are fathers. Our most important role is to pass on and accentuate the positive in masculinity to our children. We need to teach them honesty and accountability. The first book that I read, in trying to determine my specific topic in the summer of 2016, was Michael Moore’s *Stupid White Men*. Despite what Moore depicts, a strong case can be made for middle-aged white males who are embracing the metamodern shift in masculinity. Men are not always to blame. And white men blaming white men for society’s ills doesn’t give the accusations validity. It does, however, sell books.

Men of any and all ethnicities can be considered metamodern men. It only need be about qualities, character, and actions. In a *New York Times* article from 2017, entitled “I’m a White Man. Hear Me Out,” Frank Bruni writes, “Race, gender, sexual orientation, class: All of this informs – and very often warps – how we see the world” (Bruni 2). It is consideration and character that matter. Metamodern men are “aware of systematic injustice and inequality” (Bruni 3). We promote diversity and understanding, yet we are sometimes ignored by a movement “that appraises the packaging more than it does the content. It ignores the complexity of people. It’s reductive” (Bruni 4).

Metamodern men do not consider women to be the competition, generally. We seek competition from other men. We love, respect and need women. Occasional competition is

unavoidable but not intended. The masculinity drift has become inconsistent and metamodern men are getting frustrated, trying to understand the expectations and role of men in society. Can we really be the heroes and the villains? Metamodern men are constantly trying to be the heroes while taking heavy fire, as if we are the villains. We are not victims, but we are not villains either.

Honesty is the stability of masculinity, which is strictly non-toxic. Everyone appreciates authenticity. It is at the core of the metamodern man. Being truthful is the most important part of being a relevant participant in metamodernism. It is, after all, the “New Sincerity.” In place of honesty, however, there is often confusion and frustration. Women are angry with men and men are tired of taking the blame. The metamodern man is not to blame. Masculinity is evolving, not destroying our culture. The good far outweighs the bad.

Throughout my thesis writing and my research process, I am often asked, “So who do you consider to be the best example of a metamodern man?” It is important to provide thoughtful examples, in order to better define metamodern masculinity. Common popular examples I have considered are: George Clooney, Dwayne Johnson, Jared Leto, Jerry Seinfeld, Common, Derek Jeter, Keanu Reeves, Denzel Washington, and Joe Rogan.

Clooney was born in 1961 but didn’t become famous until well into his thirties. He was persistent and confident in his pursuit of making it as an actor. Clooney now exudes masculinity in his role as a husband and father, and as a generous humanitarian. Dwayne Johnson, known as “The Rock,” is an entertainer known for his activism and charity work. The Rock was the world’s highest paid actor in 2016 as well as one of *Time*’s 100 most influential people, that same year. Jared Leto is a musician and actor who is known for his activism and artistic abilities. Jerry Seinfeld is an actor/comedian who just started his own Netflix series at age 63 and maintains a private family life. Common is a hip-hop artist, actor and poet from Chicago. Derek Jeter is a Hall of Fame baseball player and entrepreneur. Keanu Reeves is a stylish actor and musician that gives generously to charity. Denzel Washington is a former athlete, Tony and Academy Award winning actor, and father of four. Joe Rogan is an athlete, actor, comedian, and popular pod-cast host. Any one of these examples is acceptable a representation of metamodern masculinity.

As 2018 dawned, I firmly established my answer to the query about who best represents masculine metamodernity. It’s not an actor, activist, or athlete. The most tangible example I can give, is to share the story and belief system of entrepreneur, Gary Vaynerchuk. Gary Vee (as he is

known) was born in the then Soviet Union in 1975. His family immigrated to the United States when he was six. Vaynerchuk was keen on hard work, communication, and the concept of supply and demand. As a teenager, he made thousands of dollars selling baseball cards. As a young man, he went to work in his father's liquor store. He became a self-made wine expert. As a college student, he embraced the information super-highway and started *WineLibrary.com*. When the metamodern began to encapsulate our culture by way of the internet, Vaynerchuk grew his family's wine business into a \$60 million empire. After he graduated from college he established one of the first entrepreneurial web channels and started a motivational YouTube channel. He is now worth over \$160 million dollars. He is a success story; someone who changed with the culture and embraced the metamodern. Vaynerchuk also keeps his private life private. A metamodern man makes a great dad, putting himself out in front, if only so that he may protect and provide for them in a way that works best for the entire family.

Part of the emerging positivity in this metamodern masculinity drift is the impact that honest middle-aged men have on the influential youth of America. Metamodern men, like Vaynerchuk, make a point to mention accountability and taking ownership of our actions and comments. It is imperative to be honest. He projects positivity with practicality. Metamodern men always value time above money. These are the traits of metamodern masculinity. We all die, so as Vaynerchuk often says in his podcast: "Just be a good dude."

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

“Amid the Weinstein culture shift, what can good men do?”

- Jessica Valenti

The metamodern man defines strength as “having character and integrity above physical and financial dominance” (Shriver Media). Metamodern men must set a better example than the one given to them for the next generation of men. Today’s man “knows who he is not but admits he is still evolving to define who he is” (Shriver Media). Metamodern men will remain confident and wait out the “Weinstein culture shift” (Valenti 1) ushered in by the postmodernist patriarchy. Men will continue to take fire as Weinstein, et al. are removed from the zeitgeist. In the meantime, metamodern men must continue to make adjustments and confront the confusion and negativity in our post-election America. The frustration affects everyone. Males typically, but not limited to, born between 1960 -1990 are the identifiable leaders of this masculine transition from postmodern politics to metamodern behavior. Metamodern men must radiate composure and move forward. It is up to these men, myself included, to promote honesty and positive masculinity.

Metamodern men want to be present for their kids, but that does not mean that they want to be stay-at-home dads. They want the very best for their children and they naturally support and assist them as their primary male role model. I wonder what the future holds for my two sons, ages fifteen and six. Will they have the same opportunities that I had? Will they be given the same treatment as my daughter? Similarly, I contemplate my legacy as a metamodern man. I anticipate my children’s questions and frustrations and I will be present. So as I surf the masculinity drift, I will remain positive and ride the current wave of toxicity until the negativity is under water. It is my metamodern obligation to stay focused and be comfortably and naturally masculine.

The final article that I read for my thesis project is entitled: “Make 2018 Your Midlife Reinvention Year.” I found the piece on a website that’s title sums up what metamodern men are honestly trying to put into words; it is called “The Good Men Project.” The site offers insight into the “Conversations that no one else is having.” It is a place where men can share their experiences and struggles, for the betterment of men who want to be better. I truly enjoy the tone and partisanship of the site and its articles. The basis of the information presented is that men and women need each other. Metamodern men are not in competition with women. We are in competition with ourselves, and occasionally with other men, but very rarely are we motivated to usurp a female. Men should be supporting women and men, even in competition. Metamodern women should be doing likewise. As Jane Galvin Lewis famously said, “You don’t have to be anti-man to be pro-woman.” It is a valuable discussion for men and women, to consider how metamodern men want to be, simply put, good men.

What can good men do? The air in our zeitgeist is toxic and male-bashing is prevalent. Metamodern men are done waiting for the dust to settle. The tipping point is now, 2018. Many, many men are motivated to act and to do so responsibly and respectfully. The culture shift has been a difficult transition for everyone, but the outcome is worth it if the struggle is real. It is time to “stop focusing on dumb shit. Don’t be afraid to break things. Don’t be romantic. Don’t aim for perfect. And whatever you do, keep moving” (Vaynerchuk). Masculinity is back.

If you are a metamodern man, it is important to recognize your value and influence. You are your most relevant right now, in the Metamodern Era. Simplify your life and be heard. Be honest with others and with yourself. Put down the video games and iPhones. Remember that actions speak louder than words. Show your positive masculinity and set an example for the next generation, in order to affect what may come next. Another transition is inevitable and right around

the corner. A metamodern man wants to make his life better so that he can make the lives of others considerably better. That is how I define positive masculinity; men helping themselves and then helping everyone else.

I have been dragging my feet for twenty years, telling myself that my work experience alone is enough for career advancement. I have been hiding, stalled out by postmodern pessimism. Being a hard worker is not good enough to garner respect from your colleagues, employer, and family. Being a good person who assumes responsibility and appreciates competition is what leads to success. Metamodern men are having a reawakening and slowly finding it in themselves to re-embrace their masculinity.

It is metamodernly important to “be a good dude,” but in order to have a dynamic positively-impactful career and family life, men must bolster their physical and mental well-being. It is necessary to make adjustments and set goals. It is essential to be active, physically and mentally. Falling down is part of the plan. Getting up and rebooting is the life-blood of metamodernism. “Positivity with practicality is a wonderful formula” (Gary Vee) for the metamodern man.

I was an example of a man who had stalled. However, this thesis project has awakened my natural masculine tendencies to achieve. Complacency is not a component of the metamodern man. I have been quietly standing by as my wife and younger sister have proudly achieved Masters’ degrees. I humbly supported them both. Despite my middle-age and in spite of my three wonderful children, my time is right now. As Gary Vaynerchuk recently posted on his Instagram account: “We’re living through the greatest era to alive ever. Yes, there’s stuff. There’s always stuff. But when you take control of your at-bat. When you own it. That’s when it starts happening.” I will

graduate this year with my Masters' degree. More importantly, I will proudly promote positive masculinity and reinvent myself because I am a **Metamodern Man**.

“On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work.” - NA

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## Afterword

Thoughtful consideration and the majority of the research for my thesis project was completed prior to the news of the Hollywood sexual misconduct cultural reckoning and subsequent movements. My thesis topic, born from a borderline midlife masculinity crisis, just coincidentally coincided with the #metoo movement, but in no way is it a response to it. Since the sexual misconduct news flooded media outlets, I have limited my personal use of social media. I did so in fairness to my thought-process surrounding this project. I did not want to read Bette Midler's tweets ("All men are worthless") or hear about "Men Going Their Own Way" (MGTOW). Both extremes are counterproductive to metamodernity; its positivity and its benefits. Metamodern men do not allow themselves to get overwhelmed with politics or distracted by celebrity gossip. Focusing on the sincerity of metamodern masculinity identity is about being grounded in work, intimacy, and parenting. I am forever attached to this and grateful for the process. My goal here was to explore the identity of **The Metamodern Man**. Mission accomplished.