Beyond the Centerfold: Masculinity, Technology, and Culture in Playboy's Multimedia Empire, 1953-1972

by

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DEDICATION

For June Christy, without whom I would have never stumbled into *Playboy*’s *Penthouse*.

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This dissertation marks the culmination of a 21-year-long journey along the path of higher education. Putting myself through college was not easy, and, due purely to financial reasons, it took me eight years to earn my bachelor's degree. I worked full-time and sometimes more than full-time and occasionally had to take time off when I couldn't afford tuition. There were many points along the way where I could not imagine going on to graduate school even though it was something that I had wanted to do for as long as I can remember. I would like to thank Scott Thompson, my undergraduate social theory professor, for encouraging me to go to graduate school at one of those low points along the way. As much as I would like to take credit for doing it all myself and as lonely as this journey sometimes seemed, the truth is that there are countless people who offered encouragement, advice, friendship, food, booze, and, occasionally money, along the way. I apologize for anyone I inadvertently left off of this list; just know that if you worked with me, hung out with me, or engaged me in an academic discussion, I am grateful for your part in this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This project utilizes Playboy as a case study for understanding changes in the configurations of white, middle class masculinity in the United States after World War II and draws attention to the role of media and entertainment technologies in circulating and defining these masculinities. More than a girlie magazine, Playboy in its most prosperous years, 1953-1972, offers multiple sites—the magazine, two television series, and the chain of Playboy Clubs—in which relationships of gender, class, race, and taste are contested. The most significant contribution of this project is its focus on the sonic dimensions of the Playboy lifestyle and its demonstration of the ways in which popular music and sound technologies were utilized to interpellate Playboy men as socially conscious citizens and to circulate gendered discourses concerning taste and mass culture.

This project relies on the analysis of over 228 issues of *Playboy* plus the analysis of women's, home, and other magazines; archival documents; episodes of *Playboy's Penthouse* and *Playboy After Dark*; and other primary and secondary sources. I take a grounded theory approach to my analysis, utilizing the constant comparative method to draw out and make connections between themes as they emerge. This approach enabled me to develop a deep understanding of the image Playboy created for itself and how this image is related to other white middle class masculinities, femininity, heterosexuality, notions of taste, consumer goods, leisure competence, and socioeconomic class.

The chapters are arranged thematically and examine and historically situate Playboy masculinity, the role of architecture and design in the Playboy lifestyle, the gendering of home

entertainment technologies, and the role of popular music in reinforcing Playboy masculinity and establishing the Playboy man as socially conscious. Through this analysis, I reveal Playboy's interventions into mid-twentieth century debates about mass culture, demonstrating how *Playboy* distanced itself from the low culture of a girlie magazine by arguing that women and undesirable men had the lowest tastes. I argue against the idea that Playboy merely masculinized consumption and demonstrate Playboy's advocacy for consumption as a performative act that produces gender and other aspects of one's social location.

INTRODUCTION

Redefining Masculinity: Taste as Gender Performance

> *I believe that tens of thousands of readers have looked at* Playboy *for thirty years and never seen it. They have not, forgive me, seen the forest for the tease.*
> —Ray Bradbury, *The Art of Playboy*, 1985[1]

Over sixty years have passed since *Playboy* magazine and its founder, Hugh Hefner, first entered American popular culture. Since its founding in late 1953, *Playboy* has grown from a girlie magazine whose first three issues were assembled on Hefner's kitchen table into a global lifestyle brand, and its media output has reached millions.[2] Although what it symbolizes has changed over time, the company's tuxedoed rabbit logo is iconic, instantly recognizable even in markets, such as China, that were established without the magazine. In the popular imagination, the place of Playboy Enterprises and the Playboy lifestyle spans geography as well as generations. Despite the fact that the magazine's circulation has been declining since its peak in

[1] Ray Bradbury, *The Art of Playboy* (New York: A. Van Der Marck, 1985), 6.

[2] When the word "Playboy" appears italicized, I am referring specifically to the magazine. When it is not italicized, it refers to either the organization as a whole or to the philosophy promoted through and across the organization's various entertainment ventures. Because the organization has undergone name changes based on transitions in private and public holding and because of the number of subdivisions that have existed throughout its history, I have decided to use Playboy as an umbrella term in order to minimize confusion and to reflect its place in the popular imagination; i.e., H. M. H. Publishing, the original name of the magazine's parent company, does not have the same cultural cachet as does the moniker Playboy.

1972, awareness of the brand, its founder, and life in the Playboy Mansions has not waned.[3] The popularity of reality series *The Girls Next Door* (2005-2010) and music videos shot at Playboy Mansion West by bands ranging from nerdy alt-rockers Weezer to Cuban-American rapper Pitbull are just a few examples of how the lore and lure of Playboy Mansion life have been maintained and perpetuated in media produced and consumed by people who were born after the magazine's heyday.[4]

While such examples highlight the central role that the Mansions have played in sustaining Playboy's place in popular culture, they also exaggerate the role of the Mansion in the Playboy lifestyle and allow the attendant fantasies of sex and luxury to overshadow the other precepts on which *Playboy* and its philosophy were founded. As the epigraph to this chapter indicates, this project is premised on the claim that the sexual aspects of Playboy obscure the rest of the identity work at stake in Playboy's representations of itself, its taste culture, and its audience. More than a girlie magazine, Playboy from the 1950s through the early 1970s offers multiple sites—the magazine, two television series, and the chain of Playboy Clubs—in which relationships of gender, class, race, and taste are contested. From its first issue, *Playboy*

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[3] The original Playboy Mansion, located in Chicago, was purchased in December 1959 and sold in 1974, and Playboy Mansion West, located in Los Angeles, was purchased in February 1971 and, as of this writing, is currently for sale. Hugh M. Hefner, introduction to *Inside the Playboy Mansion*, by Gretchen Edgren (Santa Monica, CA: General Publishing Group, Inc., 1998), 11; Candace Taylor, "Playboy Mansion Sale is Next Step in Business Transformation: Exclusive Photos," *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 11, 2016, http://www.wsj.com/articles/playboy-mansion-sale-is-next-step-in-business-transformation-exclusive-photos-1452537711; Thomas Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise: The Playboy Vision of America* (New York: Times Books, 1978), 252.

[4] *The Girls Next Door* was an E! network reality series focused on Hefner's three girlfriends at the time and their lives in Playboy Mansion West. Pitbull ft. G. R. L., "Wild, Wild Love," filmed 2014, official music video, 3:57, http://www.vevo.com/watch/pitbull/wild-wild-love/USRV81400089; Weezer, "Beverly Hills," filmed 2005, official music video, 4:02, http://www.vevo.com/watch/weezer/beverly-hills/USIV20500181.

delineates a specifically masculine taste culture imbued with a philosophy of urbanism that seeks to set the Playboy man apart from the suburban breadwinner, men with bad taste, and women.

Project Overview

First and foremost, this project utilizes Playboy as a case study for understanding changes in the configurations of white, middle class masculinity in the United States after World War II and draws attention to the role of media and entertainment technologies in circulating and defining these masculinities. It is also concerned with the ways in which discourses of gender and sexuality shape our understanding of music, media, technology, and domestic space and vice versa. These discourses are strongly connected to my questions regarding how Playboy's philosophy and content fits within larger debates over mass culture and the ways in which these debates are raced, classed, and gendered. Finally, this project is concerned not with how Playboy promotes the process of masculinizing consumption; rather, it is concerned instead with the ways in which Playboy demonstrates an understanding of consumption as a performative act, as a means of producing one's gender and other aspects of one's social location.

This project began after a YouTube video of June Christy, former vocalist for the Stan Kenton Orchestra, performing the song "Something Cool" at the request of Hugh Hefner piqued my curiosity. The video was set in an intimate cocktail party, and Christy, after making her way from the bar to the piano bench, performed most of the song sitting next to the pianist as guests dressed in tuxedoes and cocktail dresses listened attentively. Until then, I had no idea that Hefner had had a television show in the 1950s, and its formal feel and musical performances intrigued me. I began searching for information about the show—*Playboy's Penthouse*, which aired in syndication from 1959-1961. I read the two scholarly articles I could find that discussed the series at all, and I headed to the Buhr Shelving Facility and began combing through every

issue of *Playboy* from the 1950s and 1960s that the University of Michigan held, looking for anything and everything that had to do with music. As I started reading other sources about Playboy, I noticed that almost everyone mentioned the centrality of jazz to the Playboy lifestyle, but despite consensus on this matter, for some reason, jazz remained only a passing mention.

Music is how I came to Playboy as a topic, and while many other scholars and commentators pay passing mention to music in relation to Playboy, my emphasis in this dissertation on the sonic dimensions of the Playboy lifestyle highlights the previously underappreciated centrality of music appreciation to Playboy's reconfiguration of midcentury masculinity. Through analyzing record reviews, annual music polls, reviews of and ads for hi-fi gear, cartoons, profiles of and interviews with musicians, two musical variety television shows, and the entertainment circuit provided by the chain of Playboy Clubs, I came to understand Playboy's promotion of jazz as a matter of taste with far-reaching social ramifications. Playboy's relationship to popular music undergirds the rest of the dissertation. For example, changing musical tastes as rock gained cultural accreditation in the late 1960s illuminate relationships between gender and taste. This can be seen in the way Playboy promotes its tastes as masculine by distancing them from a low-feminine other as exemplified by a response to a letter to the editor that dismisses the Beatles as the faddish obsession of teenage girls.

Musical taste also illuminates the relationship between the competing masculinities of Playboy and the counterculture. This is played out both in the annual music reviews, which demonstrate a widening gap between the tastes of Playboy's readers and the official taste culture of Playboy as represented by the Playboy All-Stars' choices of poll winners, and through the marking of rock performances as peripheral to the Playboy lifestyle through their relegation to marginal spaces on the set of *Playboy After Dark* (1968-1970)—the second Hefner-hosted

musical variety show.

I also demonstrate that popular music was a crucial means through which Playboy addressed its audience as socially conscious citizens, utilizing music to address issues of integration and civil rights. Placing Playboy within the context of the popular music press, I show that Playboy circulated the same discourses surrounding the relationship between jazz and rock as did traditional exemplars of the popular music press, such as *Down Beat*. Due to Playboy's mass circulation, I argue that *Playboy* has been a long-overlooked source of popular music discourse and should be considered a part of the popular music press. Finally, *Playboy* utilizes hi-fi to instruct its readers in the development of leisure competence and link its masculinity to technical mastery; as such, hi-fi is defined in contradistinction to entertainment furniture, such as tabletop phonographs and television sets, which require no technical knowledge to use and are associated with women and undesirable men. The Playboy man's never-ending quest for sonic satisfaction links his hi-fi consumption to his heterosexuality and success at seduction. At the same time, the magazine's annual hi-fi reviews reinforce that the Playboy lifestyle is aspirational yet always at least partially attainable and indicate that there is room for social mobility both into and within the Playboy lifestyle.

The following chapters are arranged thematically and aim to provide analysis of several major facets of Playboy subjectivity, moving from its more abstract to its more concrete aspects. Chapter 1 historically situates Playboy masculinity by examining the prevailing domestic ideology of the Cold War and other masculine subject positions open to white, middle class men at the time, such as those offered by the dominant role of the breadwinner and the oppositional masculinities exemplified first by the Beats and then by the counterculture. This chapter builds on the work of Barbara Ehrenreich, who pointed out in her 1983 book, *The Hearts of Men*, that

the masculinity of the counterculture posed the same threat to Playboy masculinity as had the Beats before them.[5] Chapter 2 delves deeper into the workings of Playboy masculinity, exploring in greater detail the ways in which Playboy defined the ideal Playboy man over and against other mid-century white masculinities as well as against women and cultural objects deemed feminine. This chapter lays much of the groundwork for those that follow by highlighting Playboy as a taste culture with far-reaching social ramifications, beginning an exploration of Playboy's intervention into debates over mass culture, and introducing the role of leisure competence in defining Playboy masculinity.

In chapter 3, I re-examine the place of the bachelor pad in Playboy's taste culture. Prior analyses of domestic space in *Playboy* have almost exclusively focused on the fantasy blueprints printed in the magazine along with coverage of the Playboy Mansions. In addition to looking at these articles, I conduct a thorough analysis of the magazine's "A Playboy Pad" articles, which feature actual bachelors' pads. Despite Playboy's insistence that it is aimed at the city-bred male, its repeated distancing of its philosophy from the values it associates with the suburban domestic ideal, and the tendency in the popular imagination to associate bachelor pads with penthouse apartments, the Playboy Pads are more often than not houses rather than apartments and are often located in non-urban spaces. This suggests that Playboy's philosophy of urbanism is not limited to urban spaces and helps to break down the strict urban-suburban dichotomy that is upheld by both Playboy and many previous scholars. I also historically and culturally situate the magazine's coverage of architecture and interior design through a comparison to similar coverage appearing in contemporaneous women's and home magazines, which demonstrates the similarities between Playboy Pads and more typical suburban family homes and links Playboy

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[5] Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1983).

masculinity to the flexible use of and mastery over domestic space. Following Beatriz Colomina, I argue that architecture and design may be read like any other media text and explore the intertextual relationships among Playboy's institutional-domestic spaces to demonstrate the ways in which these relationships reinforce the values signified by domestic space and interior design within the Playboy lifestyle.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on home entertainment through examining the treatment of entertainment technologies, such as hi-fi and television, and musical tastes, respectively. Through these chapters, I consider how Playboy both circulated and encouraged debates over mass culture in part through linking hi-fi to sex and upward mobility while defining television as its low-feminine other. Through conducting a thorough analysis of *Playboy*'s television-related content, including cartoons, articles, reviews, and centerfolds, I demonstrate that its critique of television was a key means through which it intervened in debates over mass culture, utilizing its denigration of television content to elevate its own status by suggesting that, no matter what one's critique of the magazine might be, television's content was more often than not less sophisticated and in poorer taste than *Playboy*'s content. Finally, chapter 6 examines the role of popular music in the Playboy lifestyle. Playboy's handling of the rise of rock and counterculture masculinity demonstrates the ways in which Playboy struggles to maintain its connection to youth, masculinity, and consumption and how the rock counterculture replaces Playboy as the figurehead for this alliance in the late 1960s. Additionally, its embrace and promotion of jazz and jazz musicians links Playboy masculinity to progressive racial politics and contemporary discussions of race and virtuosity in ways that make it difficult to dismiss Playboy's musical tastes.

The Significance of Playboy, 1953-1972

It is neither possible nor necessary for the scope of this project to engage with the entirety of Playboy's history, which now spans over six decades. The organization exerted its greatest influence and reached the peak of its cultural significance during the first two decades following World War II. In the early 1970s, threatened by competition from the more sexually explicit *Penthouse*, it is generally agreed that *Playboy* lost sight of its brand promise, and its decline into a soft-core adult magazine overshadowed its previous claims to offer sophisticated entertainment for men. In its first two decades, however, Playboy was and continues to be regarded as a key index through which changes in postwar America were being negotiated on the terrain of the media and popular culture.

The purpose of this project is to explore Playboy as a phenomenon that both reflected and provided guidance to a culture and society that were undergoing numerous transitions in the aftermath of World War II. It was the brainchild of a man who was dissatisfied with the social expectations that encouraged him and other men to marry, start a family, and embrace the role of breadwinner while still in their early twenties and who found little to relate to when it came to entertainment that appealed to men with his interests and aspirations. Playboy grew from a magazine that relied on calendar pin-ups and literature in the public domain to fill the pages of its early issues and became an influential multimedia empire that provided multiple sites wherein white, middle class masculinities were contested. Although the Playmate of the Month spreads remained a key part of the magazine's appeal and it continued to publish "ribald classics" from the public domain, Playboy's delineation of its taste culture throughout the mid-twentieth century offers twenty-first century readers insight into the ways in which taste and anxieties over widening access to a consumer- and leisure-oriented society were gendered, raced, and classed. In addition to elaborating upon how Playboy contended with changing gender, sexual, and race

relations, this project highlights how these issues could also be understood through examining changing musical tastes throughout the 1960s. As previous scholars have pointed out, these transitions in conceptualizations of taste may be understood as symptomatic of the transition from modernity to postmodernity, and Playboy offers an important site for examining the tensions as these transitions took place.

Playboy perpetuates what Andreas Huyssen calls the notion of "mass culture as woman." Huyssen argues that the Industrial Revolution gave rise not only to the notions of the masses and mass culture; he also points out that these notions were gendered feminine while high culture was regarded as a male preserve. Although in the mid-twentieth century, we begin to see the transition from the modernist distinctions that Huyssen describes to the collapse of these distinctions in postmodernity as described by Frederic Jameson, Playboy's configuration of low and high tastes is indicative of the gendered associations that remained attached to cultural forms even as scholars and critics dispensed with the conceit of the masses. While Huyssen argues that the Frankfurt School and cultural theorists who followed abandoned the notion of mass culture and the explicit gendering of mass culture as feminine, he also points out that this gender dynamic remains underneath the surface of much cultural criticism.[6] Indeed, this is a topic which has continued to be particularly evident in the works of popular music scholars, such as Diane Railton, Simon Frith, Angela McRobbie, and others, who have pointed out the ways in which rock music has been historically gendered masculine over and against the low-feminine

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[6] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986): 44, 47-49.

other of pop music.[7] In terms of popular music, Playboy occupies an interesting place in the debates over mass culture as it sees rock as both masculine and a threat to Playboy masculinity while participating in the elevation of jazz to an art music and thereby linking its own musical tastes to the lingering notions of masculinity associated with high culture. However, as we will see, Playboy's linkage of gender to cultural forms is not limited to the realm of popular music.

Jameson argues that postmodernisms are marked by "the rise of aesthetic populism" as evidenced by:

> the effacement in them of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or consumer culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories and contents of that very Culture Industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern, from Leavis and the American New Criticism all the way to Adorno and the Frankfurt School.[8]

One of the aspects that makes Playboy's taste culture so interesting is its embrace of popular culture and the products of the culture industries even while clinging to distinctions between high and low culture. For cultural critics like Dwight MacDonald, Playboy would be a prime example of everything wrong with what he terms "Midcult," which he describes as "a peculiar hybrid" of mass culture and high culture. For MacDonald, middlebrow culture poses a threat to both high and mass culture by attempting to have it both ways. As he argues, Midcult "pretends to respect the standards of High Culture while in fact it waters them down and vulgarizes them."[9] In their

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[7] See Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality," in *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*, eds. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Routledge, 1991): 371-389; and Diane Railton, "The Gendered Carnival of Pop," *Popular Music* 20, no. 3 (2001): 321-331.

[8] Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review*, no. 146 (July-August 1984): 54-55.

[9] Dwight MacDonald, "Masscult and Midcult: II," *Partisan Review* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1960): 592-595.

proud embrace of Playboy's upper middlebrow status, *Playboy*'s editors would more likely characterize their media output as MacDonald characterizes *The New Yorker*; i.e., as "a Midcult magazine but one with a difference." MacDonald describes this difference as follows: "The formula reflects the tastes of the editors and not their fear of the readers. And, because it is more personally edited, there are more extra-formula happy accidents than one finds in its Midcult brethren."[10] The beliefs that editors should create for themselves and lead, rather than react to, their readers are repeatedly addressed in speeches given by *Playboy*'s Associate Publisher A. C. Spectorsky to others in the magazine industry. As my analysis makes clear, however, a key part of this difference is that Playboy marks some forms of popular culture (e.g., most television content) as lower than others and recuperates the gendered dimensions of these distinctions by explicitly linking their taste culture to masculinity.

Due to its long history and numerous brand extensions, narrowing the scope of the project poses a particular challenge. In addition to addressing social and cultural transitions, the success of *Playboy* began to wane after its first two decades, making the years between 1953 and 1972 crucial for understanding Playboy's relationship to the zeitgeist. During this time period, the country experienced postwar prosperity, major shifts in population numbers and locations, the civil rights movement, women's rights movement, increased sexual permissiveness, the war in Vietnam, student protests, and other social and cultural upheavals. Additionally, major changes to the management of Playboy occurred in late 1971 and early 1972. On November 12, 1971, Playboy went public, which meant that a company that had thrived, and also sometimes failed, by following the whims of its founder now had stockholders to which it was beholden. Then, on January 17, 1972, Spectorsky succumbed to a stroke. These changes coupled with the

[10] Ibid., 624.

ensuing Pubic Wars—the pressure to publish more explicit nudes brought about by competition from *Penthouse*'s U.S. release in 1969—altered the reception and meaning of *Playboy*.[11] For these reasons, my research ends after 1972 under the contention that *Playboy* after this time is not the same cultural object that it was in its first 19 years of publication.

Sources and Methods

While this project engages with, critiques, and synthesizes previous scholarship on Playboy and utilizes the company and its entertainment ventures as a case study, it is not simply about Playboy. Likewise, although this project is based heavily on the textual analysis of various magazines, it is also about more than print media. Rather, this project takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding how different types of media work together to promote, critique, and disseminate social and cultural discourse. My methods include archival research and the textual and discursive analysis of magazines; articles in the trade and popular press; biographies, autobiographies, and book-length exposés about Hefner and his organization; speeches, article clippings, and other materials from the papers of Associate Publisher A. C. Spectorsky; and episodes of Playboy-produced television shows as well as video recorded interviews with Hefner from 1956, 2002, and 2006. This project's theoretical underpinnings derive from myriad disciplinary perspectives including history; sociology; gender studies; and feminist media, cultural, sound, and popular music studies. While I draw on these perspectives to frame my sensitizing concepts and subsequent analysis, I ultimately take a grounded theory approach to this project, allowing the texts I examine to lead me to their main concerns and methods of coping with them.

This project is based on the discursive analysis of over 228 issues of *Playboy*, including

[11] "A. C. Spectorsky, 61, Dies"; Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 300-302; Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 248.

every issue published from December 1953-December 1972. Within *Playboy*, my sampling strategy was broad yet purposive. I read and analyzed every article pertaining to my project's main topics, i.e., masculinity, domestic space, hi-fi, television, popular music, and civil rights. I also read every cartoon published in *Playboy* during its first 19 years, focusing my analysis on 105 cartoons related to television or video technologies and 26 cartoons related to hi-fi or its components. Although a comprehensive analysis of advertising in the magazine falls outside the scope of this project, I did analyze the "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" campaign; every ad pertaining to the organization's television series, *Playboy's Penthouse* and *Playboy After Dark*; the "Playboy Club News" advertising campaign; and the ads pertaining to audio recording and playback technologies within 38 issues of the magazine, 2 randomly chosen issues for each of the 19 years under investigation. Although I did not systematically sample them, letters to the editor were used to gauge audience response (or, at least, *Playboy*'s representation of it) to changes in the magazine or coverage of topics that fell outside of the Playboy taste culture. Even though it is impossible to know how many of readers' letters to *Playboy* were composites or complete fabrications or in what ways they were edited, they still provide valuable information about the way Playboy chose to envision and present itself as a corporation and a lifestyle. Finally, while my research is premised on the notion that we need to move our understanding of Playboy beyond the centerfold, I also recognize that these spreads contribute more work to the shaping of Playboy subjectivity than simply reinforcing the Playboy man's heterosexuality. Therefore, I do not ignore *Playboy*'s sexual content; rather, I attempt to show that the values the Playmate of the Month features communicate often reinforce less explicitly sexual aspects of the Playboy taste culture.

These materials, as well as the sources I examined outside of *Playboy*, were analyzed

using the constant comparative method, uncovering themes within each article, ad, cartoon, or image and then comparing the overall themes that emerged within each topic. This broad analysis indicates the ways in which various types of editorial content worked together to define Playboy masculinity in relation to other masculinities, femininity, class, taste, sexuality, race, geography, architecture and design, and media and home entertainment. In particular, *Playboy*'s cartoons offer a rich source for examining the relationship between Playboy masculinity and its taste culture by indicating those topics that are and are not considered laughing matters and offering insights into the types of men and women who are deemed either worthy of respect or simply regarded as the butts of jokes. Advertisements for *Playboy's Penthouse* and *Playboy After Dark* give insight into Playboy's taste culture by highlighting some forms of entertainment as more sophisticated than others. Similarly, advertisements for the Playboy Clubs highlight both architectural and entertainment features of the Clubs, linking the Clubs to the larger taste culture expressed in the magazine and on the television series. The "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" campaign contains valuable information about *Playboy*'s actual readers even while projecting an ideal image of these readers back to them. Just as *Playboy*'s cartoons function as more than comic relief, the centerfolds also serve purposes beyond mere titillation. The Playmate of the Month spreads often contain images and text that reinforce discourses concerning competing masculinities or domestic technologies and visually link the bachelor pad and other aspects of Playboy's taste culture to sex.

Although the magazine constitutes the largest portion of source material for this project, my focus extends beyond *Playboy*'s print content. Trade and popular press coverage of *Playboy*, its television shows, and the entertainment circuit provided by the chain of Playboy Clubs serve as a counterpoint to *Playboy*'s claims about its own reception and success. In addition, I

analyzed 14 full episodes and numerous clips of *Playboy's Penthouse* and *Playboy After Dark*; issues of *VIP*, the magazine created exclusively for Playboy Club members; and speeches, article clippings, and other documents in the A. C. Spectorsky collection housed in the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming. Both television series offer insight into Playboy's taste culture, and the latter series, in particular, raises questions of gender, race, and musical taste while demonstrating how these identity markers interact with domestic space. Articles and entertainment calendars in *VIP* offered information about the architecture and interior design of various Playboy Clubs along with insight into changing musical tastes and the types of acts featured on the Playboy Club circuit. Spectorsky's speeches were instrumental to my understanding of Playboy's publishing philosophy and helped contextualize the changes that the magazine underwent in the early 1970s. Finally, numerous non-academic books, including biographies, company profiles, exposés, and fiction, offered background and insight into popular conceptions of Hefner and Playboy and provided a counterpoint to the official corporate image. Although many of the claims presented in these titles are dubious in nature, they nevertheless speak to Playboy as a cultural phenomenon. Articles from women's, home, general interest, and hi-fi magazines from the 1950s and 1960s were mainly utilized to situate *Playboy*'s coverage of hi-fi and domestic space within their larger cultural and historical context. Because many of the hi-fi related articles were written from the perspectives of hi-fi widows and the women's and home magazines focused on designing spaces for use by families, these sources afforded the opportunity to contrast the Playboy lifestyle with the suburban domestic ideal.

Previous research

In the introduction to the December 1953 inaugural issue of *Playboy*, Hefner states that the magazine will not be concerned with affairs of the state. Several previous scholars have used

this to argue that *Playboy* in its earliest years was not political. However, my analysis of over 228 issues of Playboy published from 1953-1972 and the other sources described above reinforces the political ramifications of the immense amount of identity work in which Playboy is engaged from its first issue. While the company and its founder have been generating media and public attention since the 1950s, scholarly attention to the influence of the magazine on American culture and vice versa did not begin in earnest until the mid-1990s. Ehrenreich's analysis of the magazine is a notable and influential exception, and within the past decade, Playboy has become the focus of much scholarly attention. Since 2011, three scholarly books examining various facets of Playboy, from its sexual politics to its relationship to consumer society and architecture, have been published.[12] Additionally, since 2008, a feature-length documentary film and several popular press books about Hefner and Playboy have been released, including the first authorized biography of Hefner, an examination of Playboy as a brand, an exploration of the organization's relationship to popular music, and a six-volume illustrated biography featuring excerpts from Hefner's personal scrapbooks as well as the magazine.[13]

Despite this recent interest in Playboy, many facets of the organization and its media output remain to be explored or reframed. The two most influential scholars to address the cultural impact of Playboy have been Ehrenreich, who situated Playboy masculinity in relation to

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[12] See Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Carrie Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Beatriz (Paul) Preciado, *Pornotopia: An Essay on Playboy's Architecture and Biopolitics* (New York: Zone Books, 2014).

[13] See Patty Farmer and Will Friedwald, *Playboy Swings: How Hugh Hefner and Playboy Changed the Face of Music* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2015); Susan Gunelius, *Building Brand Value the Playboy Way* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); Hefner (ed.), *Hugh Hefner's Playboy*; *Hugh Hefner: Playboy, Activist and Rebel*, directed by Brigitte Berman (Fort Mill, SC: Phase 4 Films, 2010), DVD; Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008).

other mid-twentieth century masculinities, and Bill Osgerby, who has written extensively on the figure of the bachelor, consumption in the Playboy lifestyle, and the depiction of bachelor pads in mid-twentieth century men's magazines. Like other scholars that have followed Ehrenreich and Osgerby, I work to expand upon arguments that they originally laid out.

However, many of the arguments put forth about Playboy, such as its role in masculinizing consumption or the relationship of the bachelor pad to the suburban family home, are well-worn and in need of reconsideration. Such arguments tend to suffer from limited samples, and their conclusions do not hold as strongly when a wider sample and the ways in which the content of the magazine and the company's other media ventures work together to present a particular worldview are taken into consideration. For instance, prior research discussing Playboy and domestic space has focused primarily on Hefner's own living space and the fantasy blueprints published in the magazine. These sources are used to uphold the magazine's projection of its idealized reader as a sophisticated, single, urban man-about-town and to claim that the bachelor pad is the antithesis of the suburban family home. While there is certainly some truth to such claims, they also overlook many of the ways that *Playboy* was conscious of its married, suburban-dwelling readers along with representations of non-urban spaces within the publication. For example, the magazine's features on real bachelor pads depict suburban and rural locations, contradicting the received wisdom that Playboy promotes a strictly urban lifestyle. Paul (née Beatriz) Preciado does examine some of the actual bachelor pads featured in *Playboy* and offers some useful conceptualizations of the role of domestic space in the Playboy lifestyle, but ultimately he hinges his argument on the Playboy Mansion and is concerned with how Playboy's architecture fits into a broader examination of what he calls a pharmocopornographic regime.

A synthesis of previous arguments regarding Playboy's place in American culture may be found in Elizabeth Fraterrigo's 2009 book, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, which expands on many of the themes mentioned by Osgerby, such as the masculinization of consumption. Additionally, she picks up on and furthers the claim that Helen Gurley Brown's "Single Girl" is the counterpart to the Playboy Man, which is an argument that was originally put forward in a 1971 newspaper article by Nicholas Von Hoffman and later mentioned by Osgerby.[14] Carrie Pitzulo's 2011 book, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, focuses on the sexual politics of Playboy throughout the same time period that my project covers. While we touch on some of the same topics, such as womanization, feminism, and the construction of the girl next door image of the Playmates, we do so with different aims and these are not central concerns of my project. She also furthers the idea that the Single Girl is the counterpart to the Playboy man; however, my analysis of *Playboy* and Brown's writing about the Single Girl leads to the conclusion that the Single Girl, whose goals are material gain and eventually marriage, is exactly the type of woman that many of *Playboy*'s articles rail against. Pitzulo argues that Playboy's sexual politics are overwhelmingly progressive and that the magazine offered a new liberatory form of heterosexuality to men and women alike. However, my analysis reveals that arguments related to womanization and women's negative influence on culture as well as the argument that women should serve as complements to men continue to appear in the magazine into the 1970s. The number of recent publications concerning Playboy's cultural impact should be considered evidence of the richness of the source material that Playboy provides for scholars. Although there has been a recent surge in academic interest in this media and cultural

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[14] Nicholas Von Hoffman, "Von Hoffman: Mother Cosmo Speaks," *San Francisco Chronicle Sunday Punch*, Jan. 3, 1971.

phenomenon and many of the themes and topics addressed overlap, the scholars referenced in this project and I have been able to craft varying viewpoints on how gender, sexuality, taste, consumption, and space interact within the Playboy taste culture.

Core Themes

Several overarching concepts have come to frame my analysis of the Playboy phenomenon.

Happy objects

The perspective that unifies my analysis of Playboy is that offered by Sara Ahmed's discussion of happy objects. Although her analyses of happiness are complex, encountering them after I had completed the research for this project reminded me that, reduced to its simplest terms, Playboy's guiding principle concerns the promise of happiness. What the centerfold both points to and obscures is not simply a "flight from commitment;" it is an attempt at the reorientation of happiness away from the family and toward objects that allow for masculine autonomy. In reframing masculinity, Playboy also reframed how happiness was "spoken, lived, practiced."[15]

Ahmed asserts that happiness is a matter of associations—associations between people and objects and those between people who are oriented toward the same objects. She also examines the ways in which pleasure and goodness become attached to objects, arguing that "it is possible that the evocation of an object can be pleasurable even if we have not yet experienced an object as pleasing: this is the power after all of the human imagination as well as the social

[15] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 15.

world to bestow things that have yet to be encountered with an affective life."[16]

Playboy abounds with evocative objects, and it is the pre-existing affective life of things that helps explain how the Playboy lifestyle may be open to those who cannot afford the material goods it puts on display. It is enough to cultivate one's tastes even if they cannot be realized; it is enough to orient oneself toward pleasing objects and others who find these same objects pleasing. Even if a reader did not actually know anyone else who was oriented toward Playboy's happy objects, the magazine's mode of address associated readers with its editorial personality by consistently projecting a "we-all relationship" with its audience. This explains how a man, who on the surface appeared to be conforming to the dominant role of the breadwinner, could change his relationship to masculinity and domestic space through something as seemingly simple as the purchase of the right hi-fi rig. Or, as Spectorsky explained it, "While we are editing our book, and while our readers are reading it, we all feel warm and good and pleased about our affluent, bachelorly, urban existence—whether we're married or not. Our readers are pleased that they don't have to bare their hairy chests, or get up and sit in a freezing duck blind at five in the morning, or go bowling with the gang twice a week, to prove that they are masculine."[17]

Taste cultures

The relationship of happy objects to each other and to those individuals and groups that are oriented toward them can be understood within the notions of taste cultures and taste publics. Although Herbert Gans envisioned *Playboy* as part of a wider upper middlebrow taste culture, as

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[16] Ibid., 27.

[17] Speech, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers," 1969, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection.

a lifestyle brand, Playboy clearly governs its own niche taste culture. Gans defines taste cultures as follows:

> Taste cultures…consist of values, the cultural forms which express these values: music, art, design, literature, drama, comedy, poetry, criticism, news, and the media in which these are expressed—books, magazines, newspapers, records, films and television programs, paintings and sculpture, architecture, and, insofar as ordinary consumer goods also express aesthetic values or functions, furnishings, clothes, appliances, and automobiles as well.[18]

As a media empire with roles in producing and/or distributing magazines, television programs, films, records, jazz festivals, and licensed merchandise, Playboy Enterprises holds a prime position from which to dictate tastes. *Playboy* magazine alone discusses or in other ways provides access for its readers to art, design, literature, drama, comedy, poetry, criticism, news, architecture, and the mass media. Additionally, the magazine focuses on furnishings, clothes, home entertainment technologies, food, automobiles, and leisure pursuits, such as travel, sports, and sex. With an increased focus on politics and social problems throughout and beyond the 1960s, *Playboy* provided its readers with a single location for finding information and guidance on every aspect of its particular taste culture.

By addressing its audience as a taste public, Playboy cultivated an imagined audience into an affective community, orienting its members toward the material and immaterial objects (e.g., values, styles, and aspirations) that "we imagine might lead us to happiness."[19] Playboy's media output repeatedly points to and reinforces an image of the ideal Playboy man. Just as the Playboy audience was encouraged to identify with and aspire to the ideal of the Playboy man, Playboy's corporate identity was dependent upon the notion that this ideal not only existed, but

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[18] Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 10-11.

[19] Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 29.

that it also comprised a large enough audience share to attract more of both quality advertisers and audience members. In other words, the relationship between Playboy and its audience was one of mutual aspiration. Due to this relationship, Playboy's instructions for which media to consume and the best technologies with which to consume it, at times, offer a more complete picture of the characteristics of the Playboy man than the consumer market statistics culled together to answer "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" That is, facts about the leisure and spending habits of the Playboy audience were subsumed into the magazine's projections of its ideal reader, cultivating the anticipation of happiness and directing the audience toward the objects that were deemed "happiness-causes."[20]

Leisure competence

In his history of the postwar magazine industry, Abrahamson argues that due to widespread prosperity throughout the 1960s, mere affluence began to lose its usefulness as a symbol of success and social status. He states, "knowing how to 'live well'…was one of the crucial markers of elevated social status." In other words, living well was not as simple as engaging in conspicuous consumption; Abrahamson argues that it requires personal competence, particularly in the form of "leisure competence," or skill in one's recreational activities.[21] *Playboy*'s guiding editorial focus is unquestionably the good life and how to live it. While few readers were likely to realize the hedonistic excess flaunted by *Playboy*'s Editor-Publisher, the magazine's service features were designed to provide every reader, along a continuum from neophyte to "the man in the mansion," with the knowledge he needed to develop a level of

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[20] Ibid., 28.

[21] David Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 1996), 46-47.

leisure competence appropriate to both the Playboy lifestyle and his place within it. A man's place along this continuum was defined most prominently by the amount of money he was willing and able to spend in his pursuit of the good life. The relationship between money and competence is an intimate one, and it makes sense when one considers, as Abrahamson points out, that "the best products required a particular competence to use."[22] This message is repeatedly stressed throughout *Playboy*'s coverage of technologies, particularly hi-fi, and is intensified through the magazine's linkage of particular consumer goods to sex.

Men's Magazines in the Mid-Twentieth Century United States

To be sure, fantasy and aspiration were key to Playboy's lifestyle and success; however, this project seeks to bring attention back to the more mundane aspects of Playboy's philosophy, to examine how the pursuit of happiness it promoted was inextricably linked to values and material goods that were both shaped by and helped shape the Playboy man's identity in terms of gender, heterosexuality, class, taste, and race. Although this hints at Playboy's legacy as more than a magazine, the magazine was the initial and most influential mode of spreading the Playboy philosophy. Consequently, in order to understand Playboy's attempts at renegotiating social relations, we must begin with the magazine.

The story of Playboy encapsulates the dominant story of the post-World War II United States. Like most men of his generation, Hefner went from high school into the military, serving two years as a clerk in the Army before completing, with the aid of the G. I. Bill, a bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In June 1949, shortly after his college graduation, he married Millie Williams. Although Millie had been a classmate at Chicago's Steinmetz High School, they did not meet and begin dating until after their high

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[22] Ibid., 47.

school graduation. Hefner spent the first four years of their marriage trying to find his place in the fields of marketing and publishing, working as a promotional copywriter for the Carson, Pirie, Scott department store and *Esquire* magazine, self-publishing a book of cartoons, working as a circulation manager for Publisher's Development Company, and managing subscriptions for *Children's Activities*. In early 1953, recognizing a gap in the market for magazines that were both entertainment-centered and appealing to an urban, masculine audience, Hefner set to work creating *Stag Party*, the type of magazine he wanted to read. After *Stag* magazine threatened a lawsuit for copyright infringement, the magazine's title was changed, and *Playboy* hit newsstands in late 1953.[23]

The impetus behind *Playboy* was about more than cultivating a niche market; through distinguishing itself from other publications aimed at men, *Playboy* was also distancing itself from the discourses of masculinity the other magazines circulated. When *Playboy* was first published, the men's magazine field consisted of publications like *Argosy*, *Esquire*, *Field & Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, and *True*.[24] As is evident from their titles, for the most part, these magazines, as Hefner put it in the introduction to *Playboy*'s first issue, spent "all their time out-of-doors—thrashing through thorny thickets or splashing about in fast flowing streams."[25] In addition to their emphasis on rugged masculinity and adventure stories, many men's magazines were aimed at a mass, rather than a class, audience. For instance, *True* and *Argosy* came out of the pulp trade and made the transition to men's magazines during World War II. Although these

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[23] Hefner (ed.), *Hugh Hefner's Playboy Volume 1, 1926-1954* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2013), 123, 133, 179, 191, 198, 200, 210, 224, 230.

[24] Association of National Advertisers, *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1959* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1960), 67.

[25] "Volume I, Number I," *Playboy*, December 1953, 3.

magazines made some effort at guiding their audiences toward masculine practices of consumption, they remained aimed toward a largely working class market, prompting Tom Pendergast to describe *True* as "*Esquire* for the beer-and-poker set." Although many scholars have addressed *Playboy*'s role in masculinizing consumption, patterns for "promoting a consumerist masculinity" had been established well before *Playboy* was published.[26]

Despite trying to distance itself from its competitors in the men's magazine field, *Playboy*'s editorial formula, like that of many of *Esquire*'s other successors, was heavily influenced by *Esquire*, which began publication in 1933.[27] Thomas Weyr describes *Playboy*'s editorial template as follows: "Clearly the basic formula was copied from *Esquire*: bawdy jokes, cartoons, risqué humor, quality fiction, fashion."[28] Additionally, although *Playboy* included photographs of real pin-up models, it followed *Esquire*'s lead in printing pin-up illustrations by artists George Petty and Alberto Vargas. In his history of the early years of *Esquire*, Hugh Merrill describes the magazine as "an unholy alliance of high and low culture," echoing critic Henry Pringle's claim in 1938 that the magazine was "an 'unholy combination of erudition and sex.'" Both of these descriptions could easily be applied to *Playboy* in its first two decades. However, Merrill maintains the importance of the distinction between class and mass culture and marks this as the main difference between *Esquire* and *Playboy*. He argues that *Esquire*'s cultural roots lie in the Ziegfeld Follies, which appealed to the upper classes, while he locates

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[26] Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 223-242.

[27] Ibid., 267.

[28] Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 8.

Playboy's cultural roots in the movies, which appealed to the masses. [29]

Placing *Playboy* in opposition to *Esquire* in this way glosses over the similarities between the two magazines as well as the importance of several facets of the cultural and economic climate of the immediate postwar years. First of all, such an opposition is an attempt to distance *Esquire* from its own bawdy past while neutralizing *Playboy*'s threat to its status through the insistence that the magazines occupy incomparable categories. In other words, by insisting that *Playboy* is the best-selling girlie magazine, *Esquire* can maintain its position as the best-selling class magazine for men in the mid-twentieth century. This opposition also ignores *Playboy*'s own utilization of the distinctions between mass and class culture to distance itself from both lower class magazines, such as *True*, and those masculinities that are marked as undesirable within the Playboy taste culture. Furthermore, this opposition downplays Merrill's own admissions concerning the ways that *Playboy* also influenced the contents of *Esquire.* While *Esquire* had long featured pin-ups drawings, *Playboy*'s photographed centerfolds prompted *Esquire* to briefly reintroduce the Petty Girl as a gatefold in 1954. Moving closer to what *Playboy* had on offer, later in 1954, *Esquire* turned the gatefold into "a women's fashion feature that showed models in negligees that were available in department stores (which were listed on the back of the picture)." Before the end of 1954, *Esquire* decided to distance itself from *Playboy* by replacing the "women's fashion feature" with a feature on sports. As Merrill points out, this marks a conscious decision on the part of publisher Arnold Gingrich to compete with magazines like *Sports Illustrated* and *Holiday* rather than *Playboy*.[30]

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[29] Hugh Merrill, *Esky: The Early Years at Esquire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 1, 6, 139.

[30] Merrill, *Esky*, 136, 146.

Most importantly, this opposition presupposes no middle ground between high and low culture even though it was, in large part, *Playboy*'s embrace of its own upper middlebrow status that allowed the magazine and its attendant taste culture to occupy a position that was simultaneously class and mass. Although *Esquire* had been orienting men toward a sophisticated consumer lifestyle for a generation before *Playboy* existed, *Playboy* came about in the prosperous years following World War II when many white men were either moving into or becoming more securely entrenched in the middle class. This newfound affluence was accompanied by increased leisure time and a desire to alleviate the anxieties of the Cold War. These changing economic conditions along with a change in *Esquire*'s editorial focus, which Hefner felt took much of the fun out of the magazine, left a space for a publication that offered men both entertainment and a guide toward cultivating sophisticated tastes without giving up many of the tastes for popular culture that they had already developed.

In addition to blending mass and class cultures, Merrill points out that *Esquire* was also responding to cultural pressures and discourses around masculinity and getting ahead. He argues that even though in the 1920s, "the puritan notion of character" had been replaced by the idea of personality, the American myth of pulling oneself up by his bootstraps remained firmly in tact. Developing a personality could help a man get ahead, "but the *Esquire* version of the myth allowed a little temptation from high living every once in a while."[31] Influenced by *Esquire*, *Playboy* also offered men a way to cultivate personality and high living in an age of conformity, and Associate Publisher A. C. Spectorsky credited much of the magazine's success on its modeling of a consistent personality to its readers. In a speech addressed to the American Business Press on October 28, 1968, Spectorsky explained, "We try to imbue it with a youthful

[31] Merrill, *Esky*, 49.

and life-loving personality of its own, with dramatic pacing within an issue, and issue-to-issue pacing, with an aura of excitement. In a very real sense, we want the magazine to be an idealized mirror-image of the reader's personality, of who he thinks he is—and wants to be—when he's feeling at his optimistic best."[32] In subsequent speeches, Spectorsky outlined thirteen publishing precepts, many of which stressed the relationship between the reader and the magazine, called on publishers to put the reader before advertisers, and stressed the importance of a consistent editorial personality in a fragmented society.[33] As we will see, Playboy came to define its masculinity and taste culture over and against a dominant culture and various subcultures that seemed to be in states of constant flux.

While Merrill holds that *Esquire*'s classy roots made it a better magazine than *Playboy*, he also admits that *Esquire* "never advocated a new role for men, only an enjoyment of the one prescribed by society."[34] As pointed out by numerous scholars, *Playboy* at least suggested that it was possible to delay, if not completely change, the prescribed masculine role, and this is the key to how *Playboy*'s success could outstrip that of *Esquire* by the end of its second year of publication. *Playboy*'s immediate success is even more remarkable when one considers that it was run by a largely inexperienced editorial staff and took a couple years to find its own voice.

[32] Speech, "How to Keep a Magazine Young," presented to the American Business Press, Harriman, New York, October 28, 1968, box 10, folder Speeches, Acc. 6116, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

[33] See also, Speech, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers," 1969, box 10, folder Speeches, Acc. 6116, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.; Speech, "Publishing in a Permissive Society," presented to the International Federation of the Periodical Press (F. I. P. P.), London, England, May 6, 1971, box 10, folder Speeches, Acc. 6116, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

[34] Merrill, *Esky*, 144.

The early issues offered a mix of original content and reprints of stories that were in the public domain. Even the Playmate of the Month concept did not come into its own until the July 1955 issue when *Playboy* began shooting their own centerfold models in more natural settings in order to present them as girls next door. Prior to that, all of the images were either from a calendar that Hefner had purchased along with the images of Marilyn Monroe that graced the first issue's cover and centerfold, or they were purchased from private photographers and, as a result, maintained a pin-up calendar feel. However, by 1956, *Playboy* had established its tone and formula. Many commentators have attributed *Playboy*'s sophisticated voice to the hiring of Associate Publisher A. C. Spectorsky in 1956. Spectorsky had a longer history in media and publishing than the rest of *Playboy*'s staff and was responsible for securing quality fiction from well-known authors, such as Ernest Hemingway and Vladimir Nabokov.[35]

Conclusion

Regardless of any similarities to *Esquire*, *Playboy*'s contents remained provocative, offering centerfolds alongside articles and opinions on gender, racial, sexual, and political relations in the United States. From December 1962 through May 1966, Hefner's column on the Playboy Philosophy directly addressed these issues and debates, and other features engaged clergy, politicians, cultural critics, and readers in these conversations. As Alan Nadel, Elaine Tyler May, and Ehrenreich point out, gender and sexual relations in the postwar period were heavily influenced by Cold War politics and policies, and this was reflected and reacted against in the magazine.[36] Playboy quickly became a multi-media empire, promoting its philosophy and

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[35] "A. C. Spectorsky, 61, Dies; Playboy Magazine Editor," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Jan. 18, 1972.

[36] See Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War*, Revised and updated ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Alan Nadel,

lifestyle through numerous brand extensions, including television shows, the Playboy Clubs and Club-Hotels, a record label, and licensed products beginning with cufflinks featuring the rabbit head logo. Through their intertextual relationships to the magazine and each other, these brand extensions helped disseminate and reinforce the values central to the Playboy lifestyle and their consumption became one way for Playboy's audiences to navigate the anxieties of a society first concerned about mass conformity and then concerned about increasing fragmentation.

Because the Playboy brand has been a part of the cultural fabric of the United States for so long, it is often difficult to see past the mythology that surrounds it. Given this, the primary challenge of studying a topic as well-known as Playboy is overcoming the assumption that we do indeed know it well. In short, this project stems from the premise that Bradbury's claim still holds true and is an attempt to finally see the forest for the tease. While it would be easy to dismiss Playboy as a mere celebration of commodity fetishism, this project utilizes the Playboy taste culture as a case study to examine how we come to mean through our relationships to things, how things come to mean through their relationships to us, and the role of media in circulating and reinforcing these meanings. In reflecting an idealized image of the audience back to itself, Playboy is doing more than providing guidance on how to acquire the material trappings of the Playboy man. It is imbuing those material objects with meanings that sometimes reinforce and sometimes resist dominant social relations, and it is also illustrating how changing one's relationship to the material can alter one's social location. Following Ahmed, this reveals not only how happiness becomes associated with objects, it also reveals how these associations may come to justify worldviews that may be progressive, such as promoting racial equality, or

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Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

regressive, such as reinforcing the notion that a woman's role is to complement men.

CHAPTER 1

Breadwinners, Beats, and Hippies: Examining White, Middle Class Masculinities in the Mid-Twentieth Century

> *[T]he roles that we construct are constructed because we feel that they will help us to survive and also, of course, because they fulfill something in our personalities and one does not, therefore, cease playing a role simply because one has begun to understand it. All roles are dangerous. The world tends to trap and immobilize you in the role you play; and it is not always easy—in fact, it is always extremely hard—to maintain a kind of watchful, mocking distance between oneself as one appears to be and oneself as one actually is.*
> —James Baldwin, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy"[37]

To argue that gender and sexual politics are at the center of Playboy's philosophy and media output may sound like a truism; however, despite numerous article and book-length explorations of these topics in the academic and popular press, there are still nuances, which remain to be explored, concerning how Playboy's gender and sexual politics operate within its media output and in relation to the wider culture. An analysis of other mid-century U.S. masculinities against which Playboy masculinity is defined and revised will make clear both the centrality of modes of consumption to gender expression and configuration and the "hard compulsions" that drive the continual reformation of masculinities in relation to each other and the wider social situation.[38] In her examination of masculinities in the post-World War II United States, Barbara Ehrenreich positions Playboy and the lifestyle it promotes as an "almost subversive" response to the role of the male breadwinner. In doing so, she places Playboy in

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[37] James Baldwin, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," in *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1961), 173.

[38] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 76.

between (chronologically) and in opposition (philosophically) to the Beats and the counterculture of the 1960s.[39] The analysis of Playboy in the next chapter seeks, in part, to build upon Ehrenreich's positioning of Playboy masculinity. However, before turning to an exploration of what constituted Playboy masculinity from the early 1950s through the early 1970s, it is important to understand those masculinities against which Playboy negatively defined itself and the wider social context in which these masculinities operated.

Domestic Containment in the Postwar Years

While many sociologists, psychologists, and social commentators in the 1950s appear to have been preoccupied with the development of personality and social character and the shifting definitions of social roles, subsequent scholars, such as Ehrenreich, Elaine Tyler May, and Jeremy Gilbert, challenge the received wisdom concerning crises of gender and national character and notions like "togetherness" and the ideal of the suburban nuclear family, which often seem to be taken for granted as representative of American experience in the postwar years. In his examination of masculinity in the 1950s, Gilbert argues, "To see masculinity as an aspect of a gender system in crisis is, in part, to inhabit the culture of the modern world." Gilbert explains that the link between gender crisis and modernity is, in part, due to the fact that the 1950s were "the era when the basic historical narratives of male crisis and personality development were developed—when the 1890s and the 1950s were identified as periods of profound shift in American character."[40]

Drawing on works widely read and discussed at the time, such as *The Lonely Crowd*,

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[39] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 44.

[40] Jeremy Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 22, 32.

Gilbert demonstrates that the idea of gender crisis coalesced in the 1950s prompting scholars to seek out its origins. In this search for an origin story, many of the concerns of the scholars' own period were mapped backwards onto the 1890s—another period of marked shifts in economic, social, and geographic relations—and scholars, such as David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, whether meaning to or not, constructed their explanations for current configurations of social character and relations as declension narratives of masculinity by focusing primarily on the experiences of white men and defining "the problem largely in terms of middle class habits and possibilities."[41] Indeed, in the preface to the abridged edition of *The Lonely Crowd*, Riesman, Glazer, and Denney admit that, even though they were conducting interviews and planning community studies while working on the book, it is nevertheless primarily an attempt to organize their own experiences of living in America.[42] What Gilbert uncovers is not so much a fatal flaw in past understandings of gender as it is confirmation of Raymond Williams' assertion that, "We tend to underestimate the extent to which the cultural tradition is not only a selection but also an interpretation. We see most past work through our own experience without even making the effort to see it in something like its original terms."[43] As we will see, *Playboy*, particularly in Hefner's editorial series on "The Playboy Philosophy," is a crucial site for the rearticulation, dissemination, and preservation of the declension narrative of masculinity that took hold in the 1950s, with Hefner and other contributors mapping their concerns all the way back to the country's founding by Puritans.

[41] Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 21-22, 32-33, 54.

[42] David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, abridged ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), 5.

[43] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 53.

Despite this look towards the past, contemporary observers were also keenly aware of how the threat of totalitarianism, which lingered throughout World War II and the subsequent Cold War, influenced efforts to shore up American national character through domestic policies of containment. As May points out, the idea of domestic containment, in which the family home serves as the "sphere of influence," followed from post-World War II foreign policy, which held that "the power of the Soviet Union would not endanger national security if it could be contained within a clearly-defined sphere of influence." Likewise, in *Containment Culture*, Alan Nadel examines how narratives of containment associated with the Cold War also occupied and circulated within and through postwar media, arguing that postwar media narratives functioned to contain gender and sexuality in addition to politics and foreign policy. May asserts, "More than merely a metaphor for the cold war on the homefront, containment aptly describes the way in which public policy, personal behavior, and even political values were focused on the home."[44] As a result, the nuclear family came to be seen as a social institution, the strength of which was directly connected to the strength of character of individual family members and to the strength of the nation as a whole. This emphasis on the individual placed he American family in stark contrast to the conformity of communism.

The family, as constructed by the white, middle class norms of the dominant culture, circumscribed gender and sexual roles through its heteronormativity and emphasis on the roles of mother and father, linking marriage and parenthood to notions of gender and adulthood in ways that came to be regarded as "traditional," but that May shows were unique to the Cold War era. May demonstrates that the seeds for the ideal nuclear family of the Cold War were sown during the Great Depression, when "the economic crisis…opened the way for a new type of family

[44] May, *Homeward Bound*, xxiv-xxv; Nadel, *Containment Culture*.

based on shared breadwinning and equality of the sexes." She argues that the reconfiguration of the family in the 1930s "created nostalgia for a mythic past in which male breadwinners provided a decent living and homemakers were freed from outside employment."[45] Nostalgia for this mythic past continued to be cultivated throughout the 1940s, and in the postwar years, policies of domestic containment held this imagined past up as the modern ideal.

Utilizing data from the Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS), May shows that the perceived security of the nuclear family was not free from its own set of constraints. She notes that KLS interviews reveal that both men and women often felt they faced either/or situations. For men, maintaining one's personal freedom seemed incompatible with the responsibilities of providing for one's family. For women, devoting oneself both to a profession and to the care of one's family seemed equally out of reach. It was precisely this seeming incompatibility between personal freedom and family life that underpinned Playboy's configuration as an alternative to the role of breadwinner.

However, no matter the pressures and constraints within middle-class family life, those who found themselves outside the prevailing domestic ideology—unmarried men and women and gays and lesbians—aroused widespread suspicion, as evidenced by campaigns throughout the early 1950s that sought to purge both Communists and gay people from government employment.[46] The uncontained sexuality of straight men and women was also of national

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[45] May, *Homeward Bound*, 31.

[46] As K. A. Cuordileone points out, the suspicion of gay individuals in the government, and the State Department in particular, began in the 1930s and was cultivated throughout the 1940s. Although May does not make this connection in her brief discussion of these purges, the timeframe aligns with her discussion of the cultivation of nostalgia for a mythic past, reinforcing the heteronormativity of what would come to be seen as "traditional" gender roles. For more on the connections between the purges of Communists and gay people from the government, see K. A. Cuordileone, "Anti-Communism on the Right: The Politics of Perversion," in *Manhood and*

concern. May explains:

> Sexual excesses or degeneracy would make individuals easy prey for communist tactics. According to the common wisdom of the time, 'normal' heterosexual behavior culminating in marriage represented 'maturity' and 'responsibility;' therefore, those who were 'deviant' were, by definition, irresponsible, immature, and weak. It followed that men who were slaves to their passions could easily be duped by seductive women who worked for the communists.[47]

Additionally, at the level of individual character, experts warned "that single women would be doomed to an unfulfilled and miserable existence, and that bachelors were psychologically damaged and immature." With works, such as *The Lonely Crowd* and William H. Whyte, Jr.'s *The Organization Man*, emphasizing men's loss of autonomy within the workplace, fatherhood took on an increased importance as "a new badge of masculinity" in the postwar years as men were encouraged to find their authority within the family home.[48]

Sexual excess was not the only form of decadence that required containment through the nuclear family ideal. Postwar affluence widened the middle class, making suburban home ownership accessible to white families headed by both blue-collar and white-collar workers. As May and Whyte argue, anxieties over conspicuous consumption were alleviated by consumer

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American Political Culture in the Cold War (New York: Routledge, 2005), 37-96; May, 76, 82-84.

[47] May, *Homeward Bound*, 82.

[48] In *Gay New York*, George Chauncey traces an earlier history of the relationship between changing gender and workplace configurations. He argues that prior to the late nineteenth century, the category of men was constituted in contradistinction to the category of boys, "but in the late nineteenth century, middle-class men began to define themselves more centrally on the basis of their difference from women." The factors influencing this shift include the rise of large corporations, which transformed the character of men's work by making it less about production, skill, and entrepreneurship; a perceived feminization of corporations due to the increased employment of women; and a concern that women bore too much influence on culture. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 111-112, 114, 116-117; May, *Homeward Bound*, 14, 16, 22, 76, 129.

spending centered on the home and family and contained by community standards of necessity. As Whyte observed in Park Forest, Illinois, a suburb 30 miles south of Chicago, residents were preoccupied with keeping down, rather than up, with the Joneses. He states, "*It is the group that determines when a luxury becomes a necessity*" and observes that "just as the group punishes its members for buying prematurely, so it punishes them for not buying."[49] In this way, the particular modes of consumption of white, middle class, suburban families could be justified as "strengthen[ing] the American way of life," which demonstrates the ways in which practices of consumption cannot be abstracted from performances of race, class, and gender. [50]

Breadwinners, Organization Men, and Men in Grey Flannel Suits

In everyday conversation and practice in the U.S. during the mid-twentieth century, gender was typically understood as conforming to one or the other pole in the binary opposition of men to women. Due to this and because of the emphasis many mid-twentieth century sociologists, psychologists, and other social commentators place on individual character types and national character, masculinity politics came to be most easily understood in terms of the correspondence with real men.[51] Bolstered by domestic policies of containment, the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and changing economic relations came to be captured through the notions of the breadwinner, the organization man, and the man in the grey flannel suit. These latter two characterizations can be understood as subtypes of the breadwinner role, which as the titular subjects of best-selling books (and in the case of Sloan Wilson's novel, *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*, also as a film adaptation) were images easily enfolded within popular

[49] William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), 312, 346-348; emphasis in the original; May, 148.

[50] May, *Homeward Bound*, 148.

[51] Connell, *Masculinities*, 205.

conceptions of masculinity. These phrases capture the pressures that many white, middle class men felt to conform both in the office and in their suburban communities. In *Hearts of Men*, Ehrenreich thoroughly examines the ideology of the breadwinner, arguing that by the 1950s, this role had become indistinguishable from adult masculinity in American society.[52] The ideology of the breadwinner was a linchpin of the broader ideology of domesticity, which promoted the values of an idealized white, suburban, middle class and "pervaded the entire culture as a standard of normality, not just the middle class."[53]

While the breadwinner role was a regulatory fiction that established norms of masculine behavior for men of all classes, Cohan notes that the domesticated breadwinner, as represented by "The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit," "was responsible for legitimating the hegemony of the professional-managerial class."[54] Indeed, May sees many of the values espoused in contemporary novels reflected in participants' responses in the KLS sample. Lacking individual autonomy in his work life, Cohan claims that contemporary narratives advanced the notion that home remained "the site through which the breadwinner most fully realized his masculinity."[55] Thus, conformity and maturity worked together to domesticate the American male.

Commentators at the time highlighted the contradictory demands that fulfilling the breadwinner role placed on normative conceptions of masculinity. The ideal father and husband exerted authority within the family home, but the notion of the companionate marriage meant that he had to do so in an environment "in which men and women were friends and lovers and

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[52] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 20.

[53] Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 50.

[54] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 38.

[55] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 52; May, *Homeward Bound*, 157.

children were pals," familial relations that worked to circumscribe absolute patriarchal authority.[56] These contradictory masculine roles led to the proliferation of magazine articles expressing concern over the "gender-bending behavior" of domesticated males who take on too much responsibility for the daily maintenance of the home and warning that weak fathers are a cause of homosexuality and juvenile delinquency.[57] The relationship between weak fathers and homosexuality in sons continues to be expressed in *Playboy* into the 1970s (fig. 1).

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[56] Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 12.

[57] These concerns are also widely expressed in 1950s films. The quintessential film example of the relationship between emasculated or absent fathers and delinquent and/or sexually ambiguous sons is *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). In one of the film's iconic scenes, troubled teen Jim Stark (James Dean) mistakes his father for his mother as he climbs the stairs in the family home. Frank Stark (Jim Backus) is on his hands and knees at the top of the stairs, wearing a frilly apron over his suit, and cleaning up a meal that he had prepared for his wife and incompetently dropped. Frank worries about cleaning up the mess before his wife sees it, and Jim, frustrated at his father's weakness, grabs his father by the apron and urges him to stand up. Unable to articulate his concerns to his emasculated father, Jim runs off to his room. Frank, still in apron, enters Jim's room and Jim runs out of the house after a conversation in which his father fails to answer his question, "What can you do when you have to be a man?" For more about how films of the 1950s both represented and subverted notions of normative masculinity, see Cohan's *Masked Men*. William Attwood, "The American Male: Why Does He Work So Hard?," *Look*, March 4, 1958, 72-73; Richard Gehman, "Toupees, Girdles, and Sun Lamps," *Cosmopolitan*, May 1957, 39-43; Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 66-67; George B. Leonard, Jr., "The American Male: Why Is He Afraid to Be Different?," *Look*, February 18, 1958, 97; J. Robert Moskin, "The American Male: Why Do Women Dominate Him?," *Look*, February 4, 1958, 78-80; Whyte, *Organization Man*; Wylie, "The Abdicating Male," *Playboy*, November 1956, 50.

Figure 1. "I think you better assert yourself more, Pop—I'm turning into a fag."
Source: Lee Lorenz, *Playboy*, December 1970, 271.

Several months before Otis Wiese, editor of *McCall's*, named "togetherness" as the guiding principle of the nuclear family ideal, *Life* ran a piece, consisting primarily of a series of cartoons, examining the widespread domestication of the American male. Although the captions accompanying the cartoons sometimes poke fun at the perceived ineptitude of many men in pursuing DIY projects around the home, such as laying bricks for a barbecue, the overall tone of the accompanying text is serious, detailing the positive effects that the domestication of the American male has had on the nation's economy and the family unit itself. The article concludes, "Since domestic help is expensive, he has become baby tender, dishwasher, cook, repairman. Probably not since pioneer days, when men built their own log cabins, have they been so personally involved in their home." While this piece outlines the ways men have come to take on, at least in part, some tasks traditionally relegated to women, it is careful to temper these changing gender roles with assertions that men bring more modern tastes and technological prowess to domestic tasks, such as decorating and cooking, than do their wives. In other words, fears of emasculation are kept at bay by highlighting the positive contributions a masculine touch

can bring to the family home. [58]

Outside of the family home, commentators worried that work was becoming increasingly meaningless and too focused on teamwork rather than individual achievement, leaving men in search of other ways to assert their identities. Additionally, as Whyte points out, men faced pressures to both get ahead in their careers and keep pace with their neighbors' consumer spending. In the face of these pressures, some commentators warned that men were working too hard for too little of a reward. Philip Wylie, although not alone in this sentiment, goes so far as to argue that men are "sweat[ing] themselves into early graves" in order to satisfy the consumer desires of women.[59]

As these concerns indicate, American men returning from World War II or coming of age after the war faced a restructuring within their public as well as their private lives. May argues that some of the most insightful postwar "writing examined the dehumanizing situation that forced middle-class men, at least in their public roles, to be other-directed 'organization men,' caught in a mass, impersonal white-collar world."[60] While this characterization captures a recurring theme in the male oppression narratives of the postwar years, it is an oversimplification of Whyte's concerns in *The Organization Man*. Following Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, Whyte contributes to the development of a schema of the evolution of a national character that is inseparable from the dominant character of white, middle class men. Just as Gilbert argues that

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[58] "The New American Domesticated Male," *Life*, January 4, 1954, 42-45; Otis Wiese, "Live the Life of *McCall's*," *McCall's*, May 1954, 27. See also Attwood, "The American Male: Why Does He Work So Hard?"; and J. Robert Moskin, "The American Male: Why Do Women Dominate Him?"

[59] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 180-181; 339-340; Wylie, "The Abdicating Male," 50. See also Attwood, "The American Male: Why Does He Work So Hard?"

[60] May, *Homeward Bound*, 14.

mid-twentieth century readers of *The Lonely Crowd* misunderstood the authors' intentions in describing inner- and other-direction, Whyte's emphasis on the corporation man as "the most conspicuous example" of the organization man in his description of "a major shift in American ideology" gave contemporary readers another bogeyman of conformity in the guise of the man who commuted from his suburban home to his white collar job.[61] For contemporary readers and commentators, the corporation man became synonymous with the organization man despite Whyte's assertion that "the collectivization so visible in the corporation has affected almost every field of work."[62] While May's description of the pressures men faced in their public lives indicates that there may have been tension or conflict between men's private and public roles, Whyte's observations of suburban communities led him to conclude that the values of the organization are carried back to the communities in which organization men live. In other words, he observed loyalty not simply to particular organizations but also to the principles of organization life; in terms of the guiding principle of collectivization, there is no separation of men's public and private lives. Indeed, the very notion of togetherness demonstrates the view of the family as a collective in which the needs of the family and the needs of the individual are one and the same. However, Whyte is clear that his book "is not a plea for nonconformity," that the Social Ethic and conformity are not synonymous, and that he does not intend to offer strictures

[61] Gilbert thoroughly explores the tensions between what Riesman, Glazer, and Denney meant by inner- and other-direction and the ways in which readers of *The Lonely Crowd* interpreted these characterizations. He points out that although Riesman made numerous statements indicating that he did not favor inner-direction over other-direction, readers of the work in the mid-twentieth century widely "interpreted the descriptions of other-direction as a critique of present-day conformity" and "were attracted by his description of the self-made, inner-directed man, the entrepreneur, the frontier farmer, and the small business man who made the nineteenth century a period for dynamic self-expression." See Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 34-61. Whyte, *Organization Man*, 3, 5.

[62] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 3.

against "Mass Man," "ranch wagons, or television sets, or gray flannel suits."[63] Instead, his main concern is a shift in the guiding principle of Americans' lives from the Protestant Ethic to what he calls "a Social Ethic." Whyte explains:

> By social ethic I mean that contemporary body of thought which makes morally legitimate the pressures of society against the individual. Its major propositions are three: a belief in the group as the source of creativity; a belief in 'belongingness' as the ultimate need of the individual; a belief in the application of science to achieve the 'belongingness.'[64]

The conflict Whyte sees within the organization man is his continued belief in the tenets of the Protestant Ethic—e.g., individual achievement, hard work, thrift, and postponement of pleasure—even while he strives for belongingness as part of any number of groups that comprise his immediate environment both at work and in his community.

However, Whyte, on more than one occasion, points out that surface conformity may be masking resistance. This point not only tempers criticisms of conformity lobbed at suburbanites; it is also key to understanding how Playboy masculinity operates. For Whyte, it is not significant that an individual gives in to pressures to conform at work or at home; they often have no real choice in the matter. What is of greater significance is how an individual feels about the pressures they give into and how they think people *should* feel about these pressures. That is, Whyte draws a line between selfless adjustment and surrender as well as between values and behavior. In his observations of suburban communities, Whyte found that what appeared to be passive conformity, or surrender to the will of the group, was often actually an active and unselfish act toward building consensus. The real problem concerned those who blindly accepted the increasing bureaucratization of society rather than with bureaucratization in and of

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[63] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 11-12.

[64] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 6-7.

itself. The label "organization man" was not intended to describe any suburban, white collar worker, who happened to drive the same car or wear the same suits as his neighbors and co-workers; rather, it described those who held no cynicism or skepticism about the system and who wholeheartedly believed in the basic premise of the Social Ethic—i.e., "the goals of the individual and the goals of the organization will work out to be one and the same."[65] For Whyte, then, it is the values one holds, rather than the uncompromising expression of these values, that matter most.

Beats, Hipsters, and White Negroes

As Lynn Spigel's characterization of Hefner as, in some senses, "the shining example of the 'white Negro'" and Ethan Thompson's assertion that "somewhere between Whyte's 'Organization Man' and Mailer's 'White Negro' lies Hefner's 'Playboy'" indicate, the masculinity and taste culture of the Playboy are defined as much by their opposition to the middle class nuclear family ideal as they are by their differentiation from mid-twentieth century marginal subcultures.[66] In the late 1950s and more explicitly in the early 1960s, Hefner came to understand and explain his magazine and the philosophy behind it in terms that placed Playboy's masculinity and taste culture in contradistinction to the Beat Generation. What follows is an exploration of how the figures of the Beat and the White Negro were positioned in relation to dominant white culture and lower class black culture. Due to the centrality of this opposition to the formulation of Playboy's philosophy, a more thorough analysis of the relationship between the Beats and Playboy is offered in the next chapter.

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[65] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 12, 143-144, 172, 239, 391, 395, 435-436.

[66] Lynn Spigel, *TV By Design: Modern Art and the Rise of Network Television* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 56; Ethan Thompson, *Parody and Taste in Postwar American Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 81.

In 1957, another bestselling novel, *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, would capture the attention of journalists and other cultural commentators, bringing the Beat Generation and its radical rebuke of the breadwinner ethic and consumerism fully into the popular imagination. While critical attention to the Beats grew exponentially in the late 1950s, the feelings of discontent with social roles and expectations and the quest for something more fulfilling than corporate conformity and staid domesticity had been bubbling up from the beat underground since the early 1940s. Although the women of the Beat Generation are largely overlooked in histories of the movement and its key figures, these feelings coalesced during World War II in the Morningside Heights apartment of Joan Vollmer and Edie Parker. In close proximity to Columbia University, Brenda Knight states, "Joan and Edie's apartment became a haven for a bunch of Columbia students who were disillusioned with all the starched-collar conservatism of the forties….The atmosphere was both intellectual and chaotic—a nonstop salon with both discourse and dalliance."[67] Among the current and former Columbia students who participated in Vollmer and Parker's salon and occasionally lived in their apartment were Jack Kerouac (Parker's then-boyfriend and future husband), Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs (who would go on to father a child with Vollmer before eventually shooting her in the head while attempting a William Tell act at a party in Mexico City in 1951).

The inner circle of Vollmer's salon also included journalist Lucien Carr (later, the father of novelist Caleb Carr), writer John Clellon Holmes, and Herbert Huncke, "a Times Square hustler."[68] The latter two were instrumental in the naming of the Beat Generation. In "The

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[67] Brenda Knight, *Women of the Beat Generation: The Writers, Artists and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution* (Berkeley: Conari Press, 2000), 50-51.

[68] Histories vary on exactly when and how Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs met each other. John Leland says they met in 1944 with Carr introducing Ginsberg and Kerouac with

Origins of the Beat Generation," which appears in the June 1959 issue of *Playboy*, Kerouac recalls that in 1948, "John Clellon Holmes…and I were sitting around trying to think up the meaning of the Lost Generation and the subsequent Existentialism and I said 'You know, this is really a beat generation' and he leapt up and said 'That's it, that's right!'" The word "beat" and its sentiment were ideas that Kerouac had learned from Huncke. He explains, "When I first saw the hipsters creeping around Times Square in 1944 I didn't like them either. One of them, Huncke of Chicago, came up to me and said 'Man, I'm beat.' I knew right away what that meant somehow."[69] However, it was Holmes, recounting this conversation with Kerouac in a November 1952 article in the *New York Times*, who brought the name and the sentiments behind it to the wider public. As the author of the recently published novel *Go*, which is widely considered to be the first Beat novel, 26-year-old Holmes was the initial spokesman for his generation, and his article indicates that the feelings of discontent extended much further than the walls of Vollmer's apartment or the coffeehouses of Greenwich Village. What Holmes' article makes clear is that the label Beat Generation was meant to describe his entire generation and not just the small group of hipsters that would come to be identified with the label. Pointing out that

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Burroughs acting as their literary mentor and Huncke acting as Burroughs' guide to "the criminal and queer byways of Times Square," to which Burroughs subsequently introduced the others. Simon Warner states that the three met in 1943. Knight's version of this history is that Carr brought Ginsberg to Vollmer's, introduced Ginsberg to Burroughs, and that shortly thereafter Burroughs began coming to Vollmer's salon. Huncke was a friend of Vickie Russell, who brought him with her to Vollmer's frequently, and Knight credits Russell, "a high-class call girl," with teaching Vollmer's circle "the proper way to get pure Benzedrine from over-the-counter inhalers." Regardless of the varied stories, it is clear that Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, Carr, Huncke, and Holmes all converged in Vollmer's apartment during the war. See Knight, *Women of the Beat Generation*, 48-56; John Leland, *Hip: The History* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005),142-144; Simon Warner, *Text and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll: The Beats and Rock Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 23-24.

[69] Jack Kerouac, "The Origins of the Beat Generation," *Playboy*, June 1959, 32, 42.

his generation is one "of extremes, including both the hipster and the 'radical' young Republican in its ranks," he argued that this postwar generation held in common a need for faith.[70] This sentiment would be widely spread by Kerouac, who began explaining that:

> The word 'beat' originally meant poor, down and out, deadbeat, on the bum, sad, sleeping in subways. Now that the word is belonging officially it is being made to stretch to include people who do not sleep in subways but have a certain new gesture, or attitude, which I can only describe as a new *more*. 'Beat Generation' has simply become the slogan or label for a revolution in manners in America.[71]

Although described as a "revolution" by many chroniclers of the Beat Generation, Holmes points out that "For the wildest hipster, making a mystique of bop, drugs and the night life, there is no desire to shatter the 'square' society in which he lives, only to elude it."[72] In spite of Holmes's intent to capture a more widespread structure of feeling, it is to those who eluded square society to which the Beat Generation label stuck.

With several decades more hindsight available to them, Ehrenreich and May see the Beats as evidence "that not everyone or everything could be contained in the nuclear family ideal."[73] Ehrenreich claims, "In the Beat, the two strands of male protest—one directed against the white-collar work world and the other against the suburbanized family life that work was supposed to support—come together into the first all-out critique of American consumer culture."[74] However, the Beats' protest against work extended beyond the white-collar world and to work more generally. In his study of the Greenwich Village Beat scene, Ned Polsky

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[70] John Clellon Holmes, "'This Is the Beat Generation,'" *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1952.

[71] Kerouac, "The Origins," 42.

[72] Holmes, "This Is the Beat Generation."

[73] May, *Homeward Bound*, xxv.

[74] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 52.

observes:

> Unlike most of their age-mates, beats are keen critics of the society in which they have grown up. Their anti-work ideology is not nearly so much a sign of inability to accept the reality principle as a sign of disaffiliation from particular, mutable realities. Sensible of America's inequitable distribution of income *and* its increasing depersonalization of work and leisure *and* its racial injustices *and* its Permanent War Economy, the beats have responded with the Permanent Strike.[75]

In other words, the Beats, whom Polsky noted were not so much apolitical as anti-political, chose to drop out, living outside the confines of square society as much as possible. The result, for many, was voluntary poverty—a position that could be justified as "holy" when compared to their perception of a "middle-class 'poverty of the spirit.'"[76] Contrary to Ehrenreich's claim that "the possibility of walking out, without money or guilt, and without ambition other than to see and do everything, was not even immanent in the middle-class culture of the early fifties," Polsky found that the Beats primarily came from middle class families.[77] They may have been seeking refuge from the pressures of middle class life, but it was white-male-middle-class

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[75] Ned Polsky, "The Village Beat Scene: Summer 1960," in *Hustlers, Beats, and Others* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967), 160; emphasis in the original.

[76] Polsky, "The Village Beat Scene," 162; Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 86.

[77] The family origins and paths to dropping out of the three key Beat literary figures—Burroughs, Kerouac, and Ginsberg—also contradict Ehrenreich's claim. Of the three, only Kerouac came from a blue-collar background. Burroughs came from a wealthy family whose monthly checks enabled him to survive. Ginsberg eventually left the Beat scene of New York City and ended "up in San Francisco as a clean-shaven, Ivy-suited, high-paid consultant in market research" with an apartment on Nob Hill. It would take a year of psychoanalysis before he would decide to return to Beat life, quitting his job, and moving with his lover, Peter Orlovsky, to North Beach. See Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 55; Leland, *Hip*, 142; "Playboy Interview: Allen Ginsberg," *Playboy*, April 1969, 81; Polsky, "The Village Beat Scene," 155; Warner, *Text and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll*, 23-24.

privilege that allowed them to rebel in the first place.[78] However, Ehrenreich is correct that the Beats sought and found inspiration in the underclass, hanging "out in a demimonde inhabited by drifters, junkies, male prostitutes, thieves, would-be poets and actual musicians."[79] Regardless of one's value judgments about how the Beats distinguished themselves from the dominant ideology of white, middle class values, one of their most subversive aspects involved the way their voluntary poverty and associations with the underclass worked to continually foreground class divisions in a society whose dominant members pointed to middle class affluence and consumerism as reassurance that class divisions no longer existed.

The Beats' association with the underclass, tolerance toward sex roles that were then widely considered to be deviant, outward markers of subcultural belonging such as beards, and penchant for jazz and poetry made the Beats easy to lampoon. In 1958, Herb Caen of the *San Francisco Chronicle* coined the term "beatnik." Given the term's associations with Sputnik, Ted Gioia argues that it "made the hipsters seem both up-to-date and distinctly un-American."[80] However, the Beats did not need to conjure any images of Soviet Russia to appear threatening to dominant American values. Kerouac recalled the horror he "felt in 1957 and later 1958 naturally to suddenly see 'Beat' being taken up by everybody, press and TV and Hollywood borscht

[78] Like most early studies of subcultures, Polsky's tends to elide the involvement of women in the subculture so that when he says "Beat," he usually means male Beat. Regarding women in the subculture, he mentions merely that there is an over-representation of Jewish women in the Village Beat scene and that some newer female members of the scene are ex-prostitutes. His concern about the changing demographics of the scene between 1957 and 1960 are focused primarily on race and ethnicity. He notes an increase in the number of Italian, Puerto Rican, and African American Beats, with the latter change being the most important. He also notes an increase in teenage runaways in the Beat scene. See Polsky, "The Village Beat Scene," 155-156.

[79] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 56.

[80] Ted Gioia, *The Birth and Death of the Cool* (Golden, CO: Speck Press, 2009), 116.

circuit to include the 'juvenile delinquency' shot." He went on to say, "And so now they have beatnik routines on TV, starting with satires about girls in black and fellows in jeans with snap-knives and sweatshirts and swastikas tattooed under their armpits."[81]

Through stereotypical fictional portrayals and the sensationalist reporting on the subculture by magazines, such as *Life* and even *Playboy*, the perceived threats of the Beat Generation were quelled through representations that transformed them into "meaningless exotica."[82] For instance, in September 1959, a few months after Kerouac lamented such representations of the Beats, CBS debuted a new comedy series, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*. The show's primary comedic element comes in the form of Maynard G. Krebs (Bob Denver), a teenage beatnik who plays bongos, worships jazz musicians Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie, speaks in hip slang, and recoils at the word "work." Despite all of the magazine and newspaper press that actual members of the Beat Generation had received, John Leland claims, "The heretical truth is that in the broader public imagination, it was Maynard G. Krebs, not the by-then vanishing Kerouac, who led the revolution."[83] Ehrenreich notes that beatniks, comprised of "college students and arty people drawn to the Beat centers of North Beach and Venice," lacked the "passionate energy" of the Beats, but their existence made the media's images of the beatnik credible.[84]

In spite of such trivializing co-optation by mainstream media, Ehrenreich argues that "the

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[81] Kerouac, "The Origins," 42, 79.

[82] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, (New York: Methuen & Co., 1979), 97.

[83] Gioia, *The Birth and Death*, 115-116; Leland, *Hip*, 155.

[84] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 60.

Beats lasting contribution to male rebellion [was] to establish a vantage point from which the 'normal' could be judged, assessed and labeled—square."[85] From this vantage point, the hip also judged, assessed, and labeled themselves. Prior to the need for Beats to distinguish themselves from beatniks or tourists, they drew lines between themselves and other hipsters.[86] Like the jazz they consumed, Kerouac explained hipsters were divided into "hot" and "cool" as follows:

> By 1948 the hipsters, or beatsters, were divided into cool and hot. Much of the misunderstanding about hipsters and the Beat Generation in general today derives from the fact that there are two distinct styles of hipsterism: the cool today is your bearded laconic sage, or schlerm, before a hardly touched beer in a beatnik dive, whose speech is low and unfriendly, whose girls say nothing and wear black: the 'hot' today is the crazy talkative shining eyed (often innocent and openhearted) nut who runs from bar to bar, pad to pad looking for everybody, shouting, restless, lushy, trying to 'make it' with the subterranean beatniks who ignore him. Most Beat Generation artists belong to the hot school, naturally since that hard gemlike flame needs a little heat. In many cases the mixture is 50-50.[87]

Polsky noted, however, that among the Beats he spoke to in Greenwich Village, "hipster" tended to have a pejorative meaning, indicating someone "who 'comes on' too strongly" and shows off his hipness.[88] Dick Hebdige argues that the Beat and hipster subcultures utilize black cultures in different ways. That is, the hipster had an experienced bond with the ghetto black, sharing

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[85] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 67.

[86] Herb Cohen, co-owner of two Los Angeles coffee houses—Cosmo Alley and the Unicorn—explained the coffee house clientele to *Playboy* as follows, "There has always been an out-group. There is one now. This group is no different than it always was except that today it is called the Beat Generation. This out-group is the in-group at the coffee houses….The majority of the people, though, are those who are dissatisfied with society but don't know exactly where their dissatisfaction lies….Each coffee house has its own in-group….A tourist is anybody who is not a member of the coffee house in-group." Jim Morad, "The Coffee Houses of America," *Playboy*, July 1959, 95.

[87] Kerouac, "The Origins," 42.

[88] Polsky noted that Beats thought labeling was square, but when forced to choose, they chose "Beat" in order to distinguish themselves from other hipsters. Polsky, "The Village Beat Scene," 151.

communal space, language, and focal concerns; whereas, "the Beat, on the other hand, lived an imaginary relation to the Negro-as-noble-savage."[89]

In addition to *On the Road*, 1957 also saw the publication of another piece of writing that would attempt to explain the motivations of postwar hipsters. Norman Mailer's essay, "The White Negro," concerns, in part, the largely romanticized relationship between white hipness and black culture and remains perhaps the most well-known and controversial assessment of the hipster. Mailer's essay is most often cited for linking hipness to the perceived primitiveness of African Americans, the expression of which Mailer locates in surrender to the bodily impulses of sex and violence. Describing the White Negro as one who sought refuge in the marginal status of and reaped the rewards of the "cultural dowry" brought by the African Americans they admired, Mailer's essay provoked immediate critical response with some of it coming from his own friends, such as Jean Malaquis and James Baldwin. Baldwin's response demonstrates the ways in which white masculinities are formed in relation to misperceptions and stereotypes about black masculinities and black male (hetero)sexuality. He explained, "It is still true, alas, that to be an American Negro male is also to be a kind of walking phallic symbol: which means that one pays, in one's own personality, for the sexual insecurity of others."[90] He also faulted Mailer and the Beats, whose writing style Mailer imitated in the essay, for using the Depression-era language of African Americans (that had since evolved into jive and hip talk) in order "to justify the white man's own sexual panic."[91] Here, Baldwin pointed out that turning one's back on the nuclear family ideal of middle class, white America did not necessarily quell one's anxieties

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[89] Hebdige, *Subculture*, 48-49.

[90] Baldwin, "The Black Boy," 172, 180.

[91] Ibid., 181.

about his masculinity and sexuality. In fact, Baldwin saw Mailer's and the Beats' obsession with orgasm as an avoidance strategy, a means of protecting oneself from what they fear in life and love.

This turn to African American culture and men as role models by hipsters, who deluded themselves that by dropping out they relinquished the power they held as white men, served as confirmation that "white men…believe the world is theirs and…albeit unconsciously, expect the world to help them in the achievement of their identity."[92] However, Hefner, in an installment of "The Playboy Philosophy," demonstrated that some white men quite consciously expected the world to help them achieve their identities. He stated:

> I believe that each individual should have the right to explore his own individuality and that society should assist him in this—to discover himself, as well as the world around him—to take pride in himself and in the individuality that sets him apart from the rest of mankind as fully as he takes pride in the kinship that links him to every other person on earth—past, present and future.[93]

While Hefner's suggestion that everyone on earth is one big family is well-intentioned, it is a color-blind approach to race relations that serves to diminish the ramifications of African Americans' marginal status. Further, the romanticization of the marginal status of African Americans obscures Baldwin's claim that African Americans, who are concerned with surviving in a world that is determined to destroy them, do not have the privilege to agonize over identity the way white men do. It also reinforces his assertion that the difficulty in "trying to convey to a white man the reality of the Negro experience has nothing to do with the fact of color," but is due

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[92] Ibid., 180, 183.

[93] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, January 1965, 58.

instead to the fact that a man "will face in your life only what he is willing to face in his."[94]

Likewise, Polsky also uncovered the racism inherent in the hipster's romanticization of the marginal status of African Americans. He asserted:

> Even in the world of the hipster the Negro remains essentially what Ralph Ellison called him—an invisible man. The White Negro accepts the real Negro not as a human being in his totality, but as the bringer of a highly specified and restricted 'cultural dowry,' to use Mailer's phrase. In so doing he creates an inverted form of keeping the nigger in his place.[95]

No matter how deserved these critiques of both the Beats' and Mailer's representation of them may be, they do not alter the Beats' marginal status as much as highlight the extent to which theirs was a chosen marginality based on racial stereotypes. Polsky argued that both the white and black hipster existed between two worlds and described their special cases of marginalization as follows:

> The first thing to notice about these marginal men—white or black—is that they are not the utterly isolated, atomized individuals whom sociologists assume all marginal men to be. They come together and create a little world of their own which elaborates its own worldview, code of behavior, institutions, argot, and so on. They create what to sociologists is a contradiction in terms: a subculture of marginal men.[96]

The Upbeat Generation

Upon the release of its first issue in December 1953, *Playboy* seemed to offer a radical departure from a hegemonic masculinity steeped in domesticity. According to Frank Brady,

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[94] For a response that compares and contrasts the attitudes of the Beats and the black bourgeoisie toward both the white middle class and the black working class, see Gary T. Marx, "The White Negro and the Negro White," *Phylon* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1967), accessed April 30, 2014, http://web.mit.edu/gtmarx/www/whitenegro.html. Marx's response was originally written as a term paper at Berkeley in 1961 and was publication number A83 of the Survey Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley. Baldwin, "The Black Boy," 175, 182-183.

[95] Polsky, "Reflections on Hipsterism," *Dissent*, January 1958, 80.

[96] Ibid., 79.

Playboy offered "an alternative lifestyle with a more permissive, more play-and-pleasure-oriented ethic than the puritanical work ethic that most of the readers were probably raised under. It's an upward-mobile life-style that is an unsubtle seducer of twentieth-century man."[97] Along the same lines, Barbara Ehrenreich argues that the magazine offered a detailed agenda for male rebellion against grey flannel corporate conformity and suburban domestic togetherness; however, she finds this rebellion less than radical. Ehrenreich argues that, in the inaugural issue, Hefner rallies his readers, which comprise an imagined "fraternity of male rebels," around the cause of "reclaim[ing] *the indoors for men*."[98] This description diminishes the grand ambitions Hefner had for his magazine, which he described in the first issue as "fulfilling a publishing need only slightly less important than the one just taken care of by the Kinsey Report."

Playboy's emphasis on reclaiming domestic space as masculine space was as much a slight against suburban togetherness and the breadwinner ethic as it was against the outdoorsy, adventure focus of the majority of men's magazines in the early 1950s. *Playboy* was conceived out of not just the dearth of magazines "for the city-bred male (there are 2—count 'em—2)" but also out of Hefner's dissatisfaction with these magazines' content, which he found lacking in an emphasis on entertainment. Although *Playboy* would go back on its promises that "affairs of state will be out of our province" and that its editors do not expect to "prove any great moral truths," Hefner's initial characterization of the magazine as interested only in providing masculine entertainment demonstrates how domestic and foreign policies of containment shaped even those who were rebelling against such policies. Tuned in to the Cold War zeitgeist, Hefner explained to readers of *Playboy*'s first issue, "If we are able to give the American male a few

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[97] Frank Brady, *Hefner* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 215.

[98] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 43-44; emphasis in the original.

extra laughs and a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age, we'll feel we've justified our existence."[99]

Among these anxieties, of course, were the pressures resulting from the prevailing ideology of the suburban nuclear family. Although it would take until the advent of the Playboy Panel feature in November 1960 for the magazine to begin tackling other social issues in earnest, gender roles and relations were a concern of *Playboy* since its inception.[100] In an age when one's maturity and masculinity hinged on adherence to the breadwinner ethic, Ehrenreich asserts that the truly subversive aspect of *Playboy* was its message that one "didn't have to be a husband to be a man." *Playboy* encouraged its readers to rebel against the notion that a man's status was tied to his family life "through the size of his car, the location of his house, and the social and sartorial graces of his wife." Hefner's and his magazine's claim was that a man could find freedom and distinguish himself from the masses through hard work and tasteful consumption. As such, the magazine provided men with an alternative means of status, which could be achieved through remaining single, indulging in private masculine pleasures, and eschewing the trappings of suburban life.[101] While a man's status still relied upon conspicuous consumption, he was freed of the pressure to marry and start a family.

While the taste culture and masculinity proffered by *Playboy* shared a love of jazz and rejection of the breadwinner ethic with the Beats, Hefner and his magazine actively sought to

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[99] "Volume I, Number I," 3.

[100] The intention of "The Playboy Panel," which was launched in November 1960 with a forum on "Narcotics and the Jazz Musician," was to offer "lively discussions, by experts in their fields, on provocative topics of contemporary interest and concern." "Playbill," *Playboy*, November 1960, 3.

[101] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 49-51.

distance the Playboy lifestyle from the Beats' association with voluntary poverty and the underclass. Accordingly, Hefner referred to his magazine's followers as the Upbeat Generation, of which Ehrenreich says, "They were, in fact, Beats inverted."[102] This inversion served to undermine any notion that the Beats were a desirable or viable alternative to hegemonic masculinity. *Playboy* first used the label in the December 1958 issue, when it claimed that, in its five years of publication, *Playboy* has become the voice of the Upbeat Generation. However, it would take until Hefner's second installment of "The Playboy Philosophy," in the January 1963 issue, before the meaning of the term would be fully elaborated. However, in 1959, at least one reader felt enough affiliation with the magazine and the generational label it bestowed on its readers to write a letter to the editor declaring his support for the term and the magazine that promoted it.[103]

Like the Beats, Hefner's intention in using the label was to describe the shared characteristics of the wider generation and not just those of *Playboy*'s readers. Although the label Upbeat Generation never captured the popular imagination the way the notion of a Beat Generation did, the opposition to the Beats inherent in the label Upbeat spoke to the continued importance of status to Playboy masculinity despite efforts to change the conditions through which status is conferred. Hefner, who in terms of age is a member of the same generation as the Beats, also recalled his generation's dissatisfaction with the social roles and expectations of the late 1940s. Calling the Beats "a colorful fringe only" and "modern-day nihilists for whom it was enough, apparently, to flout and defy," he argued that the national media attention accorded to

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[102] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 61.

[103] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," January 1963, 49-51; "Playbill," *Playboy*, December 1958, 3; "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, March 1959, 5.

the Beats served only to distract the nation "from a much more significant and larger segment of the new generation, a group less colorful on the surface (without the beards, berets and dirty underwear), but sharing the rebellious spirit of the Beats, and equally ready to throw off the shackles of sameness and security."[104] In other words, while the Playboy man could be thought of as a hipster in organization men's clothing, *Playboy* worked hard to present the Beats as unemployed organization men in hipster's clothing. By characterizing the Beats as the same conformity in a less desirable package, *Playboy* strengthened its position in relation to hipness and adult masculinity. Content to follow other critics in dismissing the Beats as "Nihilism's Organization Men," Hefner described the Upbeat Generation as another term for what *Life* had four months earlier called the "Take-Over Generation." What distinguished these individuals from the rest of their generation and those previous is a purpose in life beyond security and private success, a dedication to hard work, a willingness to pursue difficult questions, and a sense of hope about mankind. Like Jack Kerouac, Hefner claimed that the mood and attitude of his generation most resembles those of the Lost Generation, who came of age during World War I and is associated with the Roaring Twenties. However, unlike Kerouac and the Beats, Hefner argued that the bulk of his generation (evidence of security-seeking conformity to the contrary) was unaffected by the negativity of the Great Depression and World War II.[105]

As opposed to the alleged nihilism of the Beats, *Playboy* offered a map to the good life—one that promised all the freedom and hipness of the Beats and the material comforts of the organization man. Before the mainstream press accorded some of them praise for their literary

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[104] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," January 1963, 50.

[105] Malcolm Bradbury, quoted in Herbert Gold, "The Restless Mecca," *Playboy*, September 1960, 118; Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," January 1963, 50; Kerouac, "The Origins," 32; "A Red-Hot Hundred," *Life*, September 14, 1962, 4.

contributions or took notice of the more peculiar aspects of the taste public the Beats comprised, *Playboy* could also afford to ignore the Beat Generation. However, because there were overlaps in the tastes, especially for jazz and humor, of the Beats and the Playboy man, the magazine risked looking even squarer than the mainstream press if it continued to ignore the Beat phenomenon. The relationship of the Upbeat Generation to the Beat Generation is characterized by both cautious affinity and conscious distancing and is expressed not only in "The Playboy Philosophy" but also in articles by and about the Beat Generation as well as cartoons and other humor pieces lampooning the Beats. Like other outlets of mainstream media, *Playboy* began covering the Beat phenomenon in the late 1950s after the publication of Kerouac's *On the Road*. *Playboy*'s first reference to the subculture came in the form of a mixed review of this novel. While the beginning of the review seems to approve of the ways the main characters "live life furiously," the review concludes that the novel is disturbing, calling it "a sharpie's travelog full of literary *Weltschmerz*, jazz slanguage and the frenetic doings of a bunch of sensitive, pathetic—but interesting—cats."[106] Two months later, citing the glowing review of *On the Road* in the *New York Times* and the novel's status as "a literary sensation," *Playboy* included a short story by Kerouac as part of a holiday bonus of "fine fiction."[107] The next month, February 1958, the magazine published a three-article series titled "The Beat Mystique," in which Herbert Gold provided a scathing analysis of what *Playboy* calls "the off beat generation" and Noel Clad and Sam Boal critiqued the Beats through their observations of the subculture at parties in San Francisco and New York City, respectively. By this time, Gold was a regular contributor to *Playboy*, and he would author 35 short stories, 8 articles (including his analysis of the Beats, an

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[106] "Playboy After Hours: Books," *Playboy*, November 1957, 17-18.

[107] "Playbill," *Playboy*, January 1958, 2.

examination of Greenwich Village as a site of American rebellion, and a portrait of West Coast hippies), and have his work reviewed 14 times in *Playboy* between July 1955 and October 1972.

Regardless of the fondness the magazine and many of its readers expressed for Gold's writing, it was his own personal relationship with the Beats that made him *Playboy*'s perfect analyst of the scene. While attending Columbia University, Gold had befriended Allen Ginsberg and been a part of the Beat scene in New York. Unlike Ginsberg, however, he was highly critical of Kerouac, and as his analysis in *Playboy* demonstrates, by 1958, he was critical of the entire Beat scene. Of the hipster of 1958, Gold opined, "Mainly he is afflicted with the great triumvirate disease of the American Male—Passivity, Anxiety, Boredom." Utilizing language that could just as easily describe the suburban-dwelling pursuers of the nuclear family ideal against which the Beats were rebelling, he went on to call them "individualists without individuality, a sleepy brawl of knowing non-thinkers, the lonely crowd at its grumbling loneliest."[108] Such linkages between the Beats and the conformity associated with the suburban Organization Man are also reinforced through *Playboy*'s cartoons (fig. 2).

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[108] "Herbert Gold Biography," *Ohio Reading Road Trip*, accessed June 16, 2013, http://www.orrt.org/gold/; Gold, "The Beat Mystique: What It Is—Whence It Came," *Playboy*, February 1958, 85; "Playbill," *Playboy*, February 1958, 3.

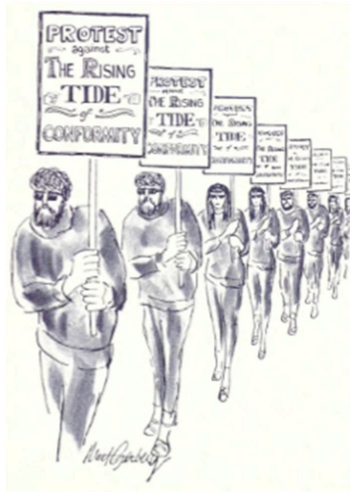

Figure 2. Protest against the rising tide of conformity.
Source: Mort Gerberg, *Playboy*, August 1965, 154.

The Beats fair little better in the other two articles in the series. Although Boal approved of the willingness of Beat "chicks" to go to bed without any endearments, his article nevertheless supports Gold's claims that Beats are nihilists and that Beat men are passive in bed. Observing a party of upper class Beats, Boal reported, "For the girl to take off her clothes is cool and for the man to remain indifferent is similarly cool. Remember, these cats are beat. They've had it. Nothing matters. Why bother, man? Who needs anything?"[109] Although Boal's article is concerned with upper-class Beats, representations of Beats in the magazine tend to highlight their voluntary poverty and undesirable living conditions (fig. 3). Clad, observed a party in the "almost barren" apartment of a painter in North Beach, comments on the party's mixture of Beats, former Beats who were now "young householders" wearing suits and married to squares, and tourists. He also drew connections between the Beats and suburbanites, saying of the latter group, "Halfway between the Beach and Burlingame and satisfied with neither, beat was their

[109] Sam Boal, "The Beat Mystique: Cool Swinging in New York," *Playboy*, February 1958, 50.

word, too."[110] The June 1958 issue featured sixteen letters from readers regarding "The Beat Mystique;" most of these letters praised the series and expressed agreement with the negative assessment of the Beats it offered. One reader praised *Playboy* for having "enough guts to buck fads."[111] Of course, this letter failed to take into account the fact that covering the Beats at this time was just as faddish as being one.

Figure 3. "We've been beatniks for 30 years and nobody thought we were anything special!"
Source: Jack Davis, *Playboy*, June 1962, 129.

In line with other mainstream media outlets, *Playboy*'s coverage of the Beats peaked in 1959. This coverage included an article by Kerouac, "The Origins of the Beat Generation" (June 1959); poems by Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Gregory Corso (July 1959); an article on "The Coffee Houses of America" (July 1959); a Beat Playmate; and a novelette by Kerouac (December 1959). *Playboy* tempered its inclusion of Beat poetry by placing it between the article on

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[110] The Beach refers to the San Francisco neighborhood of North Beach, which was the center of Beat activity in Northern California. Burlingame is a suburb of San Francisco. Noel Clad, "The Beat Mystique: A Frigid Frolic in Frisco," *Playboy*, February 1958, 21, 74.

[111] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, June 1958, 5-6.

coffeehouses and the centerfold. By surrounding the poems with captioned photographs of various coffeehouse scenes, the poetry appeared to be a justifiable complement to the coffeehouse article rather than a central feature of the issue. The coffeehouse article and photographs de-emphasized beat poetry readings at coffeehouses, focusing instead on depicting and describing various types of coffeehouses and their clientele along with activities such as conversation and chess.

The only performers depicted in the article and photographs are comedians Lenny Bruce and Mort Sahl; as two of *Playboy*'s favorite comics, their inclusion provided a context for interpreting coffeehouse culture in relation to the larger Playboy taste culture. Although Jim Morad referred to Sahl as a "beat comic," Playboy's affinity for him as well as Bruce concerned the way these comics unabashedly satirized and called into question dominant political and social relations. Unlike the typical nightclub comic, Sahl and Bruce offered audiences lengthy observations and critiques of U.S. society that required a sophisticated sensibility to appreciate. In his article on the coffee house scene, Morad labeled Sahl "the symbol of the American coffee house" and explained the comic's frequenting of coffeehouses as follows: "Although he performs in the gin mills, he hangs out in the java joints, prowling them in the wee hours after work, drawing from them and their customers much of his incisive, insightful material." Elsewhere in the issue, Sahl was further aligned with *Playboy*'s tastes, when it was announced that he would emcee both of the Saturday shows at the upcoming three-day Playboy Jazz Festival.[112] Additionally, a profile of Sahl from *Playboy*'s June 1957 issue explained his appeal

[112] Sahl also offered his opinion on topics ranging from humor to the womanization of America as a participant in multiple Playboy Panel discussions. In addition to being a regular guest at the Playboy Mansion, Sahl went on to marry China Lee, *Playboy*'s first Playmate of color (August 1964). Playboy also published Bruce's autobiography in serial form in the magazine. "Jazz, Jazz, Jazz," *Playboy*, July 1959, 93; Morad, "Coffee Houses," 95; Kathryn

to "the more aware in the audience" as follows:

> Jazz lingo exists right alongside egghead argot in Sahl's vocabulary and he spends much his time with jazz musicians. Stan Kenton was one of Sahl's early sponsors and placed him on the same program when the band played the Palladium. Mort also digs such urban interests as hi-fi and sports cars, and uses the subjects in his act.[113]

A February 1959 profile of Bruce described him as "less cerebral and a good deal further out" than Sahl and "a free-wheeling iconoclast who pokes fun at some of the sickest aspects of our society."[114] Bruce, like Playboy, also challenged obscenity laws, and this connection to the championing of free speech connected him to the Playboy philosophy just as strongly as his mordant humor. Playboy even provided evidence in Bruce's defense of an obscenity charge in Chicago.[115] Three months after *Playboy*'s assessment of the coffee house scene, Bruce would appear as a guest on the premiere of *Playboy's Penthouse*, and Sahl would appear on both Hefner-hosted variety series. Such close connections to the Playboy lifestyle overshadowed any Beat connections that the comics may have had.

The issue's "Beat Playmate" (fig. 4) also minimizes the significance of the inclusion of Beat poetry while providing reference points for interpreting the Beat milieu in relation to the tastes and masculinity presented in *Playboy*. Playmates, especially those who "frown prettily on conformity," and jazz are two staples of the Playboy taste culture, which governs and expresses

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Leigh Scott, *The Bunny Years* (New York: Gallery Books, 1998), 18-19; "The Sound of Beat," *Playboy*, July 1959, 44-45. See also, Lenny Bruce, "How to Talk Dirty and Influence People," *Playboy*, October & November, 1963, January-March 1964.

[113] Rolf Malcolm, "A Real Free-Form Guy," *Playboy*, June 1957, 51.

[114] Larry Siegel, "Rebel with a Caustic Cause," *Playboy*, February 1959, 66.

[115] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, May 1963, 68.

Playboy masculinity.[116] At first glance, the centerfold photo of Yvette Vickers appears little different from other centerfolds appearing in *Playboy* throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Vickers, clothed only in a blouse, lies on her stomach on an orange couch. She is using one hand to operate the tone arm of a turntable that sits on the floor; ostensibly, she is playing one of the jazz albums that are strewn about the floor in front of and under the couch. Her other hand is in her tousled hair as she glances toward the camera. This look along with her hair, state of undress, an open poetry book, the number of LPs strewn about, and the presence of two glasses of wine indicate that she and the man alluded to in the photograph have been enjoying many forms of entertainment. Because no man is visibly present in the photograph, readers can interpret Vickers's look as directed at them and an indication that she is more interested in what a Playboy man rather than a fellow Beat has to offer. While this image can be read as reinforcing *Playboy*'s affinity for the supposedly more liberated attitudes toward sex of Beat women, it also demonstrates the ways Playboy distinguishes its taste culture from those of the Beats. Furthermore, leisure competence, especially that tied to the connoisseurship of hi-fi equipment and music, is central to the Playboy lifestyle as a means of displaying both one's taste and masculinity. *Playboy* regularly deployed images, usually in the form of cartoons, of messy apartments, inferior hi-fi equipment, and records carelessly strewn about floors in order to convey the lack of taste and sophistication of Beats and later hippies. While *Playboy* approves of Vickers' consumption of jazz, the mismatched glasses, LPs without sleeves, and cigarette ash dropped on the carpet and LPs, all work to distance Beats from sophisticated, competent consumption.

[116] "Beat Playmate," *Playboy*, July 1959, 47.

Figure 4. Beat Playmate, Yvonne Vickers.
Source: “Beat Playmate,” *Playboy*, July 1959, 48-50. Photo by Russ Meyer.

This distancing is especially evident when juxtaposed with a similar centerfold image from the November 1966 issue (fig. 5). Although Playmate Lisa Baker, lies on the floor near jazz LPs, the photograph communicates sophistication and taste. The LPs are stacked neatly and remain in their sleeves, indicating considered consumption rather than careless clutter. The LPs pictured are closely aligned with the Playboy taste culture as they include albums by Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra, two of Hefner’s favorite vocalists, as well as an album by Chicago vocalist Johnny Janis, which was produced by Hefner. Baker lies naked on an animal skin near a cheeseboard and drinks in matching glasses, which indicate a level of luxury absent in the photograph of the Beat Playmate. Other accompanying photos depict Baker record shopping and listening intently with her eyes closed to an album by Count Basie.[117] These activities align her with the leisure competence and taste culture of the Playboy man.

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[117] “Member of the Wedding,” *Playboy*, November 1966, 125.

Figure 5. Playmate Lisa Baker.
Source: "Member of the Wedding," *Playboy*, November 1966, 126-128. Photos by William V. Figge and Edward DeLong.

In addition to such visual codes, *Playboy* utilized letters from readers to achieve its simultaneous embrace and disavowal of the Beats. The July 1959 issue's inclusion of Beat poetry and a Beat Playmate garnered mixed responses from readers. The number and tone of the letters *Playboy* printed in response to these features allowed the magazine to reinforce a preferred reading of the content. Given this and the fact that the Playmate of the Month is a regular feature of the magazine while poetry, Beat or otherwise, is not, it is unsurprising that the majority of the letters published concern the Beat Playmate and that seven of the nine letters concerning Vickers respond positively to her centerfold photograph. The longest response to Vickers' centerfold accuses *Playboy* of using the Beat phenomenon as a publicity gimmick to promote another would-be actress. Delineating evidence that Vickers is not a real Beat, reader Connie Gray stated:

> Never have I seen a beat chick shed her britches…bra, yes. Secondly, I've yet to see a beat drink wine out of a glass that at one time or another didn't hold jelly, peanut butter or a candle. There was, in your triple-page picture, no evidence of bongo drums, long black stockings, the essential shark tooth on a chain, or many, many other items no beat

could be complete without.[118]

For *Playboy*, whether Vickers is a real Beat or not matters little; to present her as such served merely to naturalize the other Beat-related content in the issue. Furthermore, the publication of Gray's letter served to reinforce the caricature of the Beats present in media representations, such as that of Maynard G. Krebs, allowing *Playboy* to distance itself from the Beats without apologizing for publishing poetry or centerfolds that capitalize on mainstream curiosity about the subculture. Of the six letters that concern the inclusion of Beat poetry, only two of them responded favorably. Again, *Playboy* designated the majority of column space to negative letters, giving one reader letter nearly one-third of a page to vent his dismay at *Playboy*'s repeated coverage of the Beats. Concluding with a plea to *Playboy* to "think it over," Wade Anderson, opined:

> Actually, of course, there is no such thing as a Beat Generation. There is only a scattering of goofballs, male and female, who cluster in the semi-slums of San Francisco and New York, uttering animal whimpers of protest and despair while belting themselves silly with drink and dope. The Bleat Generation would be a more accurate name for the lot. Or Deadbeatniks.[119]

Anderson's negative assessment of the Beats was consistent with the image presented the previous year in "The Beat Mystique," and his comparison of the Beats to sheep reinforced the characterization of the Beats as "Nihilism's Organization Men."

As mainstream curiosity about the Beats waned, so did *Playboy*'s attention to the subculture. The magazine would print a novelette and a short story by Kerouac in December 1959 and January 1965, respectively, but the historically mixed tone of its reviews of Kerouac's work would change considerably. While reviews printed before 1960 at least acknowledged that

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[118] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, October 1959, 8.

[119] "Dear Playboy," October 1959, 11-12.

he possessed "genuine talent," later ones tended not to be so merciful. For example, a review from September 1962 states, "Jack Kerouac has written another novel. The title is *Big Sur*…which is how the reader can tell it from his previous novels."[120] Likewise, the review of *Satori in Paris* calls the book "mercifully short," going on to complain, "But even so, the talk is dull, the thinking uninteresting, and we have heard the same story and been tuned in to the same thought process before."[121] As evidenced by numerous cartoons, negative depictions of Beats in short stories and articles, and Hefner's use of the label Upbeat Generation, *Playboy*'s overriding interest in the Beats stemmed primarily from their usefulness as a foil to Playboy's taste culture and masculinity, which were presented as providing a more authentic individualism and defiance of hegemonic masculinity.[122]

Playboy and the Counterculture

While *Playboy* was able to write off the Beats as the negative fringe of a generation better characterized as Upbeat and establish itself as a survival guide to the new leisure society for white, middle class men, the magazine and its taste culture were less prepared to handle the emerging countercultural youth movements of the mid- to late-1960s that were characterized by the student activists of the New Left, the communal living and loving of the hippies, and the new sounds of rock music.[123] Since its inception, a large portion of *Playboy*'s readership had been

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[120] "Playboy After Hours: Books," *Playboy*, September 1962, 48.

[121] "Playboy After Hours: Books," *Playboy*, February 1967, 24.

[122] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 134.

[123] I am using counterculture as an umbrella term to encompass the segment of the youth population, both on and off college campuses, that expressed sociopolitical views and tastes that opposed the dominant social, political, and cultural structures in the U.S. during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although I recognize that not all participants in the counterculture were of college age and that the distinction between the New Left (also referred to as student activists)

comprised of college men. As such, the magazine took an active interest in campus life and dedicated portions of its September issues to topics of special interest to the P.M.O.C., or Playboy Man on Campus, such as campus fashion, college football, and more serious critiques of the country's system of mass education. Therefore, changes in campus life and politics were of special concern for the publication.

However, while *Playboy* liked to characterize the P.M.O.C. as fashionable, in relation to the tastes and relaxed dress of the counterculture, he ended up appearing rather conservative (fig. 6). *Playboy* first addressed its college readers as P.M.O.C.s in the September 1958 issue, when it ran its first feature on back to school fashion. This feature, "The Well-Clad Undergrad," was based on a nationwide survey of male college students and "163 managers of major campus men's wear stores." The survey collected information on what clothing campus men owned, what they planned to buy, and what they actually bought and was conducted by *Playboy*'s campus representatives, college men who promoted the magazine on campus in exchange for a free subscription and other merchandise. At the time of the survey, *Playboy* had 300 representatives on campuses across the country. As a magazine aimed at the affluent and upwardly mobile, it is unsurprising that it advised P.M.O.Cs to adopt an Ivy League style while paying attention to acceptable variations for climate or campus culture. In the article, Robert L. Green, who would become *Playboy*'s Fashion Editor, admitted that Ivy League dress was conservative, but he was careful to point out that this was preferable to the conformity of fads and that the survey responses showed that "though Ivy is the arbiter and criterion, *group*

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and the hippies is artificial as there was overlap between these groups, I am making these distinctions because they are consistent with the way that *Playboy* characterizes the counterculture at the time. For more about the challenges that rock music posed to the Playboy taste culture as well as coverage of the civil rights movement in the magazine, see chapter 7.

individuality does exist."[124] Although by 1966, fashions have become more casual, Green's advice changes little over the years; Ivy League remains the arbiter and *Playboy*'s intent is to help the P.M.O.C. "select a wardrobe that's distinctively right not only for you but for your own collegiate area as well."[125] Articles such as these characterized the problems of the P.M.O.C. as apolitical, and those article that did address campus politics did not invoke the figure of the P.M.O.C.

Figure 6. P.M.O.C.s at the University of Washington.
Source: Robert L. Green, "Back to Campus," *Playboy*, September 1966, 182.

While it was certainly in *Playboy*'s economic interests to address growing unrest on college campuses and the increasing involvement of students in wider social movements, such as those for civil rights and against the war in Vietnam, these social issues also resonated with

[124] Another way that campus representatives promoted *Playboy* was through throwing Playboy-themed fraternity parties, and *Playboy* claimed that in the preceding year, 25,000 students and faculty members had attended a Playboy Formal Party. At these parties, a party Playmate would often be chosen from among the female guests. The September 1958 Playmate of the Month had been chosen as party Playmate, and the images and text accompanying her centerfold spread depict Playboy Formal Parties on campuses across the U.S. Robert L. Green, "The Well-Clad Undergrad," *Playboy*, September 1958, 31, 34, 70; "Saucy Sophomore," *Playboy*, September 1958, 41-42.

[125] Robert L. Green, "Back to Campus," *Playboy*, September 1966, 179.

Playboy's liberal politics. Although geared toward a decidedly white audience, civil rights and segregation had been discussed in the magazine since the late 1950s. Dedicated coverage of the civil rights movement began in the early 1960s with Nat Hentoff reporting on the quest for racial equality in the July 1962 issue and Malcolm X serving as the subject of the May 1963 Playboy Interview. Attention to the student protests and anti-war movement began with another article by Hentoff that appears in the March 1966 issue.[126]

Like Playboy, the counterculture was a movement enabled by postwar affluence, and if we accept Whyte's claims in *The Organization Man*, it is easy to see how the sociopolitical values of the counterculture marked a radical shift from the dominant values of the generation that preceded it. Whyte observes that the majority of white, middle class men coming of age in the late 1950s expressed no cynicism about the system.[127] However, within a decade, there would appear to be little about the system that did not provoke the cynicism and activism of youth protesting and organizing on and off college campuses. In Hentoff's March 1966 article about the student activists, it is clear that activism on college campuses has been effected in part due to postwar affluence. In the article, Robert Hutchins, former chancellor of the University of Chicago, explained that the increased political activity on campuses was attributable, in part, to the changing composition of the student body. Hutchins states that when earlier generations of college students arrived on campus, they were already firmly members of the establishment and were primarily interested in confirming their beliefs and improving their positions within the establishment. However, he argues the expansion of the middle class granted greater access to

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[126] See Leonard Feather, "Ella Meets the Duke," *Playboy*, November 1957; Nat Hentoff, "Through the Racial Looking Glass," *Playboy*, July 1962; Hentoff, "We're Happening All Over, Baby!," *Playboy*, March 1966; "Playboy Interview: Malcolm X," *Playboy*, May 1963.

[127] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 143-144.

higher education so that students were now pursuing their educations out of a genuine desire to learn that was coupled with lower stakes in maintaining the status quo.[128]

Although intrigued by their embrace of free love, the hippies were more difficult to align with the Playboy taste culture than were their counterparts in the New Left. As Ehrenreich explains, "The counterculture of the sixties was—in some ways—the Beat revolt all over again, rerun in Technicolor and with a cast, this time of hundreds of thousands."[129] A sympathetic portrait of the hippies that appeared in *Playboy*'s October 1967 issue reinforced the relationship between the Beats and the counterculture. In this article, Herbert Gold stated that the hippies, or, as he referred to them, the new wave makers, "are the descendants of the Beats, but with new drugs, new toys, new fads and new sex."[130] Ehrenreich, however, claims that the counterculture did not constitute a male rebellion, stating that "the hippies discarded masculinity as a useful category for expression." Here, Ehrenreich overstates her case, but the idea that the superficial androgyny of the hippies—expressed by the preference for long hair and colorful clothing by both genders—was one of their most shocking features is reiterated in *Playboy*.[131] The hippies' sexuality was harder to call into question, but their masculinity was an easy target. For example, the following description of folk singer Arlo Guthrie illustrates that the androgyny of the hippies was a common source of ridicule in *Playboy*:

> In dress, he is at the epicenter of the unisex-folkbilly gear-quake, with crushed-red-velvet Levis and shocking pink ruffled dress blouse for his concerts, as a good illustration, and his long curly hair hangs down to his shoulders; and when he snaps his head around to

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[128] Hentoff, "We're Happening," 146.

[129] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 107.

[130] Herbert Gold, "The New Wave Makers," *Playboy*, October 1967, 140.

[131] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 107.

keep it out of his eyes, he looks like a petulant East Side rich chick who has just been told she cannot drink in a stevedores' bar in Old Chelsea.[132]

Similarly, a cartoon in the November 1970 issue, which depicts a police officer confronting a nude hippie couple, took the joke of not being able to tell the boys from the girls to its logical extreme with the caption indicating that it was the androgyny of the boy that caused the real concern (fig. 7).

"I got sick of people asking us which is the boy. . . ."

Figure 7. "I got sick of people asking us which is the boy...."
Source: Don Orehek, *Playboy*, November 1970, 190.

In a March 1967 article for *Playboy*, Paul Goodman referred to the baby boom generation, of which the counterculture was a part, as "the new aristocrats." He pointed out that the radical student activists' middle class status marked them as the heirs to the dominant power in society. Moreover, because postwar affluence is the only economic condition they had known, he asserted that theirs was the first generation that could select its standard of living. While the counterculture resembled the Beats in terms of their shagginess and chosen poverty, they could easily return to the affluence of middle class life whenever they wanted. However,

[132] Saul Braun, "Alice and Ray and Yesterday's Flowers," *Playboy*, October 1969, 122.

Goodman argued that it was precisely because the counterculture grew up with economic security that they felt no need to climb the social ladder. While he maintained that the counterculture had been influenced by the voluntary poverty of the Beats, he also saw the student activists' choice to live below their middle class means as a response to the involuntary poverty they had witnessed in their work and friendships with people of color. Theologian Harvey Cox echoed this sentiment in a January 1968 article in which he argued that "only an affluent, highly industrialized welfare society could afford such a movement." Although the suburbs in which many of the student activists had grown up may have strived towards an appearance of classlessness, activism in the civil rights movement demonstrated to these students that the experience of postwar affluence had not been as widespread as they might have liked to imagine.[133]

Repeatedly, *Playboy* characterized the New Left as other-directed; i.e., rather than being driven by their own "psychological gyroscopes," the student activists simply acted upon their parents' values, which kept them in step with the peers from whom they sought approval.[134] In January 1970, U.S. Senator George McGovern penned an article in which he reinforced many of Goodman's claims about the baby boomers. He argued that while the war in Vietnam was the core factor in discontent among the young, they were also concerned "that the promise of America be fulfilled for all citizens." Ultimately, McGovern argued that most of the complaints of the young activists were just, stating, "In the best sense, the values of our young people are

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[133] Harvey Cox, "God and the Hippies," *Playboy*, January 1968, 94; Paul Goodman, "The New Aristocrats," *Playboy*, March 1967, 152, 154, 156; Whyte, *Organization Man*, 331.

[134] Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd*, 31-32, 36-37.

still the values of their parents."[135]

A more negative assessment of the student activists appeared in a November 1969 interview with Mick Jagger, singer for the Rolling Stones, who were described as having "become the moral scapegoats for the English middle class; and…when it comes to moral standards, 99 percent of England is middle class." Jagger dismissed the notion that he had anything to do with the current campus unrest and stated that it only interested him because he had been a student at the London School of Economics several years earlier. Although he said he could not think of anything more boring than taking over the administration of a university, he said that he supported the student activists as long as they believed in what they were doing. However, he quickly cast doubt on the authenticity of the activists' political convictions, stating, "Half these kids that shout out for anarchy and all the rest of it, well, they're all little organization men, really, aren't they?"[136] Jagger's dismissal of the student activists held up Playboy's conviction that an effective way of quelling a threat was to point out the conformity of one's opposition.

McGovern's assessment of the students' values was confirmed by a March 1971 article by Richard Flacks, then a professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, which provides details about the results of a study he helped lead in 1965. The study compared the attitudes of 50 activist students and their parents with those of 50 non-activist students and their parents. In short, the study reported differences in the parents of activists and non-activists in terms of occupation, roles in the home, and values. Student activists tended to have fathers employed in professional occupations and mothers who worked full-time outside the home. At home,

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[135] George McGovern, "Reconciling the Generations," *Playboy*, January 1970, 126, 132.

[136] Alan Coren, "Head Stone," *Playboy*, November 1969, 163, 249.

activists' parents tended to share authority and place an emphasis on cultivating intellectual and cultural interests in their children. On the other hand, non-activist students tended to have fathers who were employed as corporate executives or independent businessmen and mothers who worked as housewives. At home, non-activists' fathers tended to be dominant in terms of exerting authority. Additionally, non-activists' parents tended to fill their own and their children's leisure time with entertainment and hobbies, and while they held that school was important, they tended not to hold intellectual aspirations for their children. Ultimately, Flacks' study concluded that the early student activists of the New Left were simply acting upon the values they had learned at home rather than rebelling against their parents. While the study found that shared authority in the home along with mothers who worked outside the home did lead to changes in student activists' conceptions of masculinity and femininity, Flacks saw these changes in conceptions of gender as a positive development rather than a cause for concern, arguing that the student left were exemplars of a new character type.[137]

Playboy's problem with the androgyny of the counterculture can be understood as an extension of its concerns with Momism and the resultant weakening of masculinity.[138] In a companion article to the one by Flacks, Bruno Bettelheim, then a professor of psychoanalysis at the University of Chicago, saw changing conceptions of gender and gender roles as the cause of the student rebellion and a source of grave concern. Bettelheim, arguing that authority in the U.S. was under attack due to "the loss of a distinct role for fathers," revived and reinforced

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[137] Richard Flacks, "The Roots of Radicalism," *Playboy*, March 1971, 107-108.

[138] Momism is the idea that American boys are being weakened by overbearing mothers and that American men have abdicated their power through the appeasement of these controlling women, most notably by ceding control of their paychecks and the family finances to their wives. This idea was most vehemently perpetuated by Philip Wylie in his 1942 book *Generation of Vipers* and reiterated in articles that he penned for *Playboy*. See Wylie, "Common Women," in *Generation of Vipers*, War ed. (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1942), 184-204.

Wylie's arguments against Momism in his assessment of radicalism amongst college students. Bettelheim argued that boys growing up in the suburbs could not identify with their fathers because the father image had been downgraded. The father's authority expressed through his work outside the home remained invisible to boys; instead, they witnessed their fathers both lacking authority in the home and acquiescing to a schedule of chores devised by their wives. The perceived weakness of fathers combined with the fact that mothers tended to be the most cultured members of the household made the mother's role more appealing to boys. Because weak fathers provided nothing for their sons to emulate, boys ended up emulating their mothers, which, Bettelheim argued, explained the counterculture's adoption of long hair and unisex clothing.[139]

Additionally, Bettelheim argued that male student activists lacked the qualities necessary for success in business and other means of productive work, finding in their activism instead a reflection of the socially conscious, emotionally-driven behavior of their mothers. The blurring of social roles was a problem for Bettelheim, who argued that authority can be shared in a household as long as parents maintained specific types of masculine and feminine authority that were recognizable as such by their children. Otherwise, he argued, shared parental authority led to "such aberrant behavior as this feminized approach to politics." He contended that middle class youth were revolting against the establishment because their weak fathers are not worth the trouble of rebelling against.[140]

Although articles and cartoons appearing in *Playboy* often pointed out problems with the

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[139] Bruno Bettelheim, "The Roots of Radicalism," *Playboy*, March 1971, 106, 124, 206-207.

[140] Ibid., 206-207.

system, the magazine could not endorse a complete rebellion against the system. As a result, the way it tended to distance its taste culture and masculinity from that of the counterculture was through ridiculing and finding fault with the counterculture. Because *Playboy* shared some (but certainly not all) of the New Left's sociopolitical beliefs, the student activists tended to be taken more seriously in the magazine.[141] As a result, the magazine's scrutiny was most often directed at the hippies. In addition to calling male hippies' masculinity into question, *Playboy* often characterized the hippies as defiant children (fig. 8) and pointed out their middle class roots and the hypocrisy of their voluntary poverty.

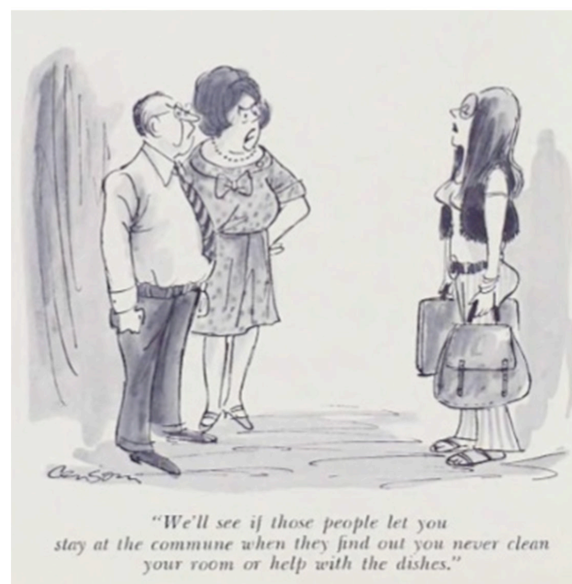

Figure 8. "We'll see if those people let you stay at the commune when they find out you never clean your room or help with the dishes."
Source: Robert Censoni, *Playboy*, May 1971, 213.

Playboy called the voluntary poverty of hippies into question through articles and cartoons that highlighted the fact that they can return to the affluence from whence they came (fig. 9) and depicted the hippies as taking handouts even while utilizing their economic privilege to ensure a certain level of comfort in their lives. Even Gold's "sympathetic portrait" of the

[141] See, for example, "The Playboy Panel: Student Revolt," *Playboy*, September 1969.

hippies maintained some skepticism about their authenticity. For example, Gold recounted a conversation with the proprietor of an Army-surplus store who told him, "You know, poor as they act, they never buy the cheap sleeping bag. I sell 'em the forty-sixty-dollar job—good down, great attachments. They come in with their rags, but they don't buy anything but the Cadillac of sleeping bags. You think maybe they get money from someplace? Home?"[142] Shel Silverstein's two-part series of cartoons about his experiences among the hippies in Haight-Ashbury also highlighted the ways that hippies continued to benefit from the affluence of their parents. One of his cartoons depicts Silverstein speaking to a hippie couple in a car. The male hippie says, "Well, sure…lots of hippies have cars. I need a car. I mean, how else would I be able to get home weekends….Not that I want to go home, but that's the only way I can get my allowance, man….I mean, not that I want an allowance, but how else could I pay the rent on a seven-room apartment….Not that I…."[143] Such characterizations painted the hippies as "coddle misfits" and their purported lack of independence and rejection of hard work made them easy to dismiss for *Playboy*, which based its philosophy on autonomy and working just as hard as one played. The Playboy man was a self-made man; by contrast, the hippies were often painted as concerned with neither ambition nor masculinity.[144]

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[142] Gold, "The New Wave Makers," 191.

[143] Shel Silverstein, "Silverstein Among the Hippies," *Playboy*, July 1968, 122-123; emphasis and ellipses in the original.

[144] Flacks, "Roots of Radicalism," 107.

Figure 9. "I've put some money in trust for you. You will be able to collect it when you are thirty, if, in the opinion of the trustees, you have sold out to the establishment."
Source: John Bernard Handelsman, *Playboy*, May 1969, 208.

Cox's article offers the most optimistic attempt at understanding the hippies to appear in *Playboy*. In "God and the Hippies," Cox compared the voluntary poverty of the hippies to that of Saint Francis of Assisi. Just as Kerouac linked Beat to beatitude, Cox argued that the hippies could be seen as a "new religious movement" with the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco serving as its Holy City. However, he worried about what he saw as the hippies' political naïveté, arguing that dropping out of society "doesn't mean society won't be able to devise ways to use you." He also lamented that the hippies were not more politically and socially engaged; i.e., that while they were open to sharing amongst themselves, this generosity did not have a more global reach. Ginsberg, however, who by the mid- to late 1960s (along with Norman Mailer) was considered an elder statesman of the New Left, contended that the hippies were increasingly politically engaged and joining forces with the student activists. Remaining optimistic about without completely endorsing the hippies' way of life, Cox returned to lingering concerns over the problem of leisure. Holding that automation will lead to 30- and then 20-hour workweeks, increased vacation time, and earlier retirement, he reiterated Americans' need to

"outgrow our preoccupation with work as the sole means of achieving human fulfillment" and to embrace leisure. At best, Cox offered the suggestion that the hippies may be seen as working out a new model of the leisure lifestyle.[145]

When it came to defining a leisure lifestyle, however, the taste cultures that defined the hippies' and the Playboy lifestyle were nearly polar opposites. For example, the Playboy ideal embraced solitary living while the hippie ideal involved communal living ad the Playboy remained committed to jazz fandom while the counterculture played a pivotal role in making rock the dominant form of popular music in American culture. While the Playboy lifestyle sought to postpone the pressures of the nuclear family ideal, it had no intentions of turning its back on the comforts of postwar middle class affluence. In the second installment of "The Playboy Philosophy," Hefner claimed, "The acquisition of property—and in the 1960s property may mean a handsome bachelor pad, elaborate hi-fi rig and the latest sports car—is the cornerstone of our American economic system."[146] Despite agreeing on many sociopolitical issues, attitudes such as this highlight just how much the Playboy lifestyle still held in common with the establishment. Furthermore, Hentoff's article indicated that New Left activists did not necessarily see leisure as the most pressing problem to be introduced by increased automation. Instead, they anticipated that the result of automation would be to widen the class divide between highly skilled and powerful workers and decision makers and an undereducated, underskilled underclass comprised disproportionately of African Americans.[147]

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[145] Cox, "God and the Hippies," 207, 209; "Playboy Interview: Allen Ginsberg," 82, 240; "Playboy Interview: Norman Mailer," *Playboy*, January 1968, 69.

[146] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, January 1963, 51.

[147] Hentoff, "We're Happening," 149.

Additionally, the counterculture propounded a different relationship to property than that described by Hefner. Goodman noted in his March 1967 article that another attribute the counterculture picked up from the Beats was a spirit of sharing one's property. In a November 1970 article on the rise of communal living, Jules Siegel described the elimination of personal ownership of property as central to communalism. However, returning to Whyte's examination of life in the new suburbs, it appears likely that this spirit of sharing had less to do with the counterculture consciously emulating the Beats and more to do with the counterculture expressing the values instilled in them by their parents. Whyte reported that the suburbs encouraged a communal way of living that helped many young families through various transitions in their lives. These transitions included moving away from extended families, becoming homeowners, becoming parents, and, for some, a move into the middle class. He observed that women often shared childcare responsibilities with their neighbors and that property, such as lawnmowers, was often treated as communal, allowing people to maintain the same quality of life as their neighbors even when their incomes did not allow for the purchase of the same goods.[148]

However, the hippies who turned to communal living did so for different reasons than their parents. Rather than seeking to increase their participation in the consumer market and take greater advantage of postwar affluence, the hippies, in part, utilized communal living as a means of distancing themselves from consumer society while supporting each other in their voluntary poverty. Siegel reported that the living conditions in many communes were so poor, worse than some prisons even, that mainstream society would have become outraged if the government had

[148] Goodman, "New Aristocrats," 153; Jules Siegel, "West of Eden," *Playboy*, November 1970, 114; Whyte, *Organization Man*, 310, 316.

forced the hippies to live in them. Siegel noted that the drive to live in communes was, in part, due to drastic changes that took place in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco and in New York City's Lower East Side. In addition to the appearance of tourists (in the cultural sense used by the Beats) in these areas, drug-related violence also resulted in many hippies searching for somewhere else to go. While communal living may have fit with the values with which middle class hippies had grown up, Siegel pointed out that communal living could also be therapeutic for those who had grown up with parents pressured to pursue the nuclear family ideal. By allowing people to repeatedly live out the roles of parents and children, he argued that communal living enabled people to work out the hang-ups they had developed in their nuclear families.[149]

As with the Beats, *Playboy*'s relationship to the counterculture was one of simultaneous embrace and disavowal. Even though *Playboy* was sympathetic to problems arising from the pursuit of the nuclear family ideal, its philosophy implied that one can gird oneself against the development of nuclear-family related hang-ups through the development of a sophisticated, masculine taste culture and the acquisition of private property. While *Playboy* supported many of the counterculture's sociopolitical views, it could not reconcile its own taste culture and masculinity with that of the hippies. However, because masculinities are organized and understood in relation to other masculinities and femininities, as the 1960s progressed, the gender expressions and role conceptions of the counterculture were increasingly brought to bear on the configuration of Playboy masculinity.

Conclusion

As we have seen, a number of social, economic, and political factors contributed to the

[149] Siegel, "West of Eden," 240, 244.

rise of the hegemony of the breadwinner ethic in the U.S. after World War II. Policies of domestic containment left few viable alternatives to the nuclear family ideal for white, middle class men and women. As Ehrenreich argues, hippies, like the Beats before them, "held out to men the possibility of perfect freedom from material obligation."[150] For the Beats and parts of the counterculture, avoidance of the nuclear family ideal and a rejection of consumer culture meant turning one's back on postwar affluence and dropping out of mainstream society altogether. However, as we have seen, the hippies' disavowal of the material was itself a product of postwar affluence. While the Beats sought to elude square society, the counterculture, due to their attempts to transform square society, marked a radical break from the nonhegemonic, white, middle class masculinities that had come before them, including the masculinity proffered by *Playboy*.

When *Playboy* began, its target market was comprised of men who were members of the same generational cohort as the Beats. Although the basic values of the Beats and Playboy differed, they did share common historical and cultural experiences and a desire to escape, at least for a time, the prevailing domestic ideology. By contrast, the generation that went on to become hippies and members of the New Left were predominantly products of the prevailing domestic ideology and the postwar baby boom. As the 1960s progressed, the generation gap between the values upon which *Playboy* and those upon which the counterculture were founded became clearer. One approach Playboy utilized to define itself over and against the counterculture was to link the values of the counterculture to the presumed suburban conformity of their parents. While Playboy shared a desire for liberation of mind and body with the counterculture, it could not accept either what it perceived as other-direction or changing notions

[150] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men,* 107.

of gender performance and relations. Additionally, while *Playboy* devoted articles and panel discussions to campus unrest, back to campus features in the magazine worked to distance the P.M.O.C. from these youth in revolt by focusing on consumption and embracing the good life.

The social, economic, and political relations discussed in this chapter provide necessary context for understanding why Playboy's masculinity came to be articulated as it did. The next chapter will illustrate *Playboy*'s role in contributing to and perpetuating debates concerning mass culture and demonstrate that the development of a sophisticated taste culture and leisure competence were more than ways to masculinize consumption. As practices of gender, they enabled white, middle class men to perform a masculinity that opposed the hegemony of the breadwinner ethic while only partially eluding mainstream society, provided a stance from which the Playboy man could judge mainstream society as square, and permitted a display of autonomy in a society widely considered to be overrun with the "other-directed."

CHAPTER 2

Defining the Playboy Man: Gender, Mass Culture, and the Problem of Leisure

The Bible singles out the meek and the poor in the spirit for special blessings. We'd like to add one of our own: Blessed is the rebel—without him there would be no progress.
—Hugh M. Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy"[151]

Although this chapter will focus on how Playboy defined, positioned, and revised the version of masculinity upheld in its various media and entertainment ventures, it is impossible to separate gender from the heterosexuality, whiteness, and upwardly mobile middle class status of the Playboy ideal. The version of masculinity promoted by Playboy is partially a means of resisting other masculinities within which *Playboy*'s readers and editors along with other American men may have felt immobilized or trapped during the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, Playboy's version of masculinity offers an attempt to fix new parameters for defining adult masculinity. As such, Playboy grapples throughout the mid-twentieth century with gender and sexual relations, both of which appear to be in a state of flux so great that sexuality is perceived as undergoing a revolution while gender (particularly, masculinity) is perceived as in a state of crisis.

While these notions of revolution and crisis are discussed in other media at the time, Playboy has a particular stake in these moments of consciousness concerning the flux and flexibility of gender and sexual identities, utilizing them in the formation of what, in another

[151] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, July 1963, 49-50.

context, Raymond Williams calls "the selective tradition." Although Williams discusses the term in relation to society as a whole, Playboy's taste culture (and the way in which it is raced, classed, and gendered) may also "be seen as a continual selection and re-selection of ancestors," drawing new lines and erasing others in relation to "the actual social situation."[152] Playboy's contributions to the selective tradition make evident the ways in which masculinities have meaning in relation to each other as well as in relation to femininities. Additionally, the delineation of the Playboy taste culture demonstrates Andrew Ross's assertion that social power is exercised through one's capacity to draw lines between categories of taste rather than being inherent to the categories themselves.[153] While Playboy recognizes that its masculine position is dependent upon its relations to other contemporary configurations of masculinity, it simultaneously operates under the false assumption—the circulation of which R.W. Connell attributes to mass culture—that "there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the ebb and flow of daily life."[154] While theorists such as Connell and Judith Butler make clear that categories of gender are performative, relational, and historically and culturally specific rather than fixed, Hugh Hefner's and *Playboy*'s discussions of gender identity and relations in the United States at the mid-twentieth century provide one account of the ways in which lived experience is regulated in part by the naturalization of notions of masculinity and femininity as fixed characteristics inhering in men and women. The pressures of such regulation make clear that although gender may theoretically best be described as a "doing," it is nevertheless most often experienced as a

[152] Williams, *Long Revolution*, 50-53.

[153] Ross, *No Respect*, 61.

[154] Connell, *Masculinities*, 37, 43, 45, 68.

way of "being" in everyday life.[155]

It is easy, as many previous scholars have done, to reduce the Playboy lifestyle to a means of masculinizing consumption; i.e., to view it primarily as a way to come to terms with the increased affluence and access to leisure that opened up to many white Americans within or at the margins of the middle class in the years following World War II. Indeed, concerns over how to spend one's leisure time and disposable income are central to *Playboy's* editorial focus. However, as Connell has warned, "Recognizing multiple masculinities, especially in an individualist culture such as the United States, risks taking them for alternative lifestyles, a matter of consumer choice. A relational approach makes it easier to recognize the hard compulsions under which gender configurations are formed, the bitterness as well as the pleasure in gendered experience."[156] Therefore, the following analysis acknowledges that Playboy is particularly sensitive to the ways in which consumption is a gendered practice and conscious of the ways in which gender and class are actively produced and linked through consumption while recognizing that Playboy's communication of the values associated with its ideals of leisure and urban sophistication is inextricably linked to the larger project of communicating the values associated with Playboy's ideal of masculinity.

This chapter seeks to examine Playboy's attempts to define and fix a version of adult masculinity that both diverged from and converged with other contemporary masculine configurations, such as those associated with the breadwinner, the Beats, and the counterculture of the hippies and the New Left. These relations cannot be understood outside of the wider

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[155] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1, 10, 41-43, 52; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 18-19, 24-25.

[156] Connell, *Masculinities*, 76.

social situation. Reflected in the multiple configurations of masculinity and femininity circulated and lived in the mid-twentieth century U.S. are changes in economic, geographic, social, sexual, racial, and cultural institutions and relations. These gender configurations are also affected by Cold War politics of containment and the characterization of this period of U.S. history as an "age of anxiety," initiated in part by the advent of the atomic bomb and exacerbated in the 1960s through racial unrest, student protest, the women's movement, and the country's involvement in the Vietnam War.

The Subdominant Status of the Playboy Man

Embracing hard work and conspicuous consumption, the lifestyle endorsed by *Playboy* in many ways conformed to the dominant values of postwar consumer culture in the U.S. *Playboy* disseminated an urban taste culture, directing mid-twentieth century readers on how and what to consume to create a sophisticated—that is, urban, upwardly mobile, adult, white but hip to black culture—masculinity. At the same time, *Playboy* actively worked to distance itself from other contemporary masculinities, including the hegemonic masculinity expressed by the suburban breadwinner and the oppositional masculinities of the Beats and the counterculture. Osgerby refers to Playboy masculinity as adaptive, arguing that it did not confront or resist the dominant social order.[157] While, as Ehrenreich points out, Playboy's masculinity may not have quite been subversive, Hefner certainly saw himself and his organization as resisting the dominant social order.

Actively defining its masculinity against the hegemony of the breadwinner and its tastes against those of the masses, I contend that *Playboy* established itself as what Keir Keightley calls

[157] Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-style in Modern America* (New York: Berg, 2001), 175-176.

a subdominant culture. A subdominant culture is a cultural formation that builds "new distinctions within and upon the terrain of the popular, to express oppositional sensibilities via commercial, mass mediated culture." It also reorders "the relationship between dominant and dominated cultures, producing something that was simultaneously marginal and mainstream, anti-mass and mass, subordinate and dominant."[158]

Playboy's mass circulation combined with its oppositional sensibilities helped establish the Playboy lifestyle as a subdominant culture. Given its circulation rate and its role in both circulating and contributing to the debates over mass culture in the mid-twentieth century, it is difficult to characterize the magazine as anything other than simultaneously mass and anti-mass. *Playboy*'s endorsement of consumerism and the acquisition of private property also marked the lifestyle as simultaneously mainstream (through its advocacy of pleasurable consumption) and marginal (through its emphasis on cultivating taste and cultural capital and its postponement of the breadwinner role). Steven Cohan discusses the bachelor as "a reversible figure, at once placed on the margins of domestic ideology and central to its perpetuation."[159] Such reversibility is a necessary condition of a culture's classification as subdominant and can be extended to its particularities. In other words, due to his rejection of the hegemonic masculinity expressed by the breadwinner role, the bachelor existed at the margins of domesticity. However, he could just as easily be seen as central to domesticity because it was the bachelor's immaturity against which domestic maturity was defined.[160]

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[158] Keir Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, eds. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 141.

[159] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 268.

[160] Ibid., 268.

Moreover, subdominant cultures derive their power precisely from their ability to claim a position that is simultaneously dominant and subordinate. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, following a critique by Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley concerning the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, do recognize that men can choose between different expressions of masculinities according to their interactional needs in a specific situation, adopting "hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable" and, at other times, strategically distancing themselves from hegemonic masculinity.[161] While in practice, it may appear that this is how Playboy masculinity operates, its relationship to hegemonic masculinity is more complicated than simply learning how to pick and choose when highlighting one's dominant status may be more appropriate than highlighting one's subordinate status and vice versa. The advantages of subdominant masculinities lie in the coexistence of its dominant and subordinate aspects rather than within the move between them. Following Whyte's discussion of suburban organization men who opposed conformity through their attitudes even if not through their behavior, one can see how the Playboy man could also utilize his "surface uniformities…as protective coloration."[162] That is, one of the reasons that Playboy masculinity could maintain the dominant aspects of its subdominance is that certain facets of its expression and taste culture—professional dress, middle class status, heterosexuality, embrace of consumer culture, etc.—prevented it from becoming completely subordinate to the hegemonic masculinity of the breadwinner. Consequently, Playboy subjectivity gained and maintained its power precisely through its fragmentation.

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[161] R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, (2005): 841.

[162] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 12.

Osgerby's suggestion that Playboy masculinity is simply adaptive fits into concerns about adjustment widely expressed by sociologists, psychoanalysts, and other experts in the mid-twentieth century U.S. However, as May demonstrates, the prevailing mode of adjustment at the time was the pursuit of the nuclear family ideal. As Ehrenreich argues, because, at the time, maturity for men was defined through the embrace of the breadwinner role, *Playboy* and its readers were open to charges of immaturity. Furthermore, as Riesman, Glazer, and Denney make clear, adjustment was measured in terms of conformity. For Riesman et al., adjustment was not merely a matter of overt behavior; it was also about an individual's character structure. Those who were not adjusted could be separated into two categories: the anomic or the autonomous. The autonomous individual has the capacity to conform and the freedom to choose whether to conform or not. However, whenever an autonomous individual chooses to conform, it is always a superficial conformity. Riesman et al. explained, "The autonomous person's acceptance of social and political authority is always conditional: he can cooperate with others in action while maintaining the right of private judgment." Furthermore, they contended that autonomy was always "relative to the prevailing modes of conformity."[163] This helps explain how a married reader ostensibly fulfilling the breadwinner role in his suburban household could display autonomy through his embrace of the Playboy taste culture, which distinguished him from his well-adjusted neighbors.

Subdominance offers an intervention into the four modes of relation between masculinities presented by Connell; i.e., hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Out of the four relations suggested by Connell, Playboy masculinity as it was expressed from 1953-1972 is best understood as having a complicit relation to hegemonic

[163] Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd*, 278, 288, 295.

masculinity. Connell explains, "Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are complicit in this sense."[164] In other words, men who benefit from patriarchy without embodying hegemonic masculinity may be understood as exhibiting masculinities that are complicit with the project of hegemonic masculinity. However, Connell's definition seems to imply that the relationship of complicity is a passive one on the part of the nonhegemonic masculinity. But Connell contradicts herself when she characterizes *Playboy* as promoting an exemplary masculinity. She explains, "Part of the struggle for hegemony in the gender order is the use of culture for such disciplinary purposes: setting standards, claiming popular assent and discrediting those who fall short. The production of exemplary masculinities is thus integral to the politics of hegemonic masculinity." In other words, *Playboy*'s masculinity can be seen as *actively* participating in the hegemonic project while distancing itself from hegemonic masculinity. That is, by utilizing culture to draw lines between its own and hegemonic masculinity, *Playboy* takes part in both defining hegemonic masculinity and reinforcing its dominant position.

The concept of subdominance offers a means of thinking about the ways that masculinities can reap the benefits of hegemonic masculinity while also actively opposing it. For example, although Connell's definitions place those exhibiting hegemonic masculinity in the role of "the frontline troops of patriarchy," a role also arguably occupied by Playboy men, Playboy masculinity neither can nor desires to be considered hegemonic masculinity in the time period under examination. That is, as Ehrenreich argues, Playboy defines its masculinity against the hegemony of the breadwinner ethic. At the same time, because Playboy masculinity also rests on its ability to position itself as a special case of masculine consumption—one based on

[164] Connell, *Masculinities*, 76-80, 214-215.

enlightened self-interest and leisure competence rather than the nuclear family ideal—it does not desire to achieve hegemony. This subdominant positioning enables the version of masculinity promoted by *Playboy* to be both on the frontlines of patriarchy and in opposition to hegemonic masculinity. This is a position that also helps the *Playboy* man maintain and enact his autonomy.

While Connell acknowledges that there may be overlap and movement between hegemonic and complicit forms of masculinity, she also argues that "hegemonic masculinity presumes the subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities."[165] Underlying this argument is the assumption that subordination to hegemonic masculinity is an undesirable position, and this assumption posits dominance and subordination as strictly an either/or proposition. The concept of subdominance offers a both/and approach to understanding the relationship between hegemonic and some other oppositional masculinities. Examining *Playboy* illuminates the ways in which such a both/and position may be desirable in terms of extracting "the patriarchal dividend" while seeming to elude the pressures of hegemonic masculinity.[166] Like that of the Beats, Playboy's masculinity also relied on the dominance of square society; however, unlike the Beats, Playboy sought to game the system rather than completely elude it.

***Playboy*'s Readers and Taste Culture**

Much as Ehrenreich argues that *Playboy* encouraged its readers to imagine themselves as members of a fraternity of rebels, Bill Osgerby and Becky Conekin view the playboy as an imagined and aspirational identity. Both Conekin's and Osgerby's analyses address what they view as the magazine's fantasies of consumption. Conekin observes that by 1959, the playboy lifestyle had been established, enabling the fashion features to include "articles suffused with

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[165] Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity," 839, 846.

[166] Connell, *Masculinities*, 79.

fantasies of wealth, luxury and travel."[167] While *Playboy* claimed to depict the actual life of sophisticated, urban men, Conekin argues that the magazine actually contained men's fantasies, longings, and desires and channeled postwar discontent "into tasteful luxury consumption."[168] To make the leap from fantasies of consumption to the imagined identities as they are lived, Osgerby turns to the work of Graham Dawson, arguing that magazines provided men "with a repertoire of cultural codes and meanings…that made intelligible their relationship with style, desire and commodity culture."[169] In an earlier analysis, Osgerby characterizes the Playboy as "a fantasy role-model" who "offered men a meaningful way of constructing their identities in relation to the proliferating world of commodity consumerism."[170] Rather than offering men an effective form of rebellion against postwar masculinity, he argues that the imagined identity of the Playboy gave men a means of making sense of masculinity in a world where consumption was no longer necessarily linked to women.

Although Osgerby is correct on this last point, by containing the Playboy lifestyle within the realm of fantasy, Conekin and Osgerby fail to consider the implications of the magazine's formulation of its readership as a taste public and affective community and overlook the complexity and flexibility of the Playboy lifestyle. While fantasy undoubtedly plays a role in the appeal of both *Playboy* magazine and the lifestyle it promotes, to characterize the relationship

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[167] Becky Conekin, "Fashioning the Playboy: Messages of Style and Masculinity in the Pages of *Playboy* Magazine, 1953-1963," in *The Men's Fashion Reader*, eds. Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas (New York: Berg, 2005), 439.

[168] Ibid., 439-440.

[169] Bill Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon: Masculinity, Consumption, and Interior Design in American Men's Magazines, 1930-1965," *Journal of Design History* 18, no. 1 (2005): 103.

[170] Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, 124.

between *Playboy* and its readers as primarily fantastic risks overemphasizing those aspects of the Playboy philosophy that operate at an individual level. That is, identification with the Playboy lifestyle is seen as primarily a private and internal experience while neglecting that readers are also interpellated as members of an affective community. Moreover, the notion of a "fantasy role-model" implies that the Playboy lifestyle is unattainable, which is an easy conclusion to draw when focusing only on the pinnacle of the Playboy image—the man in the mansion who can afford to be carefree in spending both his time and money. Such a characterization overlooks the fact that service features also indicated that there was both room for movement into and within the Playboy lifestyle. As we will see, the magazine's service features provided room for upward social mobility within the Playboy lifestyle by outlining the minimum levels of leisure competence and consumer spending necessary to consider oneself and others Playboy men. After establishing a baseline for Playboy's taste culture, service features tend to show how one can move incrementally toward the ultimate Playboy status through increased leisure competence and spending. In other words, even though the highest levels of luxury depicted in the magazine may remain only a fantasy for the majority of *Playboy* readers, this does not preclude them from participating in Playboy's taste culture and performing Playboy masculinity. For middle and upper middle class men, many of the fantasies depicted in the magazine were attainable. Even those who could not afford the accoutrements of the Playboy lifestyle, could still develop tastes for them; what one likes may be just as important as what one buys. As Sara Ahmed explains, "We come to have our likes, which might even establish *what we are like*."[171]

Moreover, Alan Nadel argues, "Its essays, its articles, its advertisements all indicate that the magazine's intended audience was upwardly mobile middle-class men who were acquiring

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[171] Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 24; emphasis in the original.

increasing spending power in the economic boom of the 1950s."[172] The didactic tone of many of the magazine's service features reveals the magazine's understanding that a portion of its intended audience was not yet familiar with the trappings of the good life and in need of education. The idea of the fantasy role model conflates the magazine's mode of address with its understanding of its intended audience by assuming that the magazine's positioning of itself as a guide to its readers is an indication of readers' inability to live up to standards and advice given in the magazine.[173] However, when comparing the editorial persona of magazines to their average readers, David Abrahamson finds, "In virtually every instance, the persona of the magazine was slightly older, somewhat better educated and more affluent, more widely traveled, and certainly more worldly and sophisticated than the magazine's average reader." This indicates a strength in the magazine rather than a weakness in its readers. Abrahamson explains that such editorial personas are "ideally suited for the role of guide, counselor, friend, and adviser to the reader—which, in the case of most special-interest magazines, [is] the essence of its function."[174] Because *Playboy*'s editorial persona functions in this way, Nadel can argue that the magazine had a double message; that is, while it appeared to suggest "that the playboy lifestyle was limited to the upper class," it also suggested "that a man didn't have to be upper class to have a classy life."[175] By viewing *Playboy* readers as members of a taste public rather than atomized individuals seeking private escape, this double message becomes even clearer. Taste publics are formed around shared aesthetic values, so even those who cannot afford the

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[172] Nadel, *Containment Culture*, 133.

[173] Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, 166.

[174] Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America*, 57.

[175] Nadel, *Containment Culture*, 132.

height of luxury depicted in *Playboy* can develop the proper attitude toward cultural products and distinguish between cultural content that does or does not fit within the Playboy taste culture.[176]

Playboy's editorial persona along with the image that it projects through the "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" ad campaigns and occasional psychographic profiles of its readers provide insight into *Playboy*'s imagined audience and clues to its actual audience. In a February 1963 memo to advertisers appearing in the magazine, Advertising Director Howard W. Lederer stresses that "the fountainhead of all of *Playboy*'s success, is the fact that its editors know precisely the audience the magazine is designed for, and their eyes never wander from the target."[177] During its second year of publication, *Playboy* commissioned a survey of its readership, the results of which were published in the September 1955 issue. These results reinforced the editors' assertion that "We've always edited *Playboy* for a particular guy: sophisticated, intelligent, urban—a young man-about-town, who enjoys good, gracious living."[178] They also foreshadow the types of leisure activities and spending habits that would be stressed in the "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" ad campaign when it began in February 1958. Although the primary purpose of printing the results of reader surveys is to attract more advertising revenue (a purpose which is betrayed by a note to "Mr. Advertiser" at the end of the results of the 1955 survey), it also provides readers with concrete ways to measure themselves against both other readers and the Playboy ideal.

According to the 1955 survey, the average age of the *Playboy* reader was 29 (the same age as Hefner), readership was split along lines of marital status with married men making up

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[176] Gans, *Popular Culture*, 12.

[177] Howard W. Lederer, "Love That Reader," *Playboy*, February 1963.

[178] "The Playboy Reader," *Playboy*, September 1955, 36.

slightly more than half, and the majority of readers were either in college or employed in business and professional occupations.[179] The results of a survey by another market research firm are published in the April 1958 issue and largely reproduce the findings of the earlier survey. However, the 1958 survey provided information about readers' household incomes and stressed the characteristics of *Playboy* readers that competed with those of well-respected mainstream magazines. In 1958, the median income of the *Playboy* household was $7,234 annually (or the equivalent of approximately $58,754 today). Not only did this place the majority of *Playboy* readers solidly in the middle class, it placed them "more than 30% above the national average" and "second only to the *New Yorker* among *all* magazines surveyed by Starch."[180] Though there would be slight fluctuations in average age and household income would increase, these demographic characteristics would remain fairly constant over the years even as the magazine's circulation grew exponentially to its peak in 1972. That is, *Playboy*'s male readers remained young, affluent, of high occupational status, and mostly married; however, the majority of married readers were considered newlyweds having been wed within the past five years. In addition to demonstrating to advertisers that *Playboy* attracted the elusive market of young, affluent men, these results also served to equate readership with membership in a discerning taste public. For example, "Meet the Playboy Reader" ends with the following assertion:

> But we—you readers and we editors—do have a kinship of tastes and aspirations, of outlooks, of interests. It's gratifying to know that this constellation of attributes, this

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[179] "The Playboy Reader," 36.

[180] In *The Organization Man*, Whyte found that the economic line beneath which middle class life was impossible resided somewhere between $4,800 and $5,200 in terms of annual household income. "Meet the Playboy Reader," *Playboy*, April 1958, 76, emphasis in the original; Whyte, *Organization Man*, 338.

> orientation of the personality, is possessed by the men who are—statistically—the leaders in their liking for and ability to attain the good things of this life. For us to be among them and to be their voice makes us happy.[181]

Descriptions such as this reinforced Playboy's claim that one could rebel against hegemonic masculinity while still pursuing the material comforts of the good life. They also reinforced that Playboy men were part of an affective community, aligned "with others by investing in the same objects as the cause of happiness."[182] At the same time, *Playboy*'s characterizations of its readers as active leaders with discriminating, individual tastes placed them in opposition to both the Beats and breadwinning organization men, who were purported to be passive followers whose tastes were influenced by those around them.

Between February 1958 and December 1972, *Playboy* ran ads from the "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" campaign in 131 issues, including every issue from 1968-1972. While these ads utilize statistics concerning the demographic make up and consumer spending habits of the *Playboy* reader, they also provide a portrait of his personality and interests while linking the Playboy man's success in life to his success with women. Each of these ads depicts the Playboy man interacting with an attractive, young woman; attracting the attention of one or more women; or both. The first of these ads describes the Playboy man as "capable of turning a fair young lady's head with calculated praise or supervising the preparation of a proper martini," skills that mark him as urbane.[183] Those ads that highlight the *Playboy* readers' desire and ability to purchase a new car link his purchasing power to his heterosexuality through double entendre that

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[181] "Meet the Playboy Reader," 76, 77.

[182] Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 38.

[183] Playboy, "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" Advertisement, February 1958, *Playboy*.

links the bodies of cars and women. For example, the July 1964 ad depicts the Playboy man laughing with his date as they zip along the waterfront in his convertible and describes him as "quick to spin off with a much-admired model that has both line and look" (fig. 10).

Figure 10. What Sort of Man Reads Playboy? Advertisement.
Source: *Playboy*, July 1964, 49.

The repeated emphasis of the Playboy man's status as a style-conscious "young man-about-town" served to distinguish him from the suburban breadwinner as well as from the Beats and the hippies. Although the Playboy man was repeatedly described as having the wherewithal to attain almost any consumer object he desires, he was also described as considering "every angle before he acts." He was a man who took both his work and his play seriously, and it was his hard work that provided him with both the leisure time and disposable income to live it up whether in his stylishly appointed bachelor pad or while traveling abroad. These ads imply that the *Playboy* reader was a man who was just as confident and successful in the boardroom as he was in the bedroom. He was a trendsetter who enjoyed trying new things and facing new challenges. This ad campaign also depicted the Playboy man as active and interested in a wide variety of leisure pursuits, including playing host to his friends, dining out, attending theatrical

performances, and driving sports cars. Although *Playboy*'s inaugural issue promised the magazine will focus on the pursuit of leisure indoors, as national trends in leisure changed and Playboy began investing in opening Playboy Club-Hotel resorts, the ads began to show the Playboy man engaged in adventurous, outdoor activities such as skindiving or enjoying a mountaintop picnic before skiing down the slopes.[184] Even though the images accompanying these ads do not call to mind the responsibilities of the suburban breadwinner, the text occasionally promoted the newlywed status of a large percentage of *Playboy* readers. While the *Playboy* philosophy eschews early marriage in favor of an extended period of play before settling down, newlyweds, as heavy purchasers of home furnishings, were prime targets for advertisers. *Playboy*, however, was sure to stress the continuing influence of the man's taste on household décor post-matrimony.[185]

All of the leisure pursuits depicted in these ads require the cultivation of leisure competence as well as discretionary income; in other words, the Playboy man must be able to both recognize and pay for quality. While these ads could easily be dismissed as self-serving aggrandizement of the *Playboy* reader as a consumer, they offered the reader more than the simple report of statistics culled from market research. In addition to reflecting actual spending patterns, these ads also delineated the Playboy taste culture by teaching readers how to value

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[184] Skindiving is essentially snorkeling without any breathing apparatus.

[185] See Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, December 1964, 213. See also the "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" advertisements appearing in the following issues: March 1958, back cover; November 1958, back cover; January 1959, back cover; February 1959, back cover; August 1960, 103; May 1962, 45; May 1963, 73; July 1963, 51; April 1964, 69; May 1964, 65; August 1964, 49; October 1964, 83; February 1965, 61; July 1965, 57; August 1965, 55; May 1966, 85; August 1966, 61; February 1969, 73; November 1969, 113; January 1970, 91; March 1970, 83; January 1971, 83; April 1971, 93; June 1971, 97; October 1971, 91; January 1972, 83; June 1972, 95; October 1972, 79.

consumer objects aesthetically and demonstrating the attitudes one should cultivate towards work, leisure, and consumption.

Consumption as a Gendered and Sexualized Practice

As Ehrenreich observes, *Playboy* was immune to charges of being "anti-capitalist or un-American, because it was all about making money and spending it." Although other scholars focus on the magazine's promotion of male consumerism as a break with traditional masculinity, Ehrenreich argues that advocating pleasurable consumption conformed neatly to American culture.[186] Similarly, Osgerby argues that, by providing men guidance on acceptable consumption with an "accent on youth, glamour, fun and stylish hip," *Playboy* promoted "a construction of maleness tailored to the demands of the consumer society that blossomed in America during the 1950s and 1960s."[187] While Playboy's promotion of material comforts may not have been out of place in the prosperous years following World War II, it, nevertheless, remained in opposition to the consumerism practiced in the typical suburban family home. For example, Elaine Tyler May points out that the nuclear family ideal worked to contain postwar affluence by focusing on spending for the family home with the husband earning the income and the wife largely in charge of spending it.[188]

In addition to providing readers with guidance on what to consume, *Playboy* also provided information on how and why a man should consume in the first place. While Osgerby is correct that *Playboy* offered its mid-century readers a way of navigating increasing affluence and consumer choice, this is only a partial picture of the role of consumption in the Playboy

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[186] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 44-45, 50. See also Conekin, "Fashioning the Playboy."

[187] Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, 2-5.

[188] May, *Homeward Bound*, 148-149.

lifestyle. As Ehrenreich suggests, conspicuous consumption by the Playboy man was a means of acquiring the status symbols of mature, adult masculinity while remaining outside the breadwinner role. Freed from the need to provide for a family or keep down with the Joneses in suburbia, the Playboy man could utilize consumption to mark himself out as an individual with sophisticated tastes that circumvented the supposedly feminizing influence of mass culture as well as the reliance on group, rather than individual, tastes that Whyte observed in the suburbs.[189] Through the cultivation of the aesthetic values presented in *Playboy* magazine and on its television variety-parties, even married readers could learn the proper attitude to take towards the pressures of conformity they may have faced either in their white collar careers or at home in their subdivisions.

Consumption in the Playboy lifestyle may also be seen as a response to the perceived problem of the womanization of America and growing concerns over the changing configuration of work and the problem of increased leisure that many commentators at the time predicted would be the results of increased automation. Andrew Ross argues that social difference, and this includes masculinity, is expressed through consumption, which helps to explain *Playboy*'s emphasis on building leisure and cultural competence in order to cultivate a mode of sophisticated consumption.[190] When this function of consumption is considered alongside Jeremy Gilbert's assertion that mid-twentieth century Americans widely understood consumer objects to have "essential gender identities," the impetus behind *Playboy*'s focus on classy

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[189] As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Whyte observed that consumer spending in the suburbs was constrained by the pressure to consume just as much as one's neighbors. Ostentatious displays of affluence could alienate one from his neighbors, which is why Whyte referred to "keeping down with the Joneses" rather than keeping up with them. Whyte, *Organization Man*, 346.

[190] Ross, *No Respect*, 59.

consumption must be seen as encompassing more than a need to cope with postwar affluence.[191] As mid-century American men felt less secure in forming their identities around their occupations, concern turned towards the types of identities that could be formed around leisure pursuits. Given these concerns, it is evident that *Playboy*'s editors understood and addressed the profound social implications of postwar consumerism. Consequently, Playboy is not so much occupied with the masculinization of consumerism as it is with the way gender (which Playboy recognizes is intimately tied to sexuality, class, and taste) is actively produced in part through practices of consumption. Although not interrogated by *Playboy* at the time, the lifestyle it depicted and promoted also served as a means of constructing hip whiteness.

Organized, in part, around a "fun ethic" that promoted a new "morality of pleasure as duty", Osgerby links the Playboy lifestyle to Pierre Bourdieu's description of the new petite bourgeoisie that formed in France in the late 1960s. Indeed, parts of Bourdieu's analysis do hold true for *Playboy*. For example, as cultural intermediaries, Hefner and *Playboy* are "inclined to sympathize with discourses aimed at challenging the cultural order and the hierarchies which the cultural 'hierarchy' aims to maintain."[192] In its challenge of discourses of hegemonic masculinity, Playboy seeks not so much to change this discourse as to at least partially elude it. Although Hefner repeatedly rails against the Puritan ethic in his "Playboy Philosophy," unlike the Beats, he did not have a problem with masculinity being tied to hard work. Rather, it was the delay of gratification, which restrains sexuality and other means of pleasurable consumption, that he saw as problematic. Promoting an ethic resting on "enlightened self-interest," Hefner

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[191] Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 66.

[192] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Routledge, 2010), 365-367; Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise,* 10-12, 81-82.

encouraged a self-interested, rather than selfless, devotion to work, which preserved the mythology of the self-made man while promoting his access to leisure as the defining symbol of his success. These ideas are central to *Playboy*'s and Hefner's own histories and the mythologies that have been cultivated around them. While these stories, such as that of Hefner putting up his family's furniture as collateral for a loan that enabled him to start *Playboy* at his kitchen table, work to configure Hefner as the Playboy man par excellence, because they depict Hefner as a self-made man, they also function as evidence that the Playboy lifestyle is within reach for almost any middle class man.[193]

As evidenced by the "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" ad campaign, heterosexual sex was unquestionably one of the Playboy man's primary leisure pursuits, and Playboy's morality of pleasure linked tasteful consumption to both masculinity and heterosexuality. Nevertheless, scholars, such as Ehrenreich and Osgerby, who focus on *Playboy*'s pin-ups as a necessary means of staving off suspicion of homosexuality, do not acknowledge the role these images also play as symbols of the Playboy's classy life. Marc Jancovich argues that the magazine's focus on sex must be seen as more than the mere reduction of sex to a consumer good. Instead, he argues, that *Playboy*'s sexual content demonstrates a recognition of sexual tastes "as one element in the ensemble of different dispositions that make up a lifestyle."[194] In his discussion of *Playboy*'s decision in 1955 to present its Playmates as girls next door whose photographs featured everyday

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[193] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," July 1963, 49; Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, December 1963, 70; "The Playboy Cover Story," *Playboy*, April 1966, 128; "Playboy's Fifth Anniversary Scrapbook," *Playboy*, December 1958, 40; Silverstein, "Silverstein's History of Playboy," *Playboy*, January 1964, 77.

[194] Marc Jancovich, "The Politics of *Playboy*: Lifestyle, Sexuality and Non-Conformity in American Cold War Culture," in *Historicizing Lifestyle: Mediating Taste, Consumption and Identity from the 1900s to 1970s*, eds. David Bell and Joanne Hollows (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 74.

settings and were accompanied by biographical details, Osgerby contends that the magazine was "encouraging its readers to think of *all* women as likely pin-up fodder."[195] Similarly, Nadel argues that the characterization of the Playmates as girls next door functioned to erase "the distinction between the women a man knew and the ones he found desirable." He also argues that the magazine's focus on developing habits of tasteful consumption helped to make its depictions of female sexuality more palatable. That is, he argues "that the first way to dissociate sexuality from cheapness, from trampiness, was to make it look expensive."[196] Although throughout its first year of publication the magazine utilized calendar images Hefner had acquired from the Baumgarth Calendar Company, when *Playboy* began seeking its own Playmate subjects, Hefner insisted that the women be inexperienced as nude models, requiring them to sign a contract that forbade them from posing nude in any other publication for a period of two years.[197] In other words, all objects consumed by the Playboy, including his women, had to be disassociated from cheapness. While the Playmates may have reflected the class of the girl-next-door, they were also an indication that the Playboy man would not settle for any woman.

Examining both *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) and *Playboy,* Nadel asserts that *Playboy*'s concept of the Playmate was a deliberate assault on dominant values "that promoted rigid boundaries between 'lady' and 'tramp.'"[198] While these two media examples (a Disney cartoon

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[195] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 51; Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, 5, 146; emphasis added.

[196] Nadel, *Containment Culture,* 131.

[197] Joe Goldberg, *Big Bunny: The Inside Story of Playboy* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967), 144-147; Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 9.

[198] Nadel, *Containment Culture*, 131.

and a men's magazine) may appear to have little in common, Nadel successfully argues that both texts illustrate the ways that an active and playful male sexuality is dependent upon a version of female sexuality that is acquiescent without threatening domesticity. Through these texts, Nadel demonstrates that in the 1950s conflicts over female sexuality were at the center of narratives of sexual containment. May also demonstrates that concerns over female promiscuity were at the heart of ideologies of sexual containment even though there was no evidence of any increase in premarital sex. This focus on female promiscuity as particularly threatening to moral and national security meant that "guilt and the stigma of 'promiscuity' combined to make premarital sexual activity a particular problem for women" since "a woman's reputation was so deeply tied to her sexual behavior."[199] While dominant discourses surrounding female sexuality were not consistent with dominant discourses surrounding domesticity, Nadel outlines how *Playboy* managed to promote a version of female sexuality that blurred the boundaries between "lady" and "tramp." This blurring enabled *Playboy* to contain and exert control over female sexuality within its centerfolds while also appearing to promote female sexual liberation.[200]

Womanization and Mass Culture

The cultivation of the aesthetic values and patterns of consumption linked to Playboy's taste culture functioned as both an intervention into the mass culture debates that occupied scholars and critics in the mid-twentieth century and as a bulwark against a perceived threat from the increasing economic power and cultural influence of women. Herbert Gans argues that the

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[199] May, *Homeward Bound*, 103, 108.

[200] Viewing *Playboy* as predominantly sexually progressive, Carrie Pitzulo argues that the magazine is actually promoting a more inclusive form of heterosexuality, which allows women to embrace their sexuality. See Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*.

major critiques of mass culture can be seen as early as the eighteenth century; however, these debates are amplified in the twentieth century with the advent of commercial radio and television and improvements to filmmaking technologies and techniques. Gans points out that critics often use "mass culture" as a pejorative term that "suggests an undifferentiated collectivity, even a mob, rather than individuals or members of a group" and highlights "that mob's lack of culture."[201]

As a men's entertainment magazine, *Playboy* is both itself a product and proponent of popular culture. This gives *Playboy* an interesting perspective on the mass culture debates from which they formulate a position that simultaneously embraces the aesthetic values of some forms of popular culture while avoiding the supposedly homogenizing and feminizing influence of other forms of popular culture. Although *Playboy*'s taste culture did seek to differentiate itself from the masses, it was, at the same time, promoting a sophisticated, masculine identity that was shaped "*through* popular culture, rather than simply rebelling against it."[202] Because of this penchant for popular culture and the postwar expansion of the American middle class, *Playboy*'s relationship to commodity consumption, including cultural commodities, is understood best in terms of identity formation related to taste rather than strictly to socioeconomic class.

In 1949, Russell Lynes argued that the old class system of society was on its way out and that the new distinctions were based on taste rather than on money or family prestige. Lynes argues, "What we are headed for is a sort of social structure in which the highbrows are the elite, the middlebrows are the bourgeoisie, and the lowbrows are *hoi polloi*." He argues that the enemy of the highbrow is not the lowbrow but rather the middlebrow, whom the highbrow views

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[201] Gans, *Popular Culture*, 10.

[202] Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 82; emphasis in the original.

as a threat both in terms of his aspirations to be a cultural arbiter and his tendency to "blur the lines between the serious and the frivolous." [203] Although Lynes' portraits of these taste cultures are less than flattering, his elaboration of distinctions based on taste rather than class resonated in a society with a growing middle class whose affluence afforded them the illusion of classlessness.

When asked in a 1956 interview by Mike Wallace where he fit in this spectrum of tastes, Hefner quickly and confidently replied, "I consider myself upper middle."[204] This assessment fits with Lynes' assertion that "the editors of most magazines which combine national circulation with an adult vocabulary" are upper middlebrows.[205] Similarly, Gans states, "Upper-middle culture is distributed through the so-called class media or quality mass media," and goes on to name *Playboy*, *Harper*'s, and the *New Yorker* among the reading interests of this wider taste public. However, as I argue, *Playboy* can be seen as the arbiter of a particular and more exclusive upper middlebrow taste culture. One that, as Lynes opines, "straddle[s] the fence between highbrow and middlebrow and enjoy[s its] equivocal position."[206] This position enables the *Playboy* man to take his culture, including popular culture, seriously while also allowing him to distinguish himself from the lower middlebrow, which to the upper middlebrow represent homogenized suburban masses. Lynes argues, "In matters of taste, the lower-middlebrow world is largely dominated by women….Except in the selection of his personal apparel and car, it is

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[203] Russell Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1, 1949, 19, 23.

[204] *Night Beat*, hosted by Mike Wallace (1956, New York: DuMont Television Network), Television, Collection of The Paley Center for Media, New York.

[205] Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middle Brow," 25.

[206] Ibid., 25.

almost *infra dig* for a man to have taste; it is not considered quite manly for the male to express opinions about things which come under the category of 'artistic.'"[207] Gans describes the lower middlebrow public as uninterested in culture and as the group for which the producers of mass media program their content.[208] This is why the cultivation of aesthetic values regarding consumption is just as, if not more, important as actual consumption in the Playboy taste culture. That is, within the Playboy taste culture, expressions of taste are performances of masculinity that distinguish the Playboy man from the suburban breadwinner while protecting him against the feminine influence of lower middlebrow tastes. Additionally, through linking the Playboy man's tastes to his heterosexuality, the Playboy taste culture also distinguished him from gay men and quelled any suspicions that might have been aroused by his lack of a wife.

The need to contain women's feminizing influence over American men and culture is most explicit in the three articles penned for *Playboy* by novelist and social critic Philip Wylie between 1956 and 1963 as well as in the June 1962 panel discussion on "The Womanization of America." Wylie is perhaps best remembered for his 1942 book, *Generation of Vipers*, which, like much of his other work, railed against changing gender relations and what he perceived as women's detrimental influence on American culture. Although *Playboy* described Wylie as a "bitcher-and-moaner *sans peur et avec reproche*" in its November 1956 issue, it is clear that this name calling was done with more than a little admiration, and his influence on Playboy's gender politics is evident throughout the time period under investigation.[209] Wylie's articles for *Playboy*

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[207] Ibid., 28.

[208] Gans, *Popular Culture*, 85-86.

[209] The phrase translates to "without fear and with reproach" and is an acknowledgement that reproach is the common tone of Wylie's often bilious social and cultural commentary. "Playbill," *Playboy*, November 1956, 3.

blamed moms for raising weak sons and women for trapping men in a breadwinner role that forced them to work themselves to death in order to satisfy the consumer desires of their families. Additionally, these articles detailed the detrimental effects of women's encroachment into affairs of culture and business. Wylie lamented the passing of the days when masculine authority rested on appreciation of the arts and the cultivation of knowledge and argued "that most citizens under 50 years of age are not aware that there ever was a time when the sweet, sticky, claw-tipped fingers of females did not model or remodel, provide or withhold much of what we read, hear on radio and behold on TV."[210]

Speaking of the *Playboy* readers' relationship to the womanization of America, Wylie stated, "Happily, I note that the kind of alert and vigorous young men who will read me here, and who read this magazine, are largely immunized against much of the social sickness I'll describe—and so are lots of the girls in their lives."[211] Despite the Playboy man's supposed immunity to the ill effects of the womanization of America, many of Wylie's arguments appeared in the "Playboy Philosophy," providing a base, along with Kinsey's studies of American sexual behavior, for Playboy's gender and sexual politics. Indeed, a recurring theme in Hefner's "Playboy Philosophy" is the idea that gender roles should be strictly delineated with women serving as complements to men. Likewise, Wylie argued, in an article from September 1958, that "America's current anti-intellectualism, together with its anti-sexuality, is evidence of a general male emasculation both of function *and* mind."[212] Hefner, who also picked up on these

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[210] Wylie, "The Career Woman," *Playboy*, January 1963, 118; Wylie, "The Womanization of America," *Playboy*, September 1958, 78.

[211] Wylie, "Womanization," 51.

[212] Ibid., 78.

themes, ensured the strength of Playboy's masculinity through his magazine's emphasis on sophisticated consumption and stance in favor of complete sexual freedom between consenting adults.[213] Although the panel discussion on "The Womanization of America" provided a forum for opposing viewpoints, the overriding message was that dominant gender and marital relations as they stood in June 1962, when the discussion was published, were detrimental to men and women alike. For example, when Ernest Dichter offered the opinion that men will ultimately benefit from the equality of women, Paul Krassner, *Playboy*'s host of this panel, shut him down with the curt statement that "Philip Wylie disagrees," followed by a long quotation from Wylie's *Playboy* article about womanization.[214] Furthermore, Krassner's response could be read as marking Wylie as the voice of *Playboy* on matters such as gender roles and relations. Foreshadowing some of the major themes addressed in the "Playboy Philosophy," the discussion concluded on the following hopeful note:

> As our nation becomes emancipated from associating sex with sin, rather than romance, and as young people are increasingly freed of feeling guilty about a play period in their lives before settling down to marital maturity, so the attitudes of the sexes may well become more healthy toward each other, may acquire a mutuality and mutual appreciativeness which does not entail the obliteration of differences, but rather heightens their pleasures and allows individuals of each of the sexes a fuller and more natural development of psyche and spirit, mind and body.[215]

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[213] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, January 1964, 189.

[214] Krassner's full response to Richter was: "Philip Wylie disagrees. If we may refer again to his *Playboy* article on womanization, he commented as follows on the repercussions of suffrage: 'The ladies won the legal advantages of equality—and kept the social advantages of their protected position on the pedestal. They thought "equal" meant "identical" in the days before they decided "equal" meant "in full charge." They said they wanted to be partners with their males, and to "share everything." That turned out to mean that the ladies wanted to invade everything masculine, cover it with dimity, occupy it forever—and police it.'" Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 211; "The Playboy Panel: The Womanization of America," *Playboy*, June 1962, 45-46.

[215] "The Playboy Panel: The Womanization of America," 144.

Nevertheless, Gilbert argues that Hefner "masculinized consumption by linking it to unmarried heterosexual sex," making "issues like Momism…beside the point to the new bachelor masculinity that *Playboy* promoted."[216] However, it is precisely because *Playboy* has such a stake in the establishment of a version of adult masculinity that is not tied to marriage and family life that the womanization of America is one of their primary concerns. Because masculinities are defined in relation to femininities, shifts in feminine roles are perceived as unsettling to masculine ones. Wylie and his supporters saw gender roles as a zero-sum game; the more women took on traditionally masculine roles, the fewer roles there were for men to occupy. In an August 1961 article entitled "Educated Barbarians," J. Paul Getty lamented that the average American suffers from cultural shortcomings, with men especially displaying a tendency to see culture as "something effeminate—if not downright subversively un-American." He went on to argue that an appreciation of arts and culture makes men both more completely male and more completely human, which better equips them to play their masculine role and enjoy life more fully.[217] In a radio panel discussion, which is reprinted, in part, in the December 1964 installment of "The Playboy Philosophy," Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum suggested that the Playboy lifestyle allows a man to reassert his masculinity and restore a balance between the genders that had been unsettled by Momism.[218] For these reasons, *Playboy*'s emphasis on the sophisticated consumption of both culture and commodities should be understood, in part, as a means of reclaiming cultural pursuits as a sign of one's masculinity and humanity and a defense against

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[216] Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 78.

[217] J. Paul Getty, "Educated Barbarians," *Playboy*, August 1961, 49-50, 188.

[218] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," December 1964, 217.

the blurring of gender roles they see emerging elsewhere in society.

The Feminine and the Feminist

Despite *Playboy*'s claim that they "are not male chauvinists" because they view many of women's advances as "entirely laudable," such guarding against fears of weak manhood often amounts to little more than attempts to salvage patriarchal power. Drawing a distinction between the feminine and the feminist, *Playboy* favored the former, linking feminism, like Wylie, to the "obliteration of differences" between the sexes. The dangers of the blurring of gender roles are reinforced by the authority of psychoanalyst Dr. Theodor Reik, who claimed, "there is a law—a law as binding as the law of chemistry or physics—namely, that a masculinization of women goes with the womanization of man, hand in hand."[219]

Building on arguments about Playboy's gender and sexual politics originally made by Osgerby, Carrie Pitzulo provides detailed information about Playboy's relationship to feminism and feminists, arguing that there were several reasons why Playboy had to directly address feminism by 1970. These reasons include the fact that the Playboy lifestyle depended, in part, on sexually liberated and available women. Pitzulo also argues that feminism simply became too big of a cultural and political phenomenon for the magazine to ignore, especially given the fact that readers were sending letters requesting that the magazine let its views on feminism be known. This is not surprising given that *Playboy* had never shied away from discussing gender relations and that 1970 was when the women's movement began receiving coverage on national television for its strikes and sit-ins supporting issues such as equality and birth control and opposition to cultural formations such as women's magazines—these last two were causes that

[219] "The Playboy Panel: The Womanization of America," 43-45.

Playboy could get behind even if it had different reasons for doing so.[220]

Taking issue with Ehrenreich's assertion that Playboy masculinity aided mid-century men in a "flight from commitment," Pitzulo argues that the Playboy lifestyle offered both men and women "an updated version of commitment." Pitzulo's main argument is that "Playboy's renegotiation of postwar heterosexuality was more pro-woman, even quasi-feminist, than previously acknowledged." She holds that while Hefner and the magazine could not bear radical feminism, they consistently supported liberal feminism through editorial content and charitable donations. She argues that Hefner's, and consequently the magazine's, vocal opposition to "militant activism…helped to solidify a misplaced legacy of anti-feminism."[221] Although Pitzulo notes the vehemence with which *Playboy* attacked the more radical factions of the women's movement, she does not acknowledge the connections between these attacks and the retrograde gender politics she associates with the magazine's early years. A primary concern of the anti-feminist pieces that appeared in the magazine during the 1970s was how the more radical feminist factions posed a threat to masculinity and weakened men's positions, which is also the concern of the pieces on the womanization of society that appeared in the 1950s and early 1960s. In addition to threatening role differences, articles in *Playboy* also depicted radical feminists as threatening heterosexuality. For example, in a May 1970 article on feminism, Morton J. Hunt wrote, "This rejection of distinctly feminine clothing and of the pursuit of beauty is supposed to free women from squandering their time and energy pleasing (and, thus, being subservient to) men. But as one listens to the extremists, it becomes clear that they are after bigger game—the

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[220] For a detailed analysis of news coverage of the women's movement in 1970, see Bonnie J. Dow, *Watching Women's Liberation, 1970: Feminism's Pivotal Year on the Network News* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

[221] Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 6-7, 128, 126.

withering away of heterosexual desire and heterosexual intercourse."[222]

Moreover, while Pitzulo states that Playboy supported liberal feminism, she is really arguing that Playboy supported the views of gender and sexuality advocated by Helen Gurley Brown, who became editor of *Cosmopolitan* in 1965.[223] The advice and gender and sexual politics espoused by Brown's books, *Sex and the Single Girl* and *Sex and the Office*, can hardly be said to constitute liberal feminism. While it is true that Brown's work focuses on how women can succeed in both work and love, the ultimate goal of her advice is snagging a husband who will be the main provider for the household. Furthermore, except for equal pay, Brown's work does not call for any real changes in gender roles or structural changes that will enable men and women to, as Brown put it in her Playboy interview, "develop the kind of social values, leadership styles, and institutional structures needed to permit both sexes to achieve fulfillment in the public and private world alike."[224]

It is also debatable whether the "Single Girl" truly is the female counterpart to the Playboy man that Pitzulo and Elizabeth Fraterrigo, following Osgerby, claim it is.[225] Because Brown espouses values that naturalize men's pre- and extra-marital dalliances, it is tempting to uphold the Single Girl as the perfect Playmate. Hefner would disagree with this conclusion for a number of reasons. Firstly, in his elaboration of "The Playboy Philosophy," he has repeatedly held that the magazine neither endorses pre- or extra-marital sex; rather, he and his magazine

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[222] Morton Hunt, "Up Against the Wall, Male Chauvinist Pig!" *Playboy*, May 1970, 206.

[223] Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 129.

[224] "Playboy Interview: Helen Gurley Brown," *Playboy*, April 1963, 56; Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction,* 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 30.

[225] Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making*, 105; Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, 169.

endorse sexual freedom in which consenting adults should be free to determine their own sexual morality and behavior without interference from the government.[226] Nevertheless, there are similarities between the lifestyles and attitudes toward gender roles that both *Playboy* and Brown espouse. For example, Ehrenreich argues that under Brown's editorial leadership, *Cosmopolitan* came to offer women "a tamer, feminine version of sexual and material consumerism."[227] In her April 1963 interview with *Playboy*, Brown expressed the idea that women should be feminine and should seek to be companions to man, which are ideas repeatedly expressed in Hefner's philosophy and elsewhere in the magazine. In her July 1964 article, "Sex and the Office," which was drawn from her forthcoming book of the same title, Brown demonstrated how well her sexual politics often aligned with those of *Playboy*. Echoing one of the fundamental premises of the "Playboy Philosophy," she stated, "Marriage may be the only legal male-female relationship, but it is far from the only meaningful one."[228] Concerned with office romances between married men and single girls, Brown's article justified men's attraction to and dalliances with women at the office. Although she claimed only "utter nutburgers" would cheat on their wives in the first few years of marriage, she goes on to argue that men who remain faithful often do so either "because they are not powerfully sexed" or "because they prefer boys."[229]

Furthermore, having similar orientations to sex and consumerism does not necessarily a counterpart make. There were many qualities that made the Single Girl exactly the type of woman that *Playboy* often derided. Brown encouraged women to engage in manipulation and

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[226] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, April 1964, 66.

[227] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 45.

[228] Helen Gurley Brown, "Sex and the Office," *Playboy*, July 1964, 82.

[229] Brown, "Sex and the Office," 82, 130.

use their sexuality, or at least the promise of it, to extract gifts and even marriage proposals from men, which was exactly the kind of behavior that *Playboy*'s articles about women often railed against. Characterizing her advice in *Sex and the Single Girl* as guidance on the appropriate use of "snares" and "wiles," it is clear in the interview with Brown that *Playboy* saw as her advocating the exploitation of men. While she denied that the purpose of her book was to teach women how to exploit men, when asked if women use sex to manipulate men, she replied, "A husband is a priceless commodity. Whatever means you use to get a husband outside of blackmail and things that are illegal, I think are all right….A woman desperately needs to get married more than a man does. She wants and needs the baby. So to get what she wants, she uses every available weapon. Sex is one of them."[230] Long before Brown began publishing advice for single women, *Playboy* characterized husband-seeking women as the enemy and warned its readers that "her single, most decisive weapon is sex."[231]

Along these same lines, later in the interview, Brown opined, "I don't know of anything more ruthless, more deadly or more dedicated than any normal, healthy American girl in search of a husband."[232] On this note, *Playboy* could not agree with Brown more. Seeking to postpone marriage rather than do away with the institution altogether, *Playboy* consistently advocated for an extended period of play before either men or women settled down to marriage and family life. The ideal Playboy woman, therefore, was one who engaged in sex without considering it pre-marital, i.e., as a husband snare. Brown's Single Girl, on the other hand, may have displayed all the feminine characteristics that a Playboy man sought in a potential playmate, but she, unlike

[230] "Playboy Interview: Helen Gurley Brown," 57-58.

[231] Burt Zollo, "Open Season on Bachelors," *Playboy*, June 1954, 37-38.

[232] "Playboy Interview: Helen Gurley Brown," 61.

the Playboy man, seemed to treat singlehood as a problem that needed to be remedied. Although Brown acknowledged that inequality between the sexes is one reason that women needed marriage more than men, she gave no indication that equality would eliminate what she characterized as a woman's need for a husband and children.

As with other phenomena that they could not ignore but also did not fully agree with (such as the Beats), *Playboy* utilized the letters to the editor column to communicate their preferred reading of the interview with Brown. The July 1963 issue of *Playboy* contained eight letters to the editor regarding the magazine's interview with Brown in its April 1963 issue. Six of these letters were negative and offer criticisms of her looks, her attitude toward abortion, her use of cutesy language (e.g., describing her own book as "pippy-poo"), her tendency to contradict herself, and her misconceptions about the rhythm method and Don Juanism. The longest letter was from a woman, Lyn Defiebre, who claimed to have been a long-time reader ever since purchasing a subscription for her husband. Stating that she and her husband "usually see eye to eye with you on your philosophy, your articles, your girls, and your humor," she went on to characterize the interview with Brown as the funniest piece of humor she had read anywhere. Defiebre continued, "I would *love* to meet the perceptive, witty, and utterly clever man who probed and needled the shallows of that silly, mixed-up mind."[233]

While these readers' letters sought to minimize the threat posed by Brown's Single Girl, her characterizations of women in the workplace hearkened back to Wylie's warnings about career women, which appeared in *Playboy* only three months prior to Brown's interview. To call Wylie's diatribe against career women misogynist is an understatement; he could not even

[233] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, July 1963, 5, 7; "Playboy Interview: Helen Gurley Brown," 56.

comprehend of the individuals he described as human let alone as women. He described "a woman of a special kind—if the term woman may be stretched beyond natural compass to include subhumanoids whose main function is to sabotage sexuality. The name we give these pseudobroads refers to a single aspect of them all….Our name for them is career women." In addition to competing with men, Wylie warned that these women were willing to cripple masculinity in their drive for personal success. Reiterating that "women should again be seen by men as complements of themselves and not as competitors," Wylie saw career women as a symptom of "a disastrous confusion about (and even exchange of) our roles as male and female."[234] Similarly, explaining one reason why a single girl would become involved with a married co-worker, Brown stated, "A barracuda girl may want professional power herself but not have the capacity for it—or her company won't hear of it. She takes on a lover who has the power she wants, gets inside him like a parasite and starts sapping." While Brown saw no problem with women using sex or the promise of it to get ahead in business, she disapproved of the methods of the "barracuda girl" and warned that these types of relationships could be damaging to a company and hinder the career aspirations of both parties to the affair.[235] Nevertheless, such descriptions lent credibility to Wylie's diatribe.

This fear of the loss of traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics and the exchange of gender roles drives *Playboy*'s stance toward feminism. In the April 1970 installment of "The Playboy Forum," Senior Editor Nat Lehrman outlines the magazine's views on feminism as follows:

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[234] Wylie, "The Career Woman," 117, 118, 154, 156.

[235] Brown, "Sex and the Office," 132; Brown, *Sex and the Office*, (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 195-196.

> Though we are opposed to the destructive radicalism and the anti-sexuality of the extremist fringe of militant feminism, our position on women's rights, we feel, is as consistently liberal as our position on all human rights. We've been crusading for a long time for universal availability of contraceptives and birth-control information, as well as for the repeal of restrictive abortion laws; we believe a woman's right to control her own body, in sexuality and in reproduction, is an essential step toward greater personal freedom. Likewise, we reject the Victorian double standard, which applauds sexual experience in men and condemns it in women; indeed, the sexual revolution, in which we have played a significant role, has helped women achieve greater sexual parity with men than they have ever enjoyed in previous Western history.[236]

Lehrman went on to explain that *Playboy* did not believe that women should be relegated to the drudgery of housewifery. Women who want to either exclusively pursue a career or combine a career with homemaking should be free to make that choice, have the opportunity to do so, and receive equal pay for equal work. However, this embrace of the career woman is mitigated by the assertion "that some occupations are better suited to most members of one sex than the other."[237] Moreover, this stance boils down to little more than a desire for the sexual and economic freedom of women, the attainment of which frees men from the pressures of early marriage and the breadwinner role. Echoing Wylie's assertion that women are meant to complement rather than compete with men, Lehrman argued that obliteration of sex differences threatened not only masculinity but heterosexuality as well.

The May 1970 issue contains a full-length article, "Up Against the Wall, Male Chauvinist Pig" by Morton Hunt, which the magazine solicited in order to more fully articulate its views on

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[236] "The Playboy Forum" became a regular column in the magazine beginning in July 1963. It was created due to the abundance of reader mail concerning the issues raised in "The Playboy Philosophy." "The Playboy Forum" allowed *Playboy* more space to print readers' letters as well as to more fully elaborate its editorial philosophy. "The Playboy Forum," *Playboy*, April 1970, 60. See also "The Playboy Forum," *Playboy*, July 1963, 39.

[237] "The Playboy Forum," April 1970, 60.

feminism.[238] In Hunt's article, the male breadwinner and female caregiver roles become desirable rather than stultifying for men. Resting on arguments about "the inherent biological differences between male and female," he stated, "In most marriages, it's logical that the husband become the head of the family, at least in economic and related areas, while the wife would make decisions in areas directly within her daily purview. This is not enslavement but democracy." This sudden embrace of the breadwinner role stemmed from the fear that radical feminists wished to do away with such a role, making men and women equal in the sense of being identical rather than in the sense of being equivalent in their roles.[239] It also stemmed from the belief, as Hunt explained in an August 1971 article on marriage, that "marriage is a microcosm, a world within which we seek to correct the shortcomings of the macrocosm around us."[240] As women sought more freedom outside the nuclear family ideal, some men respond by clinging to "traditional" gender roles. Furthermore, this demonstrates that even though Playboy masculinity was formulated as resistance to the breadwinner role, it nevertheless depends upon a world in which the breadwinner represents the dominant masculine role.

Cartoons and other humor pieces also worked to reinforce *Playboy*'s views on feminism and the dangers and absurdity of abolishing gender differences. For example, a cartoon from the January 1971 issue depicts a women's liberationist, whose feminine characteristics are limited to her hairstyle and clothing, dictating to a male secretary perched on her lap, which is an inversion

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[238] Hunt was not the first author *Playboy* approached to write a piece on "militant" feminism. For information about the controversy within *Playboy*'s editorial team regarding the publication of such an article, see Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 138-145.

[239] Hunt, "Up Against the Wall," *Playboy*, 208, 209.

[240] Hunt, "The Future of Marriage," *Playboy*, August 1971, 118.

of the typical gender roles depicted in similar cartoons.[241] The April 1971 installment of the Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder comic "Little Annie Fanny" also makes fun of feminists. The story follows the blonde, buxom Annie as she joins a group of women's liberationists as they march all over town; invading men's spaces, such as bars, pornography shops, and athletic clubs; and plaster stickers that say, "This exploits women," on every available surface. In the final four panels (see fig. 11), the women strip in order to occupy the steam room of the athletic club, but when they see Annie's body, they instead cover her in stickers exclaiming that what *Playboy* would hold as some of her most fundamentally feminine qualities exploit women. Consequently, this comic reinforced claims that radical feminists are anti-sexual.

Figure 11. Final four panels of *Little Annie Fanny* comic strip about women's liberationists. *Source*: Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder, "Little Annie Fanny," *Playboy*, April 1971, 257.

While most of the cartoons and articles attacked only radical feminists, Joan Rivers's humorous letter to women's lib made no distinction between what Hunt described as "the fiery evangelists and raging nihilists" and the "less strident, relatively reasonable" faction of

[241] Fraterrigo also discusses this cartoon; see *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life*, 188. Mischa Richter, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, January 1971, 249.

neofeminism. Rivers pleaded for Betty Friedan, Ti-Grace Atkinson, and Kate Millet to start the revolution without her because she "simply want[s] to enjoy being a female-type wife/lover just a little bit longer."[242] Although she outlined her support for gender equality and numerous other feminist causes, such as "around-the-clock child-care centers" and legalized abortion, the reasons she gave for loving her role as a soft, feminine woman and wife implied that any feminist advances would do away with both her femininity and her happiness to have finally found a nice guy to marry. Rivers's stance reinforced Hunt's claim that "there have always been women who found sex, marriage or both intolerable and who sought to make others find them so, too." Hunt claimed that these women (i.e., radical feminists) had captured attention, "in part, because they are advancing the cause of normal women as well as their own."[243] Such statements, along with other articles and cartoons that reinforced them, served to mark an embrace of traditional femininity as normal and the desire for equality (especially if it involved unisex clothing or failed to prioritize male heterosexual pleasure) as abnormal.

The Problem of Leisure

A corollary to the problems that changing economic and social configurations posed for white, middle class, heterosexual, masculinity could be found in mid-century concerns over the problem of leisure. David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney first hinted at this problem in *The Lonely Crowd*, and Denney and Riesman published a separate essay addressing leisure in 1952. In both works, the crux of the problem is identity formation. Denney and Riesman summarized the role leisure may play in identity formation as follows:

In a society in which competence in work is no longer a self-evident requirement either

[242] Joan Rivers, "Dear Women's Lib:" *Playboy*, January 1971, 165.

[243] Hunt, "Up Against the Wall," 209; Rivers, 165, 276.

> for individual or for social advance, competence in leisure may have to take over much of the justificatory quality previously found in work. That is, by developing ability in leisure skills, people may be able to circumvent social tendencies that make their work skills obsolete.[244]

The social tendencies that they referred to, and which occupied other social commentators throughout the 1950s and 1960s, were those toward an increased reliance on technology and greater bureaucratization. These ideas were echoed by Hefner in the abridged transcript of a radio panel discussion that appears as an installment of "The Playboy Philosophy" in December 1964. During this discussion, Hefner contended that one's sense of self would increasingly come from one's avocations as more leisure time became available due to the expanding mechanization of work.[245]

Although Osgerby outlines an enthusiastic embrace of a new leisure lifestyle by the expanding middle class, Riesman's and *Playboy*'s discussions demonstrate that increased access to leisure was also viewed as a source of anxiety for and by middle class Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. In *The Lonely Crowd*, Riesman, Glazer, and Denney suggested this anxiety stemmed from a blurring of the lines between work and leisure. The shortened workweek, they argued, had mostly benefited the working class since professionals and executives tended to use this extra time not to go home earlier but rather to inject more sociability into the workplace through activities such as extended coffee and lunch breaks, conventions, and the expense account entertainment of clients. Riesman and his co-authors reported a pervasive attitude of self-consciousness toward leisure, which they argued was due to the fact that "our culture no longer

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[244] Reuel Denney and David Riesman, "Leisure in Industrial America," in *Creating an Industrial Civilization: A Report on the Corning Conference*, ed. Eugene Staley (New York: Harper Brothers Publisher, 1952), 278-279.

[245] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," December 1964, 94.

provides us with clear and emotionally secure distinctions between work and leisure."[246] By 1957, William H. Whyte, Jr. reported a greater striving by professionals and executives toward balancing work and leisure; however, he observed that these men tended to use the pursuit of hobbies and other interests outside of work as a type of therapy or means of recovering from work.[247]

The notion of leisure as therapeutic was exacerbated by postwar affluence but was not a product of it. T. J. Jackson Lears traces the influence of a "therapeutic ethos" on leisure and consumption to the shift from "a production-oriented society of small entrepreneurs" to "a consumption-oriented society dominated by bureaucratic corporations," which took place in the U.S. in the early twentieth century. The therapeutic ethos stressed self-realization, and, as Lears argues, this was exploited by advertisers who "addressed those immersed in routine work *or* domestic drudgery; they held out the hope that life could be perpetually fulfilling; and they implied that one sought to strive for that fulfillment through consumption."[248] By the time *Playboy* convened a panel in early 1965 to discuss the "Uses and Abuses of the New Leisure," the problem of leisure had been medicalized with experts reporting a rise in "weekend neurosis" among young executives who did not know how to utilize their free time.[249] This anxious orientation toward leisure and consumption captures the search for "psychic security" that

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[246] Denney and Riesman, "Leisure in Industrial America," 268; Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd*, 161-162.

[247] Whyte, *Organization Man*, 156-157.

[248] T. J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 3-4, 27; emphasis in the original.

[249] "The Playboy Panel: Uses and Abuses of the New Leisure," *Playboy*, March 1965, 52.

underpinned the therapeutic ethos as it emerged and became more prevalent as postwar affluence, Cold War policies of domestic containment, and pressures to conform to corporate structures intersected in the 1950s.

Such an orientation toward leisure posed multiple problems from *Playboy*'s perspective. First of all, it set leisure up as something that must be coped with rather than viewing it as an essential part of a full life. In *The Lonely Crowd*, Riesman and his co-authors described the idea of pursuing leisure because one owes it to oneself as a reward for or break from hard work as a form of "attenuated puritanism."[250] In "The Playboy Philosophy," Hefner argued repeatedly that the most stifling influence in American life was not conformity but Puritanism.[251] One of the ways *Playboy* combated this influence was through advocating both hard work *and* the pursuit of pleasure. Work was an integral part of the Playboy man's identity; he was not a member of the idle rich who knew only leisure, and as an autonomous individual, his white collar job did not result in the psychic drain purported to afflict organization men who passively conformed to the demands of bureaucratic corporate structures. Although Denney and Riesman pointed out that leisure had the potential to be problematic, they also contended that abundance without leisure was meaningless.[252] *Playboy* extended this argument by asserting that just as women should complement men, the lighter side of life should complement the serious side. A man would be incomplete if he focused all of his energy on either work or leisure alone.[253] This was reiterated in the Playboy Panel discussion by social critic Norman Podhoretz, who argued that one can

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[250] Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd*, 185.

[251] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, March 1963, 55.

[252] Denney and Riesman, "Leisure in Industrial America," 253.

[253] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," January 1963, 50.

relax fully only if he works fully; therefore, if one's work is meaningless so, too, is one's leisure. Furthermore, *Playboy* also worked to distance the leisure pursuits it promoted from the DIY hobbyism it associated with the suburban breadwinner. In the Playboy Panel discussion of leisure, drama critic Walter Kerr argued that leisure time had been corrupted by hobbyism and DIY projects and contended that these comprise not leisure but rather work a man does for himself. Compounding the issues with hobbyism was Cleveland Amory's complaint that much of leisure was conformist and packaged, with people engaging in pastimes, such as collecting modern art, simply because their neighbors were doing so.[254] Such concern over conformity also reinforced Riesman et al.'s assertion that the blurring of the line between work and leisure posed a problem for other-directed individuals in particular. Riesman and his co-authors expressed hope that leisure might provide a space where the other-directed man could break down the barriers to his autonomy.[255]

Playboy recognized that the man whose identity was already built upon both work and leisure had less need to worry about how his masculine identity would be affected as his opportunity for leisure increased because he was possessed with a greater sense of self than the other-directed man. To this end, the "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" ad campaign functioned not only to provide guidance about how one's leisure time should be spent but also as a reminder that the Playboy man's identity rested on both his work and his play. Additionally, the range of leisure pursuits and the emphasis on building leisure competence presented in the magazine provided readers with ample ways to distinguish their leisure pursuits from those of others; these might include such diverse activities as adding the best reviewed jazz albums or hi-fi

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[254] "The Playboy Panel: Uses and Abuses," 53, 54, 59.

[255] Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd*, 185, 315.

components to one's collection, perfecting one's cocktail mixing skills with recipes from Food and Drink Editor Thomas Mario, or driving the latest foreign sports car. Even *Playboy*'s fashion features might be seen as building one's leisure competence and marking one as autonomous rather than other-directed. Riesman and his co-authors argued that one sign of the other-directed man's lack of both a clear sense of self and a clear line between work and play was the decline of evening dress. They stated, "Most men today simple do not know how to change roles, let alone mark the change by proper costuming."[256] In addition to articles by Fashion Editor Robert L. Green that provided guidance on the latest trends in men's business, active, and evening wear, Hefner modeled the line between work and play by appearing clad in a tuxedo as host of both *Playboy's Penthouse* and *Playboy After Dark*. The connection between a clear sense of self and the autonomous pursuit of leisure was captured in Terry Southern's assertion during the Playboy Panel discussion that leisure can be frightening for those who are not ready for a confrontation with themselves.[257]

In light of these concerns, the emphasis on leisure in the Playboy lifestyle must be understood as more than an attempt to elude the responsibilities of breadwinning. Leisure for the Playboy man was also an integral part of his identity, a way of proclaiming his autonomy, a manner of rejecting the Puritan ethic, and through the cultivation of competence, a means of distancing himself from the supposedly feminized and conformist mass culture preferences of women and other-directed men. Despite his early and continued support for automation in the workplace, the Playboy Panel discussion ended with the suggestion from John Diebold that as machines increasingly take over the work of men, leisure might be the one characteristic that

[256] Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd*, 185.

[257] "The Playboy Panel: Uses and Abuses," 52.

separates men and machines; i.e., he suggested that leisure might be the only thing that makes man uniquely human.[258] Such discussions promoted a worldview in which not only the Playboy man's masculinity, but also his very humanity, are both at stake and actively produced through his pursuit of leisure.

Conclusion

Although a Playboy lifestyle in terms of complete escape from the breadwinner role was probably not attainable for the majority of *Playboy*'s readers, containing the Playboy lifestyle within the realm of fantasy serves to diminish its importance in the ideological struggle over postwar masculinity. While few readers were likely to realize the hedonistic excess flaunted by *Playboy*'s Editor-Publisher, almost anyone who could read could cultivate Hefner's and his magazine's tastes. Even the domesticated suburban husband could cultivate a Playboy's taste in music, art, literature, food, and women. In the 1950s and 1960s, *Playboy* offered its readers both a refuge and a guidebook; i.e., a means of escape within its pages and as a member of an affective community comprised of the sort of men who read *Playboy* along with practical advice on how to cultivate one's tastes and eke out as much of the Playboy lifestyle as one could through classy consumption. Through membership in a discerning taste public, American men could associate themselves with a class culture rather than mass culture and thereby assert some control over grey flannel conformity and suburban domesticity. In the Playboy taste culture, sophisticated consumption was linked to more than private pleasure; it also served as a way to

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[258] Diebold, author of a 1952 book on the subject, is widely credited as providing the term "automation" with the meaning we assign it today. In 1954, he founded a consulting firm, which would come to be known as The Diebold Group, that advised businesses and governments about the oncoming computer age. Valerie J. Nelson, "John Diebold, 79; Pioneered Computer Use in Automation of Businesses," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 30, 2005, accessed May 6, 2015, http://articles.latimes.com/2005/dec/30/local/me-diebold30; "The Playboy Panel: Uses and Abuses," 51, 64.

publicly mark the Playboy man's individualism. Playboy gave the impression of having transcended the therapeutic ethos even while offering the promise of self-realization through consumption to millions of readers, viewers, and Playboy Club members.

Furthermore, consuming media is a way in which gender discourse is circulated and may also be a gendered practice. That is, the act of reading *Playboy* is both a means of consuming discourse that defines and explains how to be a Playboy man and a means of performing this masculinity. Because of *Playboy*'s double function when it comes to linking gender and consumption, it can be seen not simply as contributing to or circulating debates concerning mass culture, but as actively magnifying the role of gender in these debates. Even if we want to reduce the Playboy lifestyle (or any lifestyle, for that matter) to a mere matter of patterns of consumption, we must take into account that one's ability to consume is always circumscribed by one's social position. That is, factors, such as age, class, race, gender, geographic location, access to transportation, among others, always impact one's ability to consume freely. As the remaining chapters will illustrate, consumption is never free of assumptions about propriety; notions of who one is and what and how one "should" consume are inextricably linked.

CHAPTER 3

A Place to Call His Own: Playboy Domesticity and the Communication of Social Values through Midcentury Architecture and Interior Design

> Playboy *did not domesticate the bachelor but, in part, produced the figure of bachelor through a rearticulation of the meaning of domestic space and culture.*
> —Joanne Hollows, "The Bachelor Dinner"[259]

> *But when it comes to buying or building a weekend retreat, his options in design are woefully few; instead of having his choice of county or country houses to complement his city penthouse, he finds himself confronted with kozy kottages or split-personality ranch houses or gas-station-modern monstrosities. These, he discovers, are all 'oriented.' They may be family oriented, kitchen oriented, children oriented, suburb oriented, economy oriented. None seems to have been designed for the man who, perhaps like you, wants his own place away from the city's hurly-burly, a place where he can relax for a weekend or a week, with companions of his choosing, in a house of his own which provides his accustomed comforts and whatever degree of privacy or gregariousness, formality or informality, the occasions of pleasure require.*
> —"Playboy's Weekend Hideaway," April 1959.[260]

Even before Hugh Hefner decided that the Playmate should be characterized as the girl next door, *Playboy* magazine and the lifestyle it promoted was built upon a keen awareness of the intimate relationship between spatial and social locations. While the breadwinner role against which *Playboy* was rebelling described a relationship that may be understood as legal (husband and guardian) and economic (family provider), it must also be understood as spatial. After all, as Barbara Ehrenreich points out, a key part of the magazine's mission was to reclaim

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[259] Joanne Hollows, "The Bachelor Dinner: Masculinity, Class and Cooking in *Playboy*, 1953-1961," *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 16, no. 2 (2002): 145.

[260] "Playboy's Weekend Hideaway," *Playboy*, April 1959, 50, 53.

the indoors for men.[261] Such a mission indicates an understanding that architecture and interior design both shape and reflect societal and individual values. The ways in which spaces are constructed and decorated affect our perceptions of who and what belongs in them and informs us of the appropriate ways in which these spaces should be used. As a result, the architecture and design of a space can promote some types of relationships while inhibiting others. According to the prevailing domestic ideal, which was fueled by a housing shortage met by rapid suburban development in the years immediately following World War II, the breadwinner should or should aspire to reside in a single family home situated in a middle class suburb. An analysis of women's and home magazines from the 1950s and 1960s reveals that home for the ideal breadwinner was first and foremost a family space, the design of which required careful planning in order to meet the needs of the children and to enable the wife to manage the household as efficiently as possible.

Following the work of architecture historian Beatriz Colomina, this chapter is primarily concerned with architecture as a form of media, examining the ways in which our interactions with architecture are mediated and mediating while paying particular attention to the values communicated through architectural renderings and representations. Colomina argues, "The building should be understood in the same terms as drawings, photographs, writing, films, and advertisements; not only because these are the media in which more often we encounter it, but because the building is a mechanism of representation in its own right."[262] That is, architectural meaning is not only communicated through what we typically think of as the mass media; it is also communicated through our own relationships to architecture. However, buildings are more

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[261] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 43-44.

[262] Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 13-15.

than mechanisms of representations; Colomina asserts, "Architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupant."[263] Though not framed in these terms, Playboy is deeply concerned with the role of architecture in subjectivation, recognizing, as Hollows points out, that changing the meaning of domestic space is a key means through which Playboy subjectivity is produced. As Dolores Hayden argues, "The dwelling can be read as an image of the body, the household, and the household's relation to society. It is a physical space designed to mediate between nature and culture, between the landscape and the larger built environment."[264] In part, paying attention to the values communicated through Playboy architecture entails examining the ways in which Bill Osgerby's claim that "the bachelor pad was the spatial manifestation of a consuming masculine subject" may be understood outside of the urban bachelor apartment.[265]

The following examination of the spatial configurations of the Playboy lifestyle as manifested in fantasy blueprints for or features on actual bachelor pads in the magazine (many of which were neither urban nor apartments); the international chain of Playboy Clubs, Club-Hotels, and Casinos; and on the Hefner-hosted television variety parties, *Playboy's Penthouse* (1959-1961) and *Playboy After Dark* (1968-1970), will illustrate that a variety of public and private spaces could be constructed to communicate the values for which "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment" stands. Furthermore, the television shows and Playboy Clubs provided men who lived in suburban family homes with an opportunity to express their inner selves and claim

[263] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 250.

[264] Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life*, rev. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002): 58.

[265] Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad," 100.

Playboy's philosophy of urbanism as their own through the consumption of Playboy-constructed domestic space.[266] This chapter also seeks to ground the values associated with Playboy's philosophy of urbanism, which sits at the core of the wider Playboy Philosophy, within the history of post-World War II American architecture and design by analyzing discourses of the family home that circulated through women's and home magazines in the 1950s and 1960s. Because *Playboy* has been historically placed in opposition to postwar domesticity, examining its treatment of domestic space and domestic technologies, such as hi-fi equipment (see chapter 6) and television (see chapter 5), should elucidate the relationship between its search for masculine autonomy and its promotion of a masculine taste culture rooted in sophisticated consumption.

The family home was problematic for *Playboy* because of both the legal and spatial relationships it entailed. These problems are addressed in "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," a two-part feature devoted to a fantasy blueprint designed to showcase domestic space appropriate for the Playboy man. The second installment of the article, which appears in the October 1956 issue, argues, "A man's home is not only his castle, it is or should be, the outward reflection of his inner self—a comfortable, livable, and yet exciting expression of the person he is and the life he leads. But the overwhelming percentage of homes are furnished by women."[267] Family homes, then, were dull spaces in which a man, unable to express his inner self, could easily lose sight of both his masculinity and his individual identity. In the introduction to the December

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[266] The notion of a philosophy of urbanism is used here as Wojcik explains it in relation to her idea of "the apartment plot." That is, as "something akin to 'the right to urban life,'" which "maintains and celebrates the urban against the forces of suburbia, against containment, and against the destruction of the city." See Pamela Robertson Wojcik, *The Apartment Plot: Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945-1975* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 38-39.

[267] "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, October 1956, 65.

1953 inaugural issue of *Playboy*, Hefner hailed his readers as apartment dwellers. In her discussion of this introduction, Pamela Wojcik argues that, in addition to signifying masculine autonomy, "The apartment…serves as a synecdoche for the city; this association in turn suggests a certain level of sophistication—a catchall phrase signaling, culture, style, erudition, and urbanity."[268] The family home, though rarely explicitly mentioned in *Playboy*, could be understood within the spatial configurations of the Playboy lifestyle as the polar opposite of an urban bachelor apartment; i.e., as a synecdoche for the triumphs of familial togetherness over masculine autonomy with the assumed suburban location connoting a dreary acceptance of conformity and other-directedness as described by contemporary sociologists such as David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, Reuel Denney, and William Whyte, Jr.[269]

Additionally, comparing *Playboy*'s coverage of architecture and design to similar coverage in contemporaneous women's and home magazines (specifically, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*) will uncover the gendered assumptions and value judgments inherent in this literature and provide a more comprehensive picture of design trends in the United States during the mid-twentieth century than would studying a single source. Such a comparison will reinforce Hayden's point that "while women may have gourmet kitchens, sewing rooms, and so-called master bedrooms to inhabit, even in these spaces the homemaker's role is to service, not to claim autonomy and privacy."[270] By examining domestic spaces as texts in and of themselves, we can reveal the ways that the

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[268] Wojcik, *Apartment Plot*, 92-93.

[269] See Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd*; David Riesman, "The Suburban Sadness," in *The Suburban Community*, ed. William Dobriner (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958): 375-408; and Whyte, *Organization Man*.

[270] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 84.

intertextual relationships between Playboy's major enterprises in the mid-twentieth century worked to reinforce the values associated with the Playboy lifestyle.

Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that although the sets of Playboy's television shows; the Playboy Mansions; and the Playboy Clubs, Club-Hotels, and Club-Casinos may represent domestic spaces, they are actually institutional spaces, designed to promote the interests and values of Playboy Enterprises. As such, they work as advertisements not only for the magazine but also for the Playboy lifestyle itself, drawing the connections between Playboy masculinity and domestic space into even sharper relief than do the floor plans and articles about bachelor pads featured in the magazine. Unlike the print coverage of Playboy approved domestic spaces, Playboy's institutional-domestic spaces allow viewers and keyholders to experience these spaces as they are used even if the experience remains vicarious. The effectiveness of these institutional-domestic spaces in linking Playboy masculinity and domestic space is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that the image of Hefner as Mr. Playboy, clad in a smoking jacket and surrounded by Playmates, and the lingering lore of mansion life tend to overshadow other images of Playboy domesticity. Consequently, much of the existing scholarship on *Playboy*'s coverage of architecture and interior design focuses primarily or exclusively on the Playboy Mansion(s) and/or the occasional article describing a Playboy-designed fantasy floor plan for a bachelor pad. This narrow focus ignores the magazine's coverage of actual bachelor pads (which outnumber the floor plans by more than two to one in the time period under examination) and leads these scholars to: (1) uphold a dichotomy between urban and suburban spaces more rigid than what is actually expressed in *Playboy*, (2) conclude that the floor plans serve as "a kind of fantasmatic escape from suburbia," and (3) foreground

seduction as the ultimate design goal of the bachelor pad.[271]

While several scholars (e.g., Osgerby, Preciado, Sewell, Wagner, and Wojcik) do note masculine autonomy and control over one's environment as important values communicated through representations of Playboy domesticity, other scholars (e.g., Paul (née Beatriz) Preciado, Sewell, and Wagner) have a tendency to view the desire for autonomy and control as symptomatic of a greater desire for sexual predation.[272] For instance, Preciado argues, "The Playboy Penthouse functions first as an office, or command station, where the bachelor organizes his multiple sexual encounters, and second as a site for those encounters. Once the female guest has entered the apartment, every furniture detail operates as a hidden trap that helps the bachelor to get what *Playboy* magazine calls 'instant sex.'"[273] While he does note the actual bachelor pads featured in the magazine, his self-admitted lack of interest in "Playboy as a historical object of study" leads him to an argument that hinges incorrectly on other Playboy spaces, such as the set of *Playboy's Penthouse* and the Chicago Playboy Club (both of which were constructed before the Mansion was purchased), referencing the Playboy Mansion.[274] Consequently, he overstates the centrality of the Mansion's influence on the spatial configuration of the Playboy lifestyle.

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[271] See Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad," 105; Jessica Ellen Sewell, "Unpacking the Bachelor Pad," *The Institute Letter* (Spring 2012): 5; George Wagner, "The Lair of the Bachelor," in *Architecture and Feminism*, eds. Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze, and Carol Henderson (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996): 185-186, 195-196, 199, 210; and Wojcik, *Apartment Plot*, 96, 105-107.

[272] Sewell, "Unpacking the Bachelor Pad," 5.

[273] Beatriz (Paul) Preciado, "Pornotopia," in *Cold War Hothouses: Inventing Postwar Culture from Cockpit to Playboy*, eds. Beatriz Colomina, AnnMarie Brennan, and Jeannie Kim (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004): 228.

[274] Preciado, *Pornotopia*, 15, 17, 30, 181, 215.

For Steven Cohan, the relationship between the spatial configuration of the playboy's pad and his sexuality renders the object of his seduction ambiguous. He goes so far as to argue, based on the floor plans for "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment" and its division into active and quiet zones, that the spatial configuration of the bachelor pad "evok[es] the specter of the homosexual closet because of the way the layout simultaneously seeks to theatricalize (in the 'active zone') and contain (in the 'quiet zone') male sexuality within a single domestic space."[275] However, these arguments are weakened by the fact that, during the mid-twentieth century, it was common parlance to refer to those zones of the family home that may have previously been called formal and informal as quiet (semipublic) and active (public), respectively.[276]

This is not to suggest that seduction is not foregrounded in *Playboy*'s articles and cartoons featuring bachelor pads; like Wojcik, I am simply arguing that it is not the only design goal. Furthermore, the focus on seduction serves to distract from design goals linked to less predatory forms of control and autonomy. Osgerby and Wojcik, for instance, recognize that Playboy's embrace of a modern design aesthetic "links the playboy bachelor to an aesthetic of 'hip nonconformity,' meaning that "*Playboy*'s emphasis on style, decorating, and design represents a decisive ingredient in the *Playboy* philosophy and lifestyle."[277] In fact, it was largely the embrace of a modern design aesthetic that made both the magazine and its founder cultural icons.

Domestic and Institutional Space in the Making of Mr. Playboy

Months before the first issue of *Playboy* hit newsstands, Hefner was consciously

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[275] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 272-275.

[276] James A. Jacobs, "Social and Spatial Change in the Postwar Family Room," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 1 (2006): 73-74.

[277] Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad," 109; Wojcik, *Apartment Plot*, 96.

cultivating a public image that connected his way of life, or at least his domestic environment, with taste and sophistication. In March 1953, an article entitled "How a Cartoonist Lives" gave readers of the *Chicago Daily News* a glimpse inside the South Side apartment of Hugh and Millie Hefner. Married in June 1949 in the midst of the postwar housing shortage, Hugh and Millie moved into his parents' home when they returned from their honeymoon in Wisconsin. Glenn and Grace Hefner generously gave the young couple the largest bedroom in the house, and Hugh and Millie did their best to fashion it into a small apartment. After a year, the couple moved to a small one-bedroom apartment. When Millie became pregnant in early 1952, the couple moved to a more spacious apartment with two bedrooms, and Hugh jumped at the opportunity to turn it into a haven of the type of hip, urban, modern design that his future magazine would become known for promoting.[278]

No stranger to a carefully constructed image (Hugh had consciously transformed into "Hep Hef" between his junior and senior year of high school, changing his style of dress and becoming obsessed with jazz), Hugh worked hard to create a home and image that balanced his own desires with social expectations.[279] The *Chicago Daily News* photographs captured a young, happy family in an otherwise well-appointed and modern bachelor pad. One photo depicts Hugh, Millie, and their 4-month-old daughter, Christie, enjoying time together in their living room, nicknamed "the cave." Hefner sits cross-legged on the carpet patterned in diamonds of beige and coffee brown. He is still wearing his jacket and tie as if he had recently come home from his job as circulation manager for *Children's Activities* magazine. His trademark white

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[278] Hefner (ed.), *Hugh Hefner's Playboy Volume 1*, 193, 199; Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 50, 52-53, 56-57.

[279] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 29.

socks show above his black shoes. He is sitting against a brick fireplace with built-in bookshelves at either end. The shelves are full of books, most of them spine out, but a few too tall for the top shelf are neatly stacked. In his lap, he holds Christie, who slumps against him in a white dress. To his left sits Millie on a modern sofa in front of a large window. She looks relaxed, reading the newspaper, dressed smartly in a short-sleeved sweater and plaid wool skirt with a scarf tied around her neck. She has short bangs and long, dark hair that curls about her shoulders. She smiles broadly at her husband and daughter. Behind her, the white, yellow, and black drapes with an abstract horse design stand out against the walls, which she and Hugh painted a slate gray. In front of both of them is a Bertoia Bench coffee table by Hans Knoll, the sleek design of which appears to be comprised of no more than eight varnished wooden slats atop thin metal Y-shaped legs. Several ashtrays and a trinket box adorn the table, but they look as though they are seldom used. Although not pictured in the *Chicago Daily News* story, the living room also contained an orange, Eero Saarinen-designed and Knoll-manufactured womb chair and an Eames LCW (Lounge Chair Wood) chair, which was manufactured by Herman Miller.[280] With furniture designs appearing in New York's Modern Museum of Art (MoMA) and other museums worldwide since at least 1941, these designers and manufacturers still represent the forefront of twentieth-century American modern design.[281]

To look at the three of them, sitting there, smiling at each other, in their spotless, modern

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[280] See William Kiedaisch, "How a Cartoonist Lives," *Chicago Daily News*, March 21, 1953, for the photograph and Watts, p. 57 for a description of the apartment interior. The picture described here, along with other photographs of the Hefners' apartment, can also be found in Hefner (ed.), *Hugh Hefner's Playboy Volume 1,* 212-213, 218-219.

[281] For more on American midcentury modern design, see Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 36-38, 60-69, 115, 121, 184-185, and Kathryn B. Hiesinger and George H. Marcus (eds.), *Design Since 1945* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983).

home, it is hard to imagine that this domestic space and the furniture it contained would launch the Playboy Empire. One of the oft-repeated details of *Playboy*'s shoestring starting budget involves Hefner raising $600 in startup funds by putting his modern furniture up for collateral to secure loans from the Local Loan Co. and a bank on Michigan Avenue. Anniversary issues of *Playboy* often contain photographs of the Hefners' apartment during the magazine's early days. However, rather than projecting the familial togetherness and order on display in the *Chicago Daily News* story, the photographs that have become part of Playboy's corporate mythology show a lone Hefner, hunched over a typewriter in his Eames chair, papers and office supplies strewn about in what Hefner's colleagues would later affectionately refer to as "controlled chaos."[282]

During the creation of the first three issues, the Hefners' South Side apartment served as *Playboy*'s corporate headquarters. In early 1954, with increasing sales of the magazine, *Playboy* moved to an office in the bohemian district of Chicago across E. Superior from the Holy Name Cathedral. Once the magazine moved out of his South Side apartment, Hugh moved on as well. His office on E. Superior was attached to a small bedroom and kitchenette, and he opted to come home less and less. In 1956, the Playboy offices moved to 232 E. Ohio Street, and Hugh's new office suite also contained a bedroom as well as a bathroom and dressing room. By the summer of 1957, Hugh and Millie had officially separated, and a divorce decree was granted in March 1959.[283]

That year—1959— and the next marked important changes for both Hefner and the

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[282] Stephen Galloway, "Hugh Hefner: The Playboy Interview," *The Hollywood Reporter*, Sept. 21, 2011, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hugh-hefner-playboy-interview-238754.

[283] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 58, 64, 70-71, 81-82, 99, 144-151.

Playboy corporation. The summer saw the company undertake the successful production of a three-day jazz festival and begin production on its first television series, *Playboy's Penthouse*, a syndicated TV variety-party in which Hefner, as host, welcomed musicians, celebrities, and beautiful women to an intimate cocktail party in a television studio set constructed to resemble a bachelor pad. By the end of 1959, *Playboy*'s circulation had surpassed more than one million copies per month. It was also as 1959 came to a close that Hefner made the pivotal decision to spend $400,000 (over $3.2 million in 2015 dollars) on a four-story mansion located at 1340 N. State Parkway. On February 29, 1960, Playboy opened the first in its chain of Playboy Clubs in Chicago's Near North Side; however, it was the first party thrown at the Playboy Mansion in May 1960, and on a near-weekly basis thereafter, that would solidify the image of Hefner as the symbol of ultimate bachelorhood.[284] As he explained in a 2006 interview, "It was in 1959 quite literally that I came out from behind the desk and started living the life. I reinvented myself and became in effect Mr. Playboy."[285]

However, the Playboy Mansion was neither simply nor primarily a domestic space. As Hefner explained in an introduction to a book about the Playboy Mansions, "I acquired what was to become the Playboy Mansion in December 1959—not simply as a private residence, but as a corporate facility that would become the very center of the Playboy world."[286] Hefner's residence occupied the second floor and a portion of the first floor of the Mansion; the third floor was turned into a Bunny Dorm for women working at the Chicago Playboy Club while

[284] Kathryn Loring, "A Bachelor's Dream," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1961; Watts, 103, 155, 157-158.

[285] "Interview with Hugh Hefner 2006," interview by Bill Zehme, *Playboy After Dark*, disc 1 (Ventura, CA: Morada Vision, 2006), DVD.

[286] Hefner, introduction to *Inside the Playboy Mansion*, 11.

Playmates and other magazine employees rented apartments in the Mansion. The Mansion was also a workspace with Hefner conducting most of his business from his home office. Several magazine employees, such as Hefner's secretary and executive assistant, also worked out of the Mansion, and executive meetings were held in the space on a regular basis.[287] The Playboy Mansion was treated as a corporate investment with Hefner reportedly paying only $650 per month in rent while his company absorbed the remainder of the costs for entertaining in and maintaining the property[288]. Hefner's current home, Playboy Mansion West, located in the exclusive Holmby Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles, was purchased on February 3, 1971, by the corporation as another promotional investment property.[289] Hefner never owned either property; he currently rents Playboy Mansion West for an annual sum of $100 from Playboy's parent company, Icon Acquisition Holdings, which covers the cost of the Mansion's utilities, maintenance, and repairs.[290] Critics and admirers alike have had a tendency to reduce the Playboy Mansions and Clubs to little more than "erotic theme park[s]." However, they should also be understood as further examples of the ways in which Playboy-designed spaces actively

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[287] Gretchen Edgren, *Inside the Playboy Mansion* (Santa Monica, CA: General Publishing Group, Inc., 1998): 32, 46-47, 76; John McDonnell, "Playboy Head Buys Mansion on North Side," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 17, 1959; "The Playboy Mansion," *Playboy*, January 1966, 105, 107, 202-203.

[288] Stephen Byer, *Hefner's Gonna Kill Me When He Reads This: My Incredible Life at Playboy* (Chicago: Allen-Bennett, Inc., 1972): 44.

[289] Edgren, *Inside the Playboy Mansion*, 111.

[290] Jeff Bercovici, "Hugh Hefner's Bizarre Playboy Mansion Lease," *Forbes.com*, February 16, 2011, http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffbercovici/2011/02/16/hugh-hefners-bizarre-playboy-mansion-lease/.

blur the line between the institutional and the domestic.[291] Furthermore, the history of the evolution of Playboy's institutional space demonstrates that architecture and design have always been central to Playboy's corporate image as well as to Hefner's image as the organization's chief brand ambassador. This history also shows that, until late 1959, the Playboy lifestyle was even aspirational for the magazine's Editor-Publisher himself. Hefner understood what it was like to be a breadwinner looking for "a place to call his own," and the magazine's features on modern architecture and design along with those on cooking were intended to provide male readers with a level of domestic competence that would enable even those who were suburban breadwinners to find autonomy and express their individuality through the reclamation of specifically masculine domestic space within the family home.

Architecture and Design in *Playboy*

Although the magazine's tagline and introduction promised a focus on "entertainment for men," *Playboy*'s content situates it as a holistic men's lifestyle magazine with a focus on modern living for the actual or aspiring urban man-about-town. Since *Playboy*'s first issue, the "modern living" section of the magazine has contained articles providing information about home and office décor ranging from desks to bar accessories and from hi-fi equipment to modern art. This section also regularly features information about the latest in automobile design and articles about Playboy-appropriate modes of outdoor leisure, such as yachting, flying, and skiing. More importantly for the focus of this chapter, with the exception of "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," this is also the section under which the magazine's fantasy blueprints and features on actual bachelor pads are published. Numerous articles on architects, designers, city planning, and interior design also appear in other sections of the magazine, such as a feature article on

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[291] "Now It's the Playboy Time," *Variety*, March 22, 1961, 63; "The Playboy Mansion," 106; Preciado, *Pornotopia*, 113; Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 273.

Frank Lloyd Wright (May 1955), a profile of Mies van der Rohe (August 1958), and plans for the "City of the Future" by R. Buckminster Fuller (January 1968).[292]

While those, like architectural critic Reyner Banham, who initially purchased *Playboy* for the centerfold, may have been surprised at the quality and extent of the magazine's coverage of architecture and interior design, its centrality to the Playboy taste culture has led in the twenty-first century to articles and even museum exhibitions exploring *Playboy*'s design legacy.[293] Conceding that he could find at least a dozen reasons besides the centerfold to continue reading the magazine, Banham went on to praise the two home designs published by *Playboy* at the time of his writing, "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment" and "Playboy's Weekend Hideway." Of these designs, Banham states that although "neither of them [are] by any designers you have heard of,

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[292] Ray Russell, "The Builder," *Playboy*, August 1954; R. Buckminster Fuller, "City of the Future," *Playboy*, January 1968; "On the Scene: Mies van der Rohe," *Playboy*, August 1958, 22.

[293] In a collaboration between Princeton University and Bureau Europa (a Dutch organization that promotes European architecture and design), Beatriz Colomina curated an exhibit, *Playboy Architecture, 1953-1979*, which ran at the Bureau Europa from September 29, 2012-February 9, 2013. For more information about this exhibit, see the website for Princeton's program in Media and Modernity (http://mediamodernity.princeton.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=506) and Bureau Europa's website (http://www.bureaueuropa.nl/en/manifestations/playboy_architecture_1953_1979/). In 2009, a British illustrator created an animated virtual tour based on "The Playboy Town House" (May 1962), and recent articles on online magazines and blogs have looked at Playboy's contributions to architecture and interior design in the mid-twentieth century. See, for example, Sarah Firshein, "Animator Crafts Virtual Pad Based on 1961 Playboy Townhouse," *Curbed* (blog), October 8, 2010, http://curbed.com/archives/2010/10/08/animator-crafts-virtual-pad-based-on-1961-playboy-townhouse-1.php; Jon Patrick, "When Playboy Informed Sexy Design and Made the Bachelor Pad a Cultural Icon," *The Selvedge Yard* (blog), December 2, 2014, http://selvedgeyard.com/2014/12/02/when-playboy-informed-sexy-design-and-made-the-bachelor-pad-a-cultural-icon/; Troy Patterson, "Gentleman Scholar: Bachelor of Design," *Slate*, December 23, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/life/gentleman_scholar/2014/12/bachelor_pad_history_and_furnishing_playboy_s_design_legacy_and_a_shopping.html; Amy Schellenbaum, "A Look Back at the Midcentury Home Design of *Playboy*." *Curbed National* (blog), February 11, 2013, http://curbed.com/archives/2013/02/11/a-look-back-at-the-midcentury-home-design-of-playboy.php.

[the designs] are none the worse for that, and considerably better than any equivalent projects that one can remember in the *Home & Garden* magazines." He also astutely observed that the centerfold spreads themselves, along with features on hi-fi, also transmit "quite a lot of furnishing information."[294]

As a core part of Playboy's taste culture that is also crucial to Playboy's establishment of a version of masculinity that offers more flexibility and autonomy than does the dominant masculine role of the breadwinner, which is itself tied to its own architecture and design, it should not be surprising that elements of modern architecture and design are woven throughout *Playboy*'s contents. The connection between the Playboy man and modern design is evident in the drawing of the magazine's rabbit mascot that appears on the inside cover of the first issue. In this image by Arv Miller (see Fig. 12), the smoking jacket-clad rabbit stands near a roaring fireplace smoking a cigarette and holding a cocktail. In front of him is a low, kidney-shaped cocktail table, and behind him is a Knoll Hardoy chair (commonly referred to as a butterfly chair). An update of a nineteenth century design, the butterfly chair was designed during World War II by three Argentinian architects (Antonio Bonet, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, and Juan Kurchan) and produced in the United States by Knoll from 1947-1950. Although criticized for its irrationality because its sling design promotes bad posture, the butterfly chair nevertheless "became one of the conventional symbols of Modernism."[295]

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[294] For more on how the centerfolds and hi-fi features transmit the values associated with Playboy's taste culture, see chapters 3 and 5. Reyner Banham, "Not Quite Architecture: I'd Crawl a Mile for…*Playboy*," *The Architect's Journal* 131, no. 3390 (April 7, 1960): 107, 109.

[295] Galen Cranz, *The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body, and Design* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998, p. 143-144; "Knoll Designer Bios: Jorge Ferrari Hardoy," *Knoll, Inc.*, accessed September 7, 2015, http://www.knoll.com/designer/Jorge-Ferrari-Hardoy; "Volume I, Number I," 2.

Figure 12. Image on inside cover of *Playboy*'s inaugural issue.
Source: Playboy, December 1953, 2.

From 1954-1967, the butterfly chair appears repeatedly in *Playboy* content both explicitly and implicitly related to architecture and interior design. For example, a May 1954 humor piece mapping out the movements of a "Playboy and friend" through his bachelor pad as he embarks upon a less than smooth, but ultimately successful seduction, is accompanied by an illustration depicting both a butterfly chair and Saarinen womb chair next to the playboy's fireplace. Although the image is one of the calendar photographs Hefner had purchased when starting the magazine rather than the result of a photo shoot staged by *Playboy*, the Playmate of the Month for November 1954 happily reclines in a butterfly chair. The results of *Playboy*'s own photo shoots featuring nude women in butterfly chairs appear in a September 1959 feature on photographer Bunny Yeager and her contributions to the magazine (Playmate Joyce Nizzari sits poolside) and a July 1967 pictorial on "The Girls of Paris" (ballerina Annie France sits fireside). The January 1956 installment of "Playboy's Party Jokes" is accompanied by a drawing of a Femlin relaxing in a butterfly chair with a cocktail while wearing nothing but high heels and

black opera length gloves (fig. 13).[296] References to the Saarinen womb chair Hefner put up as collateral in order to start the magazine along with other depictions of the womb chair also appear throughout the 1950s and 1960s. For example, the January 1958 issue features a cover in which the tuxedo-clad rabbit mascot sits in an orange womb chair (like Hefner's) in front of a wall containing photographs of the previous year's most popular Playmates. Additionally, December 1958's "Playboy's Fifth Anniversary Scrapbook" contains a photograph of Playmate Lisa Winters lounging in Hefner's womb chair in the Playboy offices. All of these images and others explicitly linked the Playboy man's taste in modern design to successful seduction and heterosexual sex.

Figure 13. Femlin in butterfly chair.
Source: "Playboy's Party Jokes," *Playboy*, January 1956, 35.

In an article exploring bachelor pads of the past and future, *Slate* columnist Troy

[296] The Femlin is a character created by artist LeRoy Neiman. A former colleague of Hefner's at the Carson Pirie Scott department store, Neiman would become a regular *Playboy* contributor, illustrating stories and a feature entitled "Man at His Leisure." A pocket-sized and playful pixie, the Femlin has accompanied the magazine's "Playboy's Party Jokes" page since her first appearance in August 1955. The character would go on to adorn plates, glasses, ashtrays, and other items used at the Playboy Clubs or sold to magazine readers or Playboy Club members.

Patterson argues, "At midcentury, *Playboy* was on the same page as *Industrial Design* and *Architectural Record* and everyone else."[297] This is confirmed not only by *Playboy*'s repeated inclusion of modern architecture and design in its editorial content, but is also reinforced through *Playboy*'s singular ability to arrange a photo shoot featuring George Nelson, Edward Wormley, Eero Saarinen, Harry Bertoia, Charles Eames, and Jens Risom posing with some of their most well-known designs to accompany John Anderson's July 1961 article, "Designs for Living." Furthermore, *Playboy*'s dedication to modern design should not be surprising given its conceptualization as an upper-middlebrow magazine, especially since, as Herbert Gans points out, a preference for "good design" is a hallmark of progressive upper-middle culture. Although Gans claims that the upper-middlebrows' attraction to good design cannot be reduced to simply a means of status-seeking, Anderson, Executive Editor of *Interiors* magazine, provides *Playboy* readers with a history of modernist design that is careful to separate current trends in furniture design from the dogma of early modernism. He explains that early modern design "dwelt, along with pre-Bach and post-Bartók, strictly among the intelligentsia."[298] This comment serves to root Playboy's taste culture firmly within upper-middlebrow culture while diminishing the desirability of striving for highbrow status by insinuating that highbrow culture can be as rigid and conformist as lowbrow or lower middlebrow culture. Following Andreas Huyssen's work on the divide between high culture and mass culture, Osgerby points out that although modernism had been canonized by the 1950s, making Playboy's affinity for it hardly radical, "modernism's bold lines and slick minimalism were still a bold contrast to the 'homely' cosiness

[297] Patterson, "Gentleman Scholar."

[298] John Anderson, "Designs for Living," *Playboy*, July 1961, 5, 46-48; Gans, "Design and the Consumer: A View of the Sociology and Culture of 'Good Design,'" in *Design Since 1945*, eds. Kathryn B. Hiesinger and George H. Marcus (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 32-34.

of suburbia."[299] While the women's and home magazines occasionally featured modern design, their emphasis remained on promoting more traditional designs, such as Early American or French Provincial, and instructing homemakers on how to achieve these classic looks on a budget.[300] In contrast, much like the Playboy man himself, contemporary modern design is described as "liberated, fanciful and romantic."[301]

Of the furnishings Anderson discusses, next to chairs designed by Eames and Saarinen, the storage wall concept, originally developed by architect-designer George Nelson, is likely to be among the most recognizable design elements to regular readers of the magazine's features on bachelor pads. Anderson describes the storage wall as "an ingenious system of shelves and supports that could be assembled to accommodate in one out-of-the-way wall all manner of equipment including bar, television, hi-fi and desk, as well as storage space." Noted for "integrat[ing] furniture with architecture to achieve greater space, utility, and harmony," Nelson's design influence can be seen in many articles on fantasy and actual Playboy Pads as well as in innovations, such as the electronic entertainment wall.[302] Lynn Spigel notes, "Nelson's Storagewall was intended for the postwar consumer family overcome by the objects

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[299] Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad," 109.

[300] See, for example: Ruth Seefeldt, "The Traditional Look without Antiques," *Better Homes and Gardens*, November 1959, 54+.

[301] Anderson, "Designs for Living," 48.

[302] Ibid., 52; See, for example, "A Playboy Pad: Manhattan Tower," *Playboy*, August 1965, 62-63; "Playboy's Electronic Entertainment Wall," *Playboy*, October 1964; "A Playboy's Pad: Airy Aerie," *Playboy*, May 1964, 72-73, 76; "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," September 1956, 59-60; "Playboy's Weekend Hideaway," 56.

they possessed, but it especially served as means of hiding and organizing media machines."[303] Consequently, the storage wall fit well into the Playboy lifestyle, which emphasized hi-fi connoisseurship and listening to music as integral ways in which the Playboy man could prove his leisure competence.

The Spatial Manifestation of the Consuming Male Subject

The bachelor pad is often characterized as the antithesis to suburban "togetherness," a term coined by *McCall's* in 1954 as the ideal expression of a stable home life.[304] As a means of encouraging togetherness, postwar architecture emphasized open floor plans and eschewed earlier designs that featured more separate and socially segregated spaces. Such changes led to "a diminution of specifically male domestic space" in suburban homes.[305] Moreover, examining postwar women's magazines, Spigel observes that "the spatial organization of the home was presented as a set of scientific laws through which family relationships could be calculated and controlled."[306] Given these changes in spatial organization, it is easy to see how *Playboy*'s project of "reclaiming the indoors for men" could appeal to a sizeable readership resistant to the prevailing domestic ideology. According to Preciado, "the penthouse's particular value was its ability to produce a gender economy different from that found in the single family home."[307]

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[303] Spigel, "Object Lessons for the Media Home: From Storagewall to Invisible Design," *Public Culture* 24, no. 3 (2012): 537.

[304] Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad," 105; Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 37.

[305] Keightley, "'Turn It Down!' She Shrieked: Gender, Domestic Space, and High Fidelity, 1948-1959," *Popular Music* 15, no. 2 (1996), 153.

[306] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 37.

[307] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 43-44; Preciado, "Pornotopia," 219, 226-227.

Similarly, Hayden argues that suburban "houses provide settings for women and girls to be effective social status achievers, desirable sex objects, and skillful domestic servants, and for men and boys to be executive breadwinners, successful home handymen, and adept car mechanics." Playboy's domestic spaces, on the other hand, represent an attempt to subvert the suburban "architecture of gender."[308] For example, a January 1966 *Playboy* article describes the Playboy Mansion as "an architectural embodiment of Hefner's dual nature, enabling him to enjoy both companionship and solitude."[309]

At first glance, the magazine's features on bachelor pads seem to reinforce many scholars' assertions that the Playboy lifestyle served mainly as a fantasy role model for the magazine's mass of readers.[310] The pads featured between May 1964 and August 1972 all belong to upper middle class men, who are members of the professional class and work in largely self-directed occupations. The pads of four architects, the president of a ski-pole manufacturing firm, two developers, an attorney, a freelance photographer, an artist, a toy designer, an interior designer, and the Editor-Publisher of *Playboy* itself are all featured. In the titles of these features, the pads are described in terms that connote refuge, such as tower, retreat, haven, and oasis, but the articles reveal that the greater masculine fantasy is one of control over public and private spaces and work and leisure time. This is summed up nicely in the April 1966 feature on attorney James Hollowell's Palm Springs oasis, which concludes: "as befits a successful barrister, Hollowell has created a home and an environmental setting where he can

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[308] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 33-34.

[309] "The Playboy Mansion," 207.

[310] See Conekin, "Fashioning the Playboy"; Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad"; Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, 121-148; Wojcik, *Apartment Plot*, 88-138.

lead a full professional life *and* private life—and always on his own terms."[311] Such discourses about the relationships between Playboy masculinity, autonomy, and privacy reinforce Hayden's assertion that the architecture of gender ensures that such control is out of reach of the suburban homemaker.

Given the emphasis on pleasurable living, Osgerby and other scholars have a tendency to focus on Playboy's promotion of sophisticated consumption.[312] For example, Sewell argues, "Control panels express a fantasy of pure leisure, in which the bachelor can spend his entire life indolently in bed taking care of every need by remote control, as well as a fantasy of total control, in which the bachelor is able to control everything around him by the push of a button."[313] While sophisticated consumption is certainly advocated for and reinforced repeatedly throughout the magazine's features on real life bachelors and their ultra-modern pads, indolence is not compatible with the Playboy philosophy. In the second installment of "The Playboy Philosophy," Hefner explains:

> What some fail to realize (and this includes a number of *Playboy*'s critics) is the extent to which the lighter side of life truly complements the serious side: either without the other would result in only half a man. The fellow who spends all his time in leisure activity never knows the intense satisfaction that is to be had through real accomplishment; but the man who knows nothing but his work is equally incomplete.[314]

Consequently, the "Playboy Pad" features emphasize that these bachelor pads are also the spatial manifestations of *producing* male subjects. This is accomplished in three main ways: (1) placing

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[311] "A Playboy Pad: Palm Springs Oasis," *Playboy*, April 1966, 126.

[312] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 44-46, 49-50; Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, 100; Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 71-103; Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 76-97.

[313] Sewell, "Unpacking the Bachelor Pad," 5.

[314] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," January 1963, 50.

an emphasis on the inclusion of a home office in the pad's design, (2) featuring the homes of creative professionals, such as architects, designers, and artists and demonstrating how their professional expertise contributed to the personalized design of their homes, and (3) highlighting furnishings that were handcrafted or designed by the bachelors. If an article contains a picture of a home office that does not serve a dual purpose, such as converting to a guest room, the bachelor is usually depicted in the midst of work.[315] Other articles, such as the feature on toy designer Marvin Glass's converted suburban carriage house, point out that sometimes the bachelor's business is pleasure, and, in Glass's case, throwing a party may allow him to test out new games.[316] By also drawing attention to how the featured bachelors earn their livings, the magazine reinforces that these exemplars of Playboy masculinity are not the idle rich and demonstrates the bachelor's control over his work, space, and time.

The Ranch House and the Penthouse

While *Playboy*'s intended audience of upwardly mobile middle class men may have felt alienated by the grey flannel conformity of their white-collar jobs and (especially if married) lacked hope of ever leading life always on their own terms, there was much that a suburban husband could recognize in the layouts of the Playboy Pads. Osgerby claims, "The open-plan layout of 'Playboy's Penthouse', with its stress on 'function areas' rather than 'cell-like rooms', was reminiscent of the flowing interior spaces of the suburban ranch-house, but here the

[315] For examples of how these articles highlight bachelor-designed furnishings, see "A Playboy Pad: Manhattan Tower," 64-65; "A Playboy Pad: Surprise Package," *Playboy*, August 1972, 124; "A Playboy Pad: Texas Retreat," *Playboy*, October 1966, 106-107; and "A Playboy's Pad: Airy Aerie," 74-75. For examples of bachelors in their home offices, see "A Playboy Pad: Manhattan Tower," 64; and "A Playboy Pad: Palm Springs Oasis," 122.

[316] "A Playboy Pad: Swinging in Suburbia," *Playboy*, May 1970, 98-99.

similarity ended."[317] While Osgerby is specifically referring to the 1956 fantasy blueprint of a penthouse apartment (fig. 14), *Playboy*'s "A Playboy Pad" features continued to stress open floor plans in an attempt to justify the anti-togetherness of the bachelor through the naturalization of his "penchant for wide-open spaciousness."[318] At the same time, the open floor plans, stress on function areas, and ability to repurpose space through the opening and closing of screens were simply aspects of mainstream suburban architecture and interior design. Sewell also points to the similarities between bachelor pads and suburban architecture, describing penthouse apartments as "much like a suburban ranch house placed atop a tower."[319] According to James A. Jacobs, the division of domestic space into active and quiet zones is related to social changes in the postwar family room. He states, "As houses grew in size and expense, differentiated space became a key sign of middle-class membership."[320] More casual areas, such as the family room, comprised the active zone and were considered public space while more formal areas, such as the living and dining rooms, comprised the quiet zone and were considered semipublic space.[321] This is evident in floor plans, such as the one for *Better Homes & Gardens*' 1956 Idea Home of the Year, which place the living room "in its own wing for total freedom of the parents in their relaxation and entertainment."[322] (fig. 15)

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[317] Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad," 105.

[318] "A Playboy Pad: Palm Springs Oasis," 126.

[319] Sewell, "Unpacking the Bachelor Pad," 5.

[320] Jacobs, "Social and Spatial Change," 73.

[321] Ibid.

[322] John Normile, "The Home of the Year," *Better Homes & Gardens*, September 1956, 64.

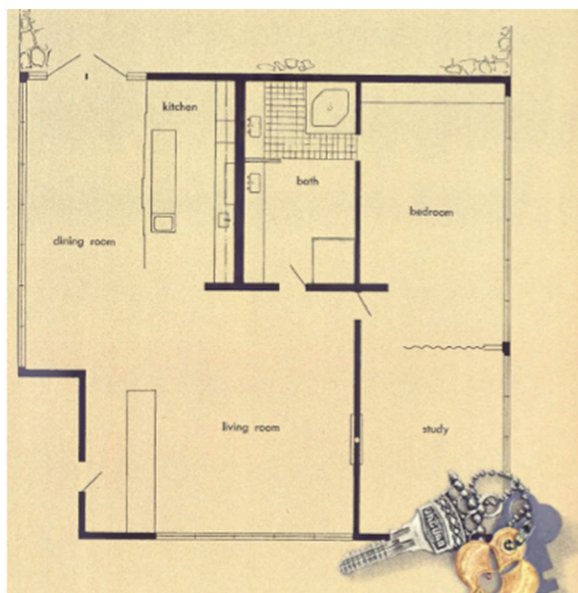

Figure 14. Floor plans for Playboy's Penthouse Apartment.
Source: "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, September 1956, 53.

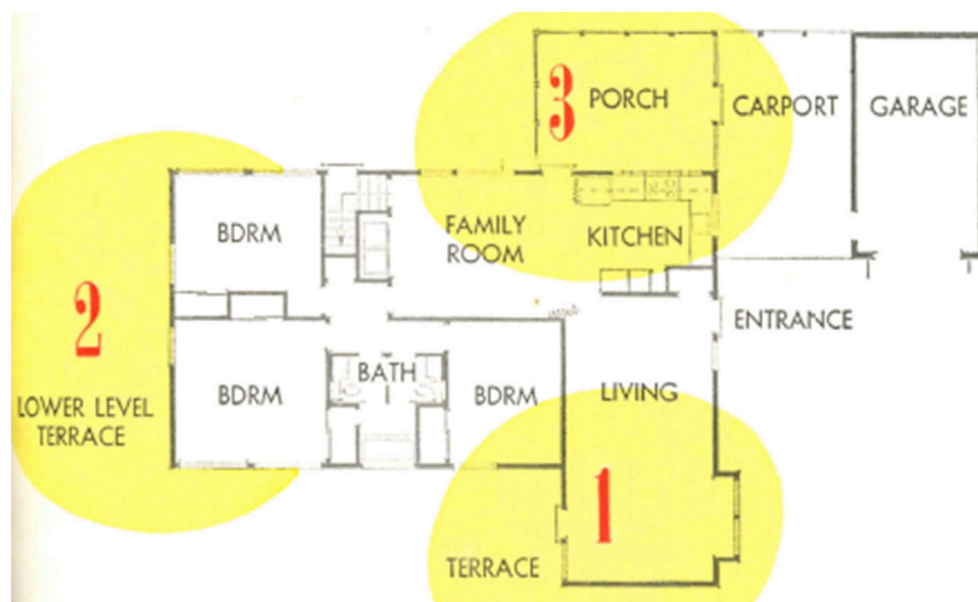

Figure 15. Floor plans showing the living room in its own wing.
Source: "The Idea Home of the Year," *Better Homes and Gardens*, September 1956, 63.

Spigel, noting the competing discourses in women's magazines between open floor plans that stressed togetherness and the efficiency of divided work and leisure space, asserts that

"room dividers presented a perfect balance of integration and isolation."[323] For example, a September 1956 decorating preview in *Better Homes and Gardens* suggests using screens "to make a study corner for a student, divide living and dining areas, or make extra wall space for the TV set."[324] The utilization of dividers to balance integration and isolation was also demonstrated in *Playboy*'s coverage of the Palm Springs pad of attorney James Hollowell. The article explains, "Hollowell maintains absolute control of the inner spaces throughout his entire domain by utilizing freestanding wall sections, sliding screens, and swinging panels instead of traditional interior walls to adjust the space relationships of his floor plan in accordance with the needs of the moment."[325] With a simple change of pronouns, this quote would have seemed almost as natural in *Better Homes and Gardens* as it did in the April 1966 issue of *Playboy*. Taking this spatial flexibility to its extreme is the bachelor pad designed and occupied by architect Fred Lyman. The floors, ceiling, and walls of his Malibu Beach home slide freely so that they may be adjusted to allow for the expansion or contraction of the living space.[326]

Cohan, however, equates the discussion of active and quiet zones in the "*Playboy's Penthouse Apartment*" articles of 1956 with the interiorization of public and private spheres, "reflecting how the bachelor's masculinity is itself divided." In addition to his claim about the relationship between the spatial division of the bachelor pad and the homosexual closet, Cohan also claims that "the function of the 'quiet zone' is to create a space for a bachelor's erotic self-stimulation, so it follows that the *object* of desire signified by *Playboy*'s apartment is the

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[323] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 92.

[324] "Here's Your Decorating Preview," *Better Homes and Gardens*, September 1956, 33.

[325] "A Playboy Pad: Palm Springs Oasis," 126.

[326] "A Playboy's Pad: Airy Aerie," 74.

bachelor himself, and that the overall purpose of the apartment's design is to turn his domestic sphere into a site of uncontained but nonetheless consumable autoerotic fantasy."[327] One could only reach such conclusions by foregrounding the bachelor pad as a den of seduction and ignoring non-sexual reasons for the rejection of the breadwinner role. In many ways, the object of desire signified by the magazine's features on bachelor pads is indeed the bachelor himself, but this desire is more obviously expressed in terms of autonomy than autoeroticism. In his contention that the pad's active zone is a site for the performance of bachelorhood, Cohan fails to take into account that such a performance stands in direct opposition to the suburban home's active zone as a site of family togetherness.[328]

While the quiet zones of the suburban household are utilized primarily for adult activity, the Playboy's lack of a wife and children enables him to control just how active and quiet each zone is and even reverse the zones if he so chooses. Although the playboy is anti-togetherness, the "A Playboy Pad" features illustrate that he is rarely alone, which is one reason a bachelor would need to maintain a private space, such as a study. These features, which are heavier on pictures than text, often show a party in progress or a naked woman bathing, swimming, or relaxing in a sauna without the Playboy man in sight. With surroundings lavish enough to entertain his guests even in his absence, the bachelor is free to move between the active and quiet zones, "enabling him to enjoy both companionship and solitude" on his own terms.[329]

The Heart of the Home

While the featured bachelor pads may not differ from suburban ranch houses in terms of

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[327] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 272, 274.

[328] Ibid., 272.

[329] "The Playboy Mansion," 207.

their emphases on designing spaces that flow, Playboy Pads promote different conceptions of public, semipublic, and private spaces than do the suburban family homes described by Jacobs. To begin with, a bachelor pad has neither need nor desire for a family room. However, in September 1956 (the same month that *Playboy* unveiled its design for the Penthouse Apartment), *Better Homes and Gardens* celebrated the addition of family rooms, explaining that "the family room is the only practical space when children are small" due to the room's "dual function as a supervised play area and family dining space."[330] Furthermore, while the living and dining rooms in family homes may have been considered semipublic space, they are the heart of the pads featured in *Playboy*.

Examining the spaces that Playboy Pads share with suburban family homes, particularly the kitchen, dining, and living rooms, provides further insight into the relationship between publicity and privacy and gendered notions of leisure and work. These relationships are perhaps made most explicit through the consideration of the differing ways in which *Playboy* and women's and home magazines define "the heart of the home." *Good Housekeeping, Better Homes & Gardens*, and *Ladies Home Journal* feature numerous articles that position the kitchen as the heart of the family home. These magazines describe the kitchen as not only "the hub of the house" but also as a command center, the base from which a wife can conduct "the official business" of running a family home.[331] With these functions in mind, women's and home magazines recommend that kitchens contain desks, giving women a "place where menus are planned, groceries ordered, [and] household files kept orderly." (fig. 16) These compact offices

[330] Normile, "Home of the Year," 64.

[331] Margaret Davidson, "Cooking Up a Great Kitchen," *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1969, 62-63.

may also serve as “the control center for the housewide intercom system, from which it is possible to answer the front door or speak to members of the family in any of the various rooms without leaving the desk.”[332] These magazines also recommend numerous ways to increase a woman’s efficiency in the kitchen, including specialized appliances, surfaces made from materials that are easy to clean, and carefully planned arrangements “to minimize the number of steps it takes to make dinner, to ward off a case of fallen arches at the end of the day.”[333]

Mother can be seated at her desk and keep tabs on her entire home with the built-in intercom. It also boasts AM-FM radio for music while she works. White wall telephone completes handy planning center.

Figure 16: Kitchen command center.
Source: “The Kitchen is the Heart of the Home,” *Better Homes and Gardens*, October 1959, 63.

Kitchen command centers and concern for easily cleaned surfaces occasionally appear in *Playboy*’s architecture and design features; however, they appear for different reasons. For example, a description of the architectural renderings of Playboy’s Duplex Penthouse praises a Knoll cocktail table as follows: “Its stainless steel top is the answer to a bachelor’s dream, as spilled drinks and forgotten cigarettes are cleaned up with the swipe of a cloth.”[334] While the

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[332] “The World’s Fair House,” *Good Housekeeping*, May 1964, 112.

[333] Davidson, “Cooking Up,” 62.

[334] “Playboy Plans a Duplex Penthouse,” *Playboy*, January 1970, 233.

Playboy Townhouse is described as featuring a kitchen control panel for a housewide intercom and closed-circuit television system, the article makes clear that a houseman, rather than the bachelor himself, would be in control of this command center; the bachelor's command center is his bedroom as evidenced by an identical control panel located in the headboard of his bed. The article's lack of detailed renderings of the kitchen further minimize its importance within the bachelor pad.[335] Such treatment of the kitchen command center makes clear that, within Playboy domesticity, the kitchen is a site of devalued labor, a place from which unpaid housewives and paid servants manage the routine maintenance of domestic spaces. Although ease of cleaning is important to both the housewife and the Playboy, it is a concern for the housewife because she is seeking ways to facilitate her work while the Playboy is seeking ways to facilitate his leisure. This is reinforced in other *Playboy* architecture and design features, which contain electronic entertainment walls and control panels for audiovisual entertainment, temperature and lighting control, and intercom and closed-circuit television systems. Rather than commanding his home from the kitchen, these designs usually allow the playboy to control almost every electronic convenience in his home while entertaining in his living room or bedroom.

Overall, the designs for Playboy Pads, as much as possible, do away with the rooms considered by *Better Homes & Gardens* to be the two most important areas of a plan for a family home: the family room and the kitchen.[336] Examining cooking in *Playboy* from 1953-1961, Joanne Hollows argues that *Playboy's* instruction on domestic matters functions as "a rejection of the associations between femininity [and] domesticity." As such, she argues that *Playboy*'s

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[335] "The Playboy Town House," *Playboy*, May 1962, 87.

[336] Normile, "Home of the Year," 67.

attention to food and drink and innovations like the "kitchenless kitchen" was part of a process of "the 'manization' of the kitchen."[337] The kitchenless kitchen, the brainchild of Associate Editor A. C. Spectorsky, was featured in the magazine and on *Playboy's Penthouse* in October 1959. The 7-foot-long rectangular island was designed to look "like a walnut storage chest or hi-fi cabinet when closed." Opened, *Playboy* claimed, it "dispenses with a kitchen as such entirely; it renders the proverbial hot stove unnecessary; it has no use for the usual collection of pots, pans, skillets, oven and other customary kitchen gear." Opening the kitchenless kitchen revealed two formica countertops (one for prepping food and the other for dining), a built-in sink and refrigerator, and plenty of outlets to accommodate the numerous self-contained cooking gadgets (such as electric griddles and deep fryers) kept in the unit's storage cupboards.[338] Although it is tempting to link the emphasis on gadgetry to a process of masculinization, the kitchenless kitchen is more an attempt at the minimization rather than the "manization of the kitchen." It is a compromise in an attempt to do away with the kitchen, which is the only uninvited vestige of femininity in a bachelor pad, reinforcing Preciado's claim that "the playboy's…spatial conquest depended on the exclusion of three forms of femininity…the mother, the wife, and the housewife—that had until then defined interior space."[339] Minimizing the kitchen—the heart of the suburban family home—was essential to Playboy domesticity not due to a desire to masculinize the space, but due to *Playboy*'s recognition that the kitchen's architecture of gender was more deeply entrenched than in more flexibly public living spaces, such as the living room or dining room.

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[337] Hollows, "Bachelor Dinner," 143, 145, 148.

[338] "The Kitchenless Kitchen," *Playboy*, October 1959, 53-54, 108.

[339] Preciado, *Pornotopia*, 52.

Innovations like the kitchenless kitchen and similar cooking islands featured in some of the Playboy Pads allowed the bachelor to show off his technological expertise while preparing refreshments for his guests and remaining an active participant in the party. *Playboy*'s repeated emphasis on kitchen designs that facilitate entertaining attenuates the kitchen's traditional associations with homemaking while also blurring dominant notions of work and leisure space and refiguring the nearby dining and living rooms as public rather than semipublic spaces. In fact, the text accompanying *Playboy*'s first floor plan emphasizes that "the *Playboy* apartment brings back the dining room—done away with in many another modern apartment" and goes on to emphasize the flexibility of the apartment's function areas, which through the simple arrangement of furniture or screens are just as suited to an intimate dinner for two as they are for entertaining 50 of one's closest friends. Many of the bachelors whose homes are featured in *Playboy* mention that they designed their homes with entertainment in mind.

Intertextuality among Playboy's Domestic Spaces

The kitchenless kitchen offers a prime example of the intertextual relationships among Playboy's domestic spaces. Featured first in the magazine, its appearance on the first episode of *Playboy's Penthouse* served to reinforce the values of Playboy domesticity by associating kitchen labor with women and minimizing the presence of the kitchen in a domestic space oriented to the needs of a bachelor. Designed to look like the type of penthouse bachelor apartment that might be featured in the magazine, the set of *Playboy's Penthouse* was planned to emphasize the relationship between domestic space and leisure. As such, its layout included a large living room with a scaled down version of an electronic entertainment wall, a bar, and a fireside "conversation pit" large enough to accommodate a jazz combo including a grand piano; in other words, all the public domestic spaces a bachelor might need for entertaining. Despite

the absence of a kitchen on the set and the show's premise that the television variety party was taking place in Hefner's penthouse apartment, Hefner and Spectorsky introduced the kitchenless kitchen to Playmates Joyce Nizzari and Eleanor Bradley rather than to the viewers at home or the other guests. Pulling Nizzari and Bradley away from the pile of LPs they had been perusing while seated on the floor, Hefner told them that he wanted to show them something special. Echoing the *Playboy* article about the fixture, he explained, "It looks like a hi-fi, but what it actually does is replace the kitchen, so we called it, logically enough, the kitchenless kitchen." After Hefner and Spectorsky explained how the kitchenless kitchen works (by providing outlets and storage for kitchen gadgets with their own heating elements; thus, eliminating the need for an oven), the segment ended with Spectorsky suggesting, "Hef, why don't you go ahead and take care of your guests, and I'll help the girls rustle up something to eat."[340] In other words, a Playmate's place is in the kitchen no matter how "kitchenless" it may be, and the primary duty of the Playboy man is to be a good host, a task which he cannot accomplish if he is sequestered away from his guests in the kitchen.[341]

By leaving these women to work in the kitchenless kitchen, Playboy is communicating seemingly conflicting ideas about gender, leisure, and domestic space. Hollows argues, "*Playboy*'s construction of cooking practices as a sign of a hip, pleasurable and distinguished lifestyle could only be accomplished through a rejection of the associations between femininity,

[340] "Playboy's Penthouse," *Playboy After Dark*, disc 1, episode 1, directed by Carl Tubbs, aired October 1959 (Ventura, CA: Morada Vision, 2006), DVD.

[341] While in real life, the kitchenless kitchen may enable the host to remain near his guests while preparing food, this is not the case on the set of *Playboy's Penthouse* as Hefner's role is actually that of television, rather than party, host; consequently, "taking care of his guests" means sitting down for an intimate conversation with Lenny Bruce.

domesticity and cooking in 1950s America."[342] However, *Playboy*'s treatment of the kitchenless kitchen on television and in the magazine illustrates that *Playboy* does not so much reject the associations Hollows describes as it reframes them, making fine distinctions between "the construction of cooking as aestheticized leisure rather than domestic labour."[343] As Osgerby points out, Playboy's affinity for gadgets falls in line with a wider change in perceptions of technology during the mid-twentieth century and the promotion of consumer products that promised to maximize efficiency and convenience. He explains that the "concept of the 'gadget' conceived technology as…precise, functional and emblematic of stylish cool."[344] Women's and home magazines also regularly reviewed and reported on household gadgets, with *Good Housekeeping* running a regular column on household products (many of which were not electric) entitled "Gallery of Gadgets" in addition to its other articles about electric gadgets to ease cooking and cleaning.[345] These types of articles tend to be brief, informative, and focused on the functionality of the product rather than on its connotations as a gadget. In contrast, for *Playboy*, one of the primary functions of household technologies is to serve as evidence of the Playboy man's leisure competence and acquisitive capabilities. By removing the oven from the kitchen (thereby, making it "kitchenless") and emphasizing the relationships between cooking, the mastery of gadgets, entertaining, and tasteful consumption, *Playboy* transforms cooking from a household chore and does away with its associations to the "kitchen drudgery" experienced by

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[342] Hollows, "Bachelor Dinner," 143.

[343] Hollows, "Bachelor Dinner," 151.

[344] Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad," 108-109.

[345] See, for example, "The Famous Fry Pan," *Good Housekeeping*, October 1956, 255; and "Gallery of Gadgets," *Good Housekeeping*, September 1956, 132.

the housewife.[346]

The connections between cooking and leisure are reinforced in the May 1964 feature on architect Fred Lyman's ultra-flexible Malibu Beach house. The main body of Lyman's home consisted of a 24' x 30' room in which social activities took place. Within this room and separating the dining room and kitchen was a utility island modeled on the kitchenless kitchen.[347] While Lyman's home was not kitchenless, the absence of a description of his actual kitchen and his addition of a kitchenless kitchen highlights the social function of cooking for the Playboy man while marking the traditional kitchen as a private space of feminized work rather than a public space of leisure. Lyman's kitchenless kitchen allowed him to simultaneously prepare food and socialize in the main room of his home. Following Hollows, the kitchenless kitchen is a means of putting "the chef on display," enabling "the bachelor [to offer] his guests excitement and creativity by putting on a performance or show."[348] While Hollows is correct in her assessment that Thomas Mario's cooking features in *Playboy* worked to construct cooking as pleasurable, this construction reinforced, rather than rejected, associations between the physical space of the kitchen, femininity, and everyday cookery. As she argues, "By demonstrating how cooking can be used to produce sexual relations, the masculine playboy cook is distanced from the feminine domestic cook whose labour produces and sustains familial relations."[349] The pictures of a Playboy man entertaining two women, who appear to be his only guests, that accompany the magazine's feature on the kitchenless kitchen; the unit's unveiling to two

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[346] Hollows, "Bachelor Dinner," 151.

[347] "A Playboy's Pad: Airy Aerie," 76.

[348] Hollows, "Bachelor Dinner," 152.

[349] Ibid., 146.

Playmates on *Playboy's Penthouse*; and Lyman's inclusion of a utility island inspired by the feature in his "modern lair," all serve to reinforce the connection between cooking and sexual relations, and in the bigger picture, also reinforce the prominence of leisure time well-spent in the Playboy lifestyle.[350] However, the kitchenless kitchen is far from the only example of the intertextual relationships among *Playboy*'s domestic spaces.

While ads for *Playboy After Dark* (*P.A.D.*), Hefner himself, commentators at the time, and many subsequent scholars have maintained that the sets were designed to duplicate the interior of the Playboy Mansion and to "offer the TV audience the kinds of music which host Hugh Heffner [sic] appreciates in his own home," I contend that the ways in which the sets also relate to the Playboy Clubs and the magazine are of vital importance for understanding the communicative and identity marking power of popular music and domestic space on the series and in the wider playboy taste culture.[351] Repeatedly, designs featured in the magazine were highlighted in articles featuring actual bachelor pads; innovations, such as the electronic entertainment wall, which first appeared in the magazine in October 1964, could be found on the sets of both television shows as well as in the Playboy Clubs, and even the Playboy Mansion's own electronic center was said to be modeled after it; and the Playboy Clubs and sets for both television series were remodeled in order to reflect each other as well as changing tastes in entertainment and interior design.[352] *Playboy's Penthouse* began production before Hefner had purchased the Chicago Mansion or opened the first Playboy Club. The original set emphasized what Preciado calls "stag space" so well that, by August 1960 (less than 6 months after it

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[350] "The Kitchenless Kitchen," 53, 56; "A Playboy's Pad: Airy Aerie," 73.

[351] Eliot Tiegel, "Playboy Covering Spectrum," *Billboard*, March 8, 1969, 32.

[352] "The Playboy Mansion," 109, 203.

opened), Playboy began remodeling the Chicago Club to add a Penthouse room replicating the show's set.[353] Throughout the 1960s, ads for the Clubs emphasize design features recognizable to viewers of either series.

Similarities between the layout of the Clubs and the set of *P.A.D.* and the series' own acronym served to reinforce the links between sophisticated entertainment and Playboy domesticity. By the time the series began filming at CBS Television City in July 1968, the Playboy Club chain consisted of 17 Clubs, 2 resort Club-Hotels, and a Club-Casino. According to ads for the Clubs, it was typical to "find a combo or folk group holding forth in the Playmate Bar and a feature attraction headlining in the Penthouse," and the line up, which also included comedians and musical revues, changed every two weeks.[354] In other words, the acts that could be found in the Clubs were the same kinds of entertainment also featured on *P.A.D.* Like the sets of Playboy's television parties, the Clubs consisted of "beautifully appointed rooms" designed to evoke "the informal feeling of a bachelor's luxurious penthouse apartment and the atmosphere of a fun-filled private party."[355] Moreover, the Clubs and sets function as domestic-cum-nightclub spaces that reflect and link the musical and domestic dimensions of the Playboy lifestyle, with the Clubs evoking the domestic space of the series' sets and the series' sets evoking the nightclub space of the Clubs. Discussing the series, Wojcik argues that the penthouse apartment-styled sets are "represented as a public social space more than a single person's private domestic

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[353] "The Playboy Club," *Playboy*, August 1960, 42.

[354] Playboy Clubs International, "Playboy Club News," Advertisement, May 1969, *Playboy*.

[355] Playboy Clubs International, "Playboy Club News," Advertisement, March 1966, *Playboy*.

space."[356]

Forman points out that the creation of "a sense of place" had been a priority for television since its early days and discusses the importance of the nightclub setting for musical programs from 1948-1956. He argues that the nightclub setting brought an aura of glamour to television, an element that the medium had been widely criticized as missing. Even when not used as the setting for musical programs, Forman points out that mentions of performers' appearances at nightclubs were frequent, functioning to associate the shows and the performers with the glamour and sophistication of "the urban night scene." Furthermore, he argues, "television's actual and ersatz nightclubs suggested more than simple intimacy or benign entertainment, they communicated complex values associated with the ideals of middle- and upper-middle class leisure and urban sophistication."[357] *Playboy*'s frequent features on Playboy Pads and entertainment technologies were aimed at providing readers with the competence to furnish their own living quarters with a sense of place commensurate with the Playboy lifestyle. Referencing a *Playboy* article on comedy albums that promoted listening to them as a way to create "a sort of do-it-yourself nightclub," Thompson argues, "With the addition of the proper technology and the proper taste to know what to play, the apartment could thus be as masculine as a nightclub."[358] *Playboy's Penthouse*, through televising nightclub acts performing in a domestic space, brought the sophistication and values of the public and masculine nightclub scene indoors, making it a private experience, reclaiming masculine domestic space, and temporarily rescuing television

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[356] Wojcik, *Apartment Plot*, 98

[357] Murray Forman, *One Night on TV is Worth Weeks at the Paramount: Popular Music on Early Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 137-138, 143.

[358] Robert Legare, "Hip Wits Disc Hits," *Playboy*, September 1960, 83; Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 88.

from its supposedly feminizing tendencies. Hailing the home audience as guests at one of Hefner's soirees, both series also distanced the viewer from the stereotype of the passive homebody discussed by Spigel. In the case of *P.A.D.* (and the rest of the Playboy empire, for that matter), communicating the values associated with Playboy's ideals of leisure and urban sophistication is inextricably linked to the larger project of communicating values associated with Playboy's ideal of masculinity.

By the time *P.A.D.* began filming in mid-1968, even Hefner recognized that despite Playboy's sympathy toward many of the political causes and beliefs of the New Left and the sexual politics of the counterculture, Playboy seemed increasingly out of step with the taste formations of the younger generation. In an August 1968 interview with the *L.A. Times*, Hefner admitted that given the rapidly changing times, both the magazine and the clubs were "in great danger of seeming old fashioned," stating:

> The average age of the Playboy reader is 29. The average age of the club member is 39. There's a world of difference in those ten years. The clubs must change to keep up and attract younger people. We've put the bunnies in psychedelic costumes, and that's just part of the change.[359]

Another part of the change was the introduction of rock music to the Playboy Clubs. While the London Club opened in 1966 with a discotheque featuring "various name rock groups," most of Playboy's discotheques featured recorded rock music spun by Bunny DJs and accompanied by pulsating lights and psychedelic projections.[360] In 1968, Playboy began remodeling its existing Clubs in order to accommodate the addition of or update existing discotheque spaces. This

[359] Wayne Warga, "Hefner Hops Aboard the TV Bandwagon," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 11, 1968.

[360] "Entertainment Calendar/Fall," *VIP*, Fall 1967, 5; "Playboy's Psychedelic Disco," *VIP*, Spring 1969, 10-13.

introduction of rock music space in the Clubs coincides with the introduction of rock music space on *P.A.D.*, and the treatment of rock on the series highlights the ways in which, by the late 1960s, Playboy masculinity must be configured, in part, through simultaneously following and not following the lead of the rock counterculture.

In order to fully understand the role of music on *P.A.D*, one must take into account the multiple ways in which space functioned on the series as well as the ways in which music and space interacted. The technical demands of each performance undoubtedly affected the location of each performance on the set; however, the affordances of each space also played a determining role in which rooms best accommodated any given performance. That is, those spaces utilized for rock, and other upbeat performances that engender dancing, functioned as purely entertainment spaces, whereas the other rooms of the set necessarily also functioned as living spaces. Jazz and pop vocal performances requiring use of the grand piano or the arrangements of musical director, Tommy Oliver, played by the series' 13-piece orchestra fit most readily into the space of the living room. Pop, folk, country, and some soul performances—i.e., those performances with roots and traditions that, for Playboy, engender listening—also usually took place in the living room, visually marking out the centrality of these genres to the Playboy lifestyle. Rock performances, however, were relegated to a peripheral space in both the penthouse location of the show and the Playboy lifestyle. In the first season, rock bands performed in front of the electronic entertainment wall in a room devoted to media consumption (fig. 17). Moving to KTLA's Hollywood studios for the filming of its second season, this space was replaced by a "rumpus room" (occasionally referred to as the "rec room") with a pulsating, psychedelic light display and dance floor, reminiscent of the Club's discotheques, where Hefner's guests went to dance rather than listen to the music (fig. 18).

Figure 17. Deep Purple performing in front of the Electronic Entertainment Wall on *P.A.D.*
Source: Screen capture, "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy After Dark Collection Two*.[361]

Figure 18. Guests dance to the Buddy Miles Express performing in the rumpus room.
Source: Screen capture, Buddy Miles Express, "Buddy Miles Playboy After Dark 1971," YouTube video.[362]

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[361] "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy After Dark Collection Two*, disc 2, episode 2, directed by Dean Whitmore, aired October 23, 1968 (Ventura, CA: Morada Vision, 2007), DVD.

[362] The date in the video title is incorrect since *Playboy After Dark* stopped filming in 1970. Buddy Miles Express, "Buddy Miles Playboy After Dark 1971," YouTube video, 6:35, posted by Mauro Groove Zanchetta, February 25, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= QoeyvofqSYY.

The living and entertainment spaces on the series and in the Clubs were used to mark some activities, such as discerning listening and viewing, as more adult and sophisticated than other activities, such as dancing. The rumpus room on *P.A.D.* served the same function as one would in a suburban family home; i.e., it solved the problem of having "no place for the children to play indoors" and ensured that "their commotion doesn't disturb adult activities going on" elsewhere in the home.[363] This is demonstrated in the introduction to the Buddy Miles Express's performance on *P.A.D.*, wherein the love of gadgetry and the ease of high-tech living, associated with the Playboy lifestyle in the magazine, served as buffers between Hefner and the other adults conversing in the den and the music of the Buddy Miles Express in the rumpus room. The scene begins with Hefner explaining to an African American woman, with whom he is conversing while sipping cocktails, that the Buddy Miles Express is performing in the rec room. She responds by putting down her cocktail and saying, "Well, that's music for dancing. I think I'll grab me a partner. Byron!" As Byron Gilliam, *P.A.D.*'s dance supervisor and lead dancer, grabs the woman by the hand and begins to lead her out of the den, Hefner says, "Wait a minute, Byron! He's also here in the den." Hefner then raises a remote control, and with the touch of a button, a panel above the den's fireplace slides open to reveal a screen broadcasting the performance taking place in the rumpus room. While "the kids" dance in the rumpus room, those in the den turn their backs on the musical performance in order to watch Gilliam and his partner dance, confirming Gilliam's dance partner's assertion that the Buddy Miles Express is

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[363] Mrs. Alice M. Hathaway, "Now, Here's a Real Rumpus Room!" *Better Homes and Gardens*, November 1959, 166.

"music for dancing."[364] Placement in the "rumpus room" and Hefner's conspicuous absence from the space served to further mark performances such as these as noisy disturbances within the Playboy lifestyle.

This is not to suggest that jazz performances never took place in the rumpus room or that Hefner never utilized the space. To the contrary, when jazz and/or Hefner are present, the relationship between sonic and domestic spaces in the Playboy lifestyle is made even more clear. A prime example is the March 1970 performance by the Modern Jazz Quartet (MJQ), which begins with Hefner speaking to John Lewis, the group's pianist and musical director. One striking difference between this and the majority of rock performances on *P.A.D.* is Hefner's endorsement of the music through both his physical presence in the rumpus room and his verbal assertion that he personally digs their sound very much. The MJQ transformed the entertainment space of the rumpus room into living space by playing spread apart on what is usually the dance floor, which allowed the guests to surround the band on all sides as they often did in living room performances. While a handful of guests snap along and dance in place to the music, the normally pulsating psychedelic projections are subdued as are the other guests, who sit and listen to the music.[365] This contrasts with the Buddy Miles Express, whose organist and horn section occupied the dance floor space without transforming it into living space. Such intersections of sonic and domestic spaces reinforced *Playboy*'s assertions that jazz was music to be listened to, really listened to, by those with sophisticated adult tastes and that rock was better suited to those more interested in youthful abandon than in cultivating taste. Ads for the Playboy Clubs reiterate

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[364] Buddy Miles Express, YouTube video.

[365] "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy After Dark Collection Two*, disc 2, episode 1, directed by Bill R. Foster, aired March 18, 1970 (Ventura, CA: Morada Vision, 2007), DVD.

this by reminding keyholders that "other justly famous rooms beckon" with different forms of entertainment "if the *disco* beat gets too wild."[366]

Conclusion

By focusing on the spatial configurations of the Playboy lifestyle, the preceding analyses complicate narratives of white, middle class, suburban conformity; challenge existing narratives of the role of the bachelor pad in the Playboy lifestyle; and provide further insight into anxieties over postwar masculinities by examining the role of architecture and design in negotiating relations of gender, sexuality, class, and taste. While the spatial organization of the postwar family home purportedly threatened to emasculate husbands by diminishing their control over domestic space, a nearly identical though more flexible spatial organization of the bachelor pad reinforced both the Playboy's virility and his control over his work and leisure. While many of the Playboy Pads shared open plan layouts and design features, such as the use of screens to divide and rearticulate domestic space, with typical mid-twentieth century suburban ranch houses, Playboy's architecture and design blurred suburban notions of publicity and privacy and communicated a version of domesticity antithetical to familial togetherness. Furthermore, features on pads in locations such as Sun Valley, Idaho; Abilene, Texas; and New Haven, Connecticut, illustrated that the Playboy lifestyle was not as strictly urban as some scholars have characterized it to be.[367] More importantly, these features illustrated that a Playboy can be anti-breadwinner without rejecting such benefits of exurban living as "the indoor-outdoor, pool-and-

[366] Playboy Clubs International, Advertisement, May 1969.

[367] See "A Playboy Pad: High Life in the Round," *Playboy*, October 1968, 153-157; "A Playboy Pad: New Haven Haven," *Playboy*, October 1969; and "A Playboy Pad: Texas Retreat."

patio type of life."[368] The suburban and exurban Playboy Pads demonstrated that a man can not only achieve social status but also suburban domesticity without a wife and family and highlighted that adherence to Playboy's philosophy of urbanism is possible in spite of one's geographical location.

As Hayden notes, in the prevailing domestic ideology in the post-World War II United States, "the dream house replaced the ideal city as the spatial representation of American hopes for the good life."[369] However, Playboy's representations of domestic space in its magazine, Clubs, Club-Hotels, and television shows worked together to provide a vision of domesticity that maintained the link between the masculine dream home and the ideal city while distancing it from the gender architecture of the suburban family home. This was accomplished through the prominent display of modernist iconography and symbols of good design; the use of technologies and design features to ease leisure and maximize autonomy and control over one's environment; and devising modes of spatial organization that were more flexible than those presented in the women's and home magazines. Hollows is correct that *Playboy*'s project was not to domesticate the bachelor. However, through its rearticulation of domestic space and culture, it not only, as Hollow claims, produced the figure of the bachelor, but also provided guidance on how particular forms of consumption and leisure could enable bachelors and married men alike to claim a piece of Playboy domesticity. By decentering the Playboy Mansion and the penthouse as the pinnacles of Playboy domestic space, it becomes clear that the desire for freedom other scholars have detected in Playboy's treatment of architecture and design stems less from a desire to escape suburban domesticity or indulge in hedonistic excess than it does

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[368] "A Playboy Pad: Palm Springs Oasis," 120.

[369] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 55.

from the search for individual autonomy in a postwar society dominated by corporate conformity and familial togetherness. The importance of technology, autonomy, and control is reiterated in the following two chapters, which more deeply explore the material culture of the Playboy lifestyle by focusing on how Playboy promoted relationships to two new domestic technologies, hi-fi and television, in ways that could bring Playboy domesticity into the suburban family home through the cultivation of taste and leisure competence.

CHAPTER 4

"The Compleat Fidelitarian": Hi-Fi, Social Mobility, and Home Entertainment for Men

Due to *Playboy*'s focus on sophisticated, indoor entertainment for men, home entertainment technologies figured prominently in the cultivation of its taste culture and of the *Playboy* audience as an affective community. One of the most prominent and attainable "happy objects" in the Playboy taste culture was a hi-fi system, which is not surprising given that *Playboy* emerged in the middle of a decade marked by rapid development in music playback technologies and hailed its audience as jazz aficionados from its first issue. In the years immediately following World War II, several significant advances changed the way we listen to music. These advances included the development of the transistor by Bell Labs in 1947 and the release of transistorized radio sets in 1954, the commercial release of the first vinyl long-play records in 1948, and the commercial release of the first stereophonic records in 1957.[370] Such developments led to both an increase of interest in audio technologies and the renewal and reinvigoration of arguments and anxieties concerning gender and domestic and sonic space.

In its December 1953 inaugural issue, *Playboy* framed itself as a "pleasure-primer" for upwardly mobile and sophisticated men, explicitly tying masculinity to the enjoyment of

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[370] John M. Conly, "Music for People with Two Ears," *Playboy*, March 1958, 48. Susan J. Douglas, "Audio Outlaws: Radio and Phonograph Enthusiasts," in *Possible Dreams: Enthusiasm for Technology in America*, ed. John L. Wright (Dearborn, MI: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, 1992), 52; Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination…from Amos 'n' Andy to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 225-226.

activities such as “putting a little mood music on the phonograph.”[371] Throughout the next two decades, which witnessed an ever-expanding middle class, *Playboy* consistently promoted the consumption of audio technology and jazz music as indicators of social status. Beyond regular reviews of albums and audio technologies and interviews with musicians, *Playboy* also presented music-related themes in cartoons, the centerfold, advertisements, and other editorial content. Such focus on the sonic dimensions of the Playboy lifestyle was a key means through which the magazine conflated sexual fantasies with fantasies of social mobility both into and within the Playboy lifestyle. Such social mobility was dependent upon Playboy framing its audience as members of a taste public centered around an identity that was at least partially attainable yet always also aspirational. That is, the corporation’s various media output promoted the idea that the Playboy man could never be sonically or sexually satisfied; his social status could always be improved through the consumption of the newest model component, companion, or composition.

Ushering in the Hi-Fi Era

John M. Conly, who contributed articles on hi-fi technologies to *Playboy* while he was editor of *High Fidelity*, traced the phrase “high fidelity” back to the late 1920s and claimed that the phrase “led a sort of disembodied existence” as “a description in search of a fact” for its first two decades.[372] Conly claimed that the description found its fact in the late 1940s, which indicates the role the introduction of the vinyl long-play record played in ushering in the hi-fi era.[373] As high fidelity became a household concept throughout the 1950s, the phrases “high fidelity” and hi-fi were used to sell a variety of products in no way associated with audio

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[371] “Volume I, Number I,” 3.

[372] Conly, “The Compleat Fidelitarian,” *Playboy*, October 1957, 31.

[373] Ibid.

entertainment. This included everything from women's accessories, such as makeup and bras, to glow-in-the dark windshield stickers, and the use of high fidelity sound or inclusion of high fidelity speakers was also used to enhance the desirability and promote the technological superiority of other household appliances and electronics like dishwashers and hairdryers.[374] That such a diverse array of manufacturers would seek to align their products with the concept of high fidelity indicates the cultural weight of the values associated with audio technologies in the time period. While high fidelity and hi-fi were used to convey a variety of meanings in these ads (e.g., high fidelity's association with lifelike sound was connected to hi-fi makeup's enhancement of natural beauty), the terms took on a dual meaning in relation to audio entertainment technologies.[375] As Conly explained, the terms denote both "sound reproduction of a peculiar true brilliance" and the technological means of this sound reproduction.[376] Although Conly and other journalists of the time period used high fidelity and hi-fi interchangeably to mean either of the terms' definitions, I will use the full phrase high fidelity when discussing sound reproduction and its contraction, hi-fi, when discussing the technologies responsible for sound reproduction.

Although hi-fi came to have strong masculine connotations in the mid-twentieth century, many scholars have demonstrated that music appreciation and audio entertainment technologies

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[374] Ibid.; "Hair Drier Equipped with Hi-Fi Speaker," *The New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1958; Max Factor, "Hi-fi Fluid Makeup," Advertisement, September 1959, *Vogue*; "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," September 1956, 58.

[375] Conly, "The Compleat Fidelitarian," 31; Max Factor, 131.

[376] Conly, "The Compleat Fidelitarian," 31.

were not always considered entertainment for men.[377] Susan Douglas, for example, argues that radio's initial linkage of "technical mastery with music listening" legitimated musical enjoyment for men.[378] In the 1920s, the masculine pastime of radio tinkering was juxtaposed against the feminized domesticity of the phonograph. Unlike women who were encouraged through the popular press and advertising to use the phonograph for cultural uplift or to soothe household tensions, men were encouraged to view radio as a hobby that allowed them to both demonstrate control and discipline through the acquisition of technical skills and become members of a community of similarly interested and skilled men.[379] As Douglas points out, the sense of fraternity that a radio hobby provided men became increasingly important as white-collar jobs, which were increasingly deskilled and routinized, became more prevalent in the twentieth century.[380] The mid-century hi-fi craze also provided men with an outlet for the electronics skills many of them had gained during military service in World War II.[381] Like early radio, early hi-fi sets also required home assembly, and while this helped to masculinize these forms of audio

[377] In addition to the works cited in this chapter, see also Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008); William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Holly Kruse, "Early Audio Technology and Domestic Space," *Stanford Humanities Review* 3 (1993).

[378] Douglas, *Listening In*, 89.

[379] Kyle S. Barnett, "Furniture Music: The Phonograph as Furniture, 1900-1930," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 18, no. 3 (2006): 309-310; Douglas, *Listening In*, 15, 88-89.

[380] Douglas, *Listening In*, 14-15.

[381] Douglas, "Audio Outlaws," 53.

entertainment, it also caused what Keir Keightley has described as "spatial/spousal conflict" within the family home.[382]

As Keightley points out, hi-fi entered American homes at the same time as television.[383] While the next chapter will Playboy's relationship to television in greater depth, it is necessary to briefly mention some of the discourses surrounding hi-fi that developed alongside those of television in the immediate postwar years. Despite Lynn Spigel's identification of some early commodity inhibitionism involving hiding or camouflaging the television set, the television won eventual acceptance as a piece of furniture and people began to embrace the concept of the home theater and the notion of the home as an exhibition space.[384] Kyle Barnett argues that the domestication of the phonograph involved a similar discursive shift, one that distanced the object "from its own technological past" while emphasizing its desirability as a form of "entertainment furniture" akin to the family piano.[385] What occurred in the hi-fi era was a reversal of this discursive shift; that is, a rejection of entertainment furniture and its association with domesticity in conjunction with the reclamation of audio technology and its historical links to male hobbyists. Keightley observes that the hi-fi era "initially involved breaking up the integrated radio-phonograph console into a system of distinct components which revealed metallic, tube-filled interiors and were connected by wiring that previously had been hidden."[386] As Douglas

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[382] Keightley, "'Turn it down!'" 163.

[383] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity: Taste and the Gendering of Home Entertainment Technologies," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 47, no. 2 (2003), 237.

[384] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 49-50, 99-100.

[385] Barnett, "Furniture Music," 301.

[386] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity," 239.

points out, the impetus to break apart commercially available integrated radio-phonographs was dissatisfaction with the sound quality of these packaged units.[387]

The gendering of hi-fi discourse in the popular press

Discourse among consumers and specialist magazines privileged such component systems as more authentic than package units.[388] This was due in part to the far superior fidelity of custom-built sets, which could offer twice the fidelity for one-half to one-third of the price of the most expensive commercial sets.[389] Unlike the television or the packaged stereo system, the component system requires a certain level of technical knowledge in order to properly match and connect components, which enables the consumer to exert control over the aesthetic experience. Whereas one can simply walk into a store and walk out with a television, a component hi-fi requires careful craftsmanship, which necessitates keeping up with technological advances and spending hours testing configurations in dealer showrooms before making a properly informed purchase. Additionally, with a turntable as a central component, high fidelity is differentiated from the broadcast medium of radio. As a primarily playback, rather than a strictly broadcast, technology (one component remains an AM/FM receiver), the consumer is free to choose both what he listens to and when. These aspects of control and individual choice elevate such purchases to matters of taste and classy consumption in contrast to the mass culture experience of television, where the consumer is "subject to a commercial broadcast flow controlled by far-flung corporations that transformed viewers into commodities ('audience shares') to be sold to

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[387] Douglas, *Listening In*, 264.

[388] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity," 240.

[389] Douglas, *Listening In*, 265.

sponsors."[390]

The discourses surrounding hi-fi that circulated in women's and general interest magazines and newspapers, tended to characterize hi-fi and men's enthusiasm for it as problems that needed to be mitigated in order to maintain peace and order in the family home. The emphasis on spousal relations in articles and advertisements about hi-fi is unsurprising given that by 1955 the largest purchasers of hi-fi equipment were married couples between the ages of 30 and 50.[391] One of the problems with hi-fi (and phonographs and televisions) is that technological components tend not to be aesthetically pleasing forms of home décor. In addition to the exposed wires and metallic bits that comprise hi-fi component systems, the search for ever better fidelity could lead to homes cluttered with both old and new components, and the process of assembling these systems often involved rearranging existing furniture and the risk of solder being burned into carpets.[392]

Two main approaches to this problem are identifiable in the popular press of the time: 1) articles for women about how to decorate and live with hi-fi and 2) articles written by hi-fi spouses (or widows) commiserating with their readers about husbands who have contracted the hi-fi bug. In terms of decorating with hi-fi, commercial manufacturers and women's magazines handled the domestication of hi-fi components in much the same way as they handled the domestication of the phonograph earlier in the century; i.e., they focused on ways of turning

[390] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity," 241.

[391] "Married Folk Biggest Hi Fi Purchasers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sep. 30, 1955.

[392] Douglas, *"Audio Outlaws*," 53; Eleanor Edwards, "I am a Hi-Fi Wife," *High Fidelity*, November/December 1953, 43; Norman Eisenberg, "Good News for the Audiophile's Mate: New Cabinets Solve the Tangled-Wire Problem," *The Washington Post*, Apr. 4, 1971; "Hi-Fi Spouse Sings Dirge," *The New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1953; and Opal Loomis, "The High Fidelity Wife or, a Fate Worse than Deaf," *Harper's*, August 1955, 34.

messy technological components into stylish entertainment furniture. By the mid-1950s, established manufacturers, such as RCA and Magnavox, began selling packaged hi-fi sets marketed towards women. Hi-fi enthusiasts denounced these sets as inferior because the manufacturers' focus was on appearance (cabinets were constructed to match "existing furniture designs such as French provincial or colonial") rather than fidelity.[393] A compromise for women whose husbands would never dream of purchasing a packaged hi-fi set was to take up refinishing antiques in order to house a component set in a piece of furniture that fit with the existing décor of the home. *New York Times* reporter Rita Reif, who penned several articles about hi-fi, devoted nearly half of an article about women camouflaging hi-fi sets to the transformation and adaptation of antique "chests, secretaries, credenzas and breakfronts."[394] Those with no interest in taking up an antique hobby could easily find advice on other ways of hiding hi-fi components, such as clearing out a closet for use as an audio installation that could be masked in fabric matching the color of the walls.[395] In general, women's and general interest publications throughout the hi-fi era worked to emphasize the ways that "hi-fi can become an asset in living room decoration."[396]

In December 1955, *House Beautiful* devoted a section of ten articles and pictorials to "high fidelity in the home." One of these pictorials proclaimed that "hi fi finally has graduated

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[393] Douglas, *Listening In*, 265.

[394] Rita Reif, "Women Working to Camouflage Hi-Fi," *The New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1957.

[395] Reif, "The Woman's Touch," *The New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1956.

[396] In addition to the other articles referenced in this chapter, see, for example, Anne Douglas, "Fisher's Speakers Newest Look in Home Furnishings," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 16, 1972 and "Hi-Fi Can Become an Asset in Living Room Decoration," *The New York Times*, Nov. 19, 1957.

out of the gadget group into the integrated decorative pattern of the home," and featured photos of attractive cabinets crafted by fine furniture manufacturers.[397] In another article in the same issue of *House Beautiful*, Charles Fowler, publisher of *High Fidelity*, maintained the superiority of component parts while emphasizing that one advantage of the flexibility offered by a component system was that all of its parts may be disguised or hidden.[398] In a November 1956 article, Reif drew attention to the fact that while some women chose to limit their involvement with hi-fi technology to interior decorating, others were relegated to this role through "masculine intimidation."[399] The type of intimidation she referred to was well-documented in other articles of the time period, which indicated that barriers to women's involvement in the hi-fi craze included jargon, lack of access to technical skills and knowledge, and husbands who either demanded that their wives keep their hands off the hi-fi or who installed increasingly complicated equipment without teaching their wives how to use it.[400]

While hi-fi articles aimed at men also attempted to educate their readers, these articles tended to assume their readers had a higher baseline of existing technical knowledge than those articles aimed at women. Authors also often assumed that men and women had different reasons for wanting to read about hi-fi. Articles aimed at men tended to go into greater technical depth and focus on the latest in technological developments while those aimed at women stuck to basic terms and focused more on helping women understand their husbands rather than the

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[397] "Hi Fi No Longer Needs a Wall," *House Beautiful*, December 1955, 20.

[398] Charles Fowler, "Why Hi Fi?," *House Beautiful*, December 1955, 141-142.

[399] Reif, "The Woman's Touch."

[400] Barbara R. Diamond, "Live with Hi-Fi and Like It," *Saturday Review*, January 29, 1955, 40; Douglas, "Audio Outlaws," 53; "Hi-Fi Spouse Sings Dirge"; Loomis, 36.

technologies. Articles aimed at women occasionally contained mixed messages that reinforced the gendered dichotomy of feminized packaged systems versus masculinized component systems. Often these mixed messages were a result of the assumption that housewives viewed hi-fi as an intrusion into or an enemy to order within the family home and that their true interest in the technology lay in learning how to conceal it.[401]

For example, Irving Kolodin, music critic for the *Saturday Review*, contributed an article about purchasing hi-fi systems to the December 1955 issue of *House Beautiful*. While his article provided advice on choosing components, what to look for in a packaged set, and the placement of speakers, the accompanying images emphasized the technical and decorative advantages of commercially produced packaged units (the technical advantage being that a packaged unit requires no technical expertise). The images and captions accompanying Kolodin's advice stressed the various finishes available for cabinets and showed the packaged units seamlessly integrated into the family home as unobtrusive pieces of entertainment furniture.[402] While a December 1956 article in *Vogue*, provided a glossary of hi-fi terms, explanations and images of the three basic components for any hi-fi set up (i.e., a turntable, an amplifier/preamplifier, and speaker enclosures), and information on packaged sets, the article began with the assertion, "You don't have to know about tweeters, crossovers, or record-compensators to own and operate a hi-fi set successfully—anymore than you have to know about pistons to enjoy a drive in the country."[403] The first photograph accompanying this article shows a man leaning against the

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[401] See, for example, Walter Stern, "Housing for a Hi-Fi Set," *The New York Times*, Mar. 16, 1958.

[402] Irving Kolodin, "What Makes a Good Phonograph?," *House Beautiful*, December 1955.

[403] "Hi-Fi," *Vogue*, December 1956, 170-171, 179.

wall next to an ultra-modern Stephens Tru-Sonic Three-Way speaker system in a cabinet designed by Charles Eames; he appears to be snapping his fingers and his gaze is lifted to the ceiling as if he is lost in the music. The "lady listener," who occupies the foreground of the photograph, looks bored; her gaze appears vacant, and she is sprawled on top of her fur coat, which has been draped across a chair, with her cheek resting atop hands folded on the arm of the chair. The caption to the photo provided details about what the listeners were wearing, how much each item of apparel cost, and where such clothing might be purchased. Information about the hi-fi was minimal and an afterthought.[404] Despite the inclusion of technical information, the conflicting discourses in this article ultimately worked to reinforce the idea that women should be more concerned with style than technology.

Although Reif herself wrote articles about decorating with hi-fi, she was one of the few commentators of the time to point out that gendered discourse, such as may be found in the types of articles described above, reinforced misogyny within the culture of hi-fi in the mid-1950s. Surveying leading audio shops, Reif found that even hi-fi retailers were "unanimous in their agreement that men have 'bulldozed' the opposite sex into the belief that they cannot possibly understand the workings of this complicated equipment."[405] Hi-fi wives like Opal Loomis, who lamented, "Our equipment has become so complicated I no longer try to play it," reinforced this claim.[406] While a November 1963 *New York Times* article acknowledged that the business of buying hi-fi had long been a battleground between the sexes, it claimed that gendered attitudes to

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[404] Ibid., 170.

[405] Reif, "The Woman's Touch."

[406] Loomis, "High Fidelity Wife," 36.

hi-fi had been reversed based on a survey of 647 attendees of the New York High Fidelity Music Show. The survey, conducted by Pilot Radio Corporation, found there was only a 0.1 percent difference between men and women in their attention to hi-fi's appearance.[407] This implied that until the early 1960s, male hi-fi enthusiasts gave little concern to the design of hi-fi components and their enclosures; however, such an assumption may be easily rebutted by any of the hi-fi articles appearing in *Playboy*. Furthermore, quality, design, and expense of components tended to go hand in hand, so a man's concern over the appearance of his hi-fi system was just as likely, if not more so, to be connected to his desire to display both his technical competence and upward social mobility as it was to be connected to his desire to display good taste in his interior decoration. The article betrayed its own claim to a reversal of gendered attitudes when it revealed that two-thirds of the men who participated in the survey would not consider consulting their wives prior to making a hi-fi purchase.[408]

The second approach to hi-fi as a problem involved characterizations of hi-fi enthusiasm as both a mental illness and a contagion, or as a form of sonic terrorism. These depictions usually appeared in women's or general interest publications; however, sympathetic specialist magazines, such as *High Fidelity*, also addressed these characterizations, but they usually did so with a healthy dose of humor and not without their fair share of lampooning "infidelical" wives.[409] Women frustrated by husbands they described as having run amok, cluttering the

[407] "Hi-Fi Attitudes Reversed," *The New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1963.

[408] Ibid.

[409] In addition to those articles already referenced, see, for example, C.G. Burke, "In Defense of the Faithful," *High Fidelity*, September 1954; Jim Cost, "Have Casket, Need Corpse," *High Fidelity*, December 1958; Ann Goodenough, "I am a Hi-Fi Widow," *McCall's*, May 1954, 11; S. Strindberg Schopenhauer, "The Infidelical Spouse," *High Fidelity*, March 1957; Ed Wallace, "Hi-Ho Fidelity," *High Fidelity*, January/February 1953.

family home with exposed wires and handmade hi-fi cabinets that were often lacking in both form and function, penned many of the articles depicting hi-fi enthusiasm as a disease. Other authors likened hi-fi enthusiasm to membership in a religious cult.[410]. Professional and armchair psychiatrists also entered conversations depicting hi-fi as a pathology, which lent credence to the idea that participants in the hi-fi craze were truly crazy.[411] For example, psychiatrist H. Angus Bowes "suggested that the addict may be using his sound equipment as an expression of aggression, as a power symbol, as a means of keeping ahead of the Joneses, or as a means of relieving anxiety."[412] Such characterizations did not go without the occasional rebuttal in the popular press; the same *Chicago Daily Tribune* article reporting Dr. Bowes' findings defended hi-fi addicts by pointing out that many other men and women were equally addicted to consumer goods, such as automobiles, clothing, or cosmetics.[413] While other reports of Dr. Bowes' findings stressed that not all audiophiles are hi-fi addicts, the enduring image of the hi-fi craze is

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[410] Meyer Berger, "That Strange Hi-Fi Set," *The New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1953; Diamond, 40.

[411] Although not written by a mental health professional, for an article written from the perspective of a hi-fi enthusiast speaking to an analyst, see Meyer Berger, "Crazy over Tweeters," *The New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1953. See also H. Angus Bowes, M.D., "Hi-Fi Addicts with Low-Fi Wives," *The New York Times*, Sep. 25, 1966; Emma Harrison, "The Hi-Fi Addict: New Personality," *The New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1957; "High Fidelity and Other Addicts," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 3, 1957; Dennis A. Nunley, "Concerning Audiophilia," *Saturday Review*, July 30, 1955; Julius Segal, Ph.D., "A Psychologist Views Audiophilia," *High Fidelity*, September 1955.

[412] "High Fidelity and Other Addicts."

[413] Ibid.

of a man whose compulsive search for increasingly higher fidelity led to chaos and emotional disruption in the family home.[414]

Keightley observes that the concept of the hi-fi widow (a wife who felt abandoned due to her husband's hi-fi enthusiasm) entered the popular imagination at approximately the same time as the concept of "togetherness." The fact that hi-fi enthusiasm provided a source of individualism for men often led it to be characterized in the popular press as "an enemy of 'togetherness.'"[415] Analyzing advertisements for hi-fi in a wide range of American magazines between 1948 and 1959, Keightley argues "that men used hi-fi sound reproduction technology (including its necessary adjunct, the Long Play (LP) record album) to produce a domestic space gendered as masculine." The need for such masculine domestic space was driven by a sense of entrapment and a search for autonomy and precipitated by both the conformity and alienation of corporate work and the open floor plans of postwar suburban homes. While Spigel argues that the tensions caused by television in the family home did not diminish its status as a technology of togetherness, Keightley demonstrates that discourses around hi-fi in the family home were regularly discussed in terms of a battle of the sexes and a source of spousal conflict. A primary source of spousal conflict was volume. Not only did the loudness keep the wife out of the domestic space the husband had reclaimed for himself, "the equipment capable of producing such volume was also seen as disrupting the interior aesthetics of the home, by occupying an excessive amount of physical space and by virtue of its technological appearance." For the

[414] Nunley, "Concerning Audiophilia," 37-38.

[415] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity," 248.

husband, however, the loudness enabled a “virtual escape from the family circle, without leaving the home, via a literal immersion in high fidelity.”[416]

Conly’s Typology of Hi-Fi Consumers

The October 1957 issue contained “The Complete Fidelitarian,” which was *Playboy*’s first substantive article on hi-fi. In it, Conly explained that a hi-fi system “is commonly accepted as a badge of sophisticated masculinity. Indeed, one hears it said that high fidelity has supplanted the etching as a sure lure to seduction.” Conly went on to impart a parable wherein a man invites his date up to hear his hi-fi only to discover that she has more knowledge of both components and music. The lesson readers were to take away from this tale of woe was that far worse fates than failed seductions await the man who does not understand the basics of his hi-fi rig. Conly warned, “Belinda now dominates their relationship, which puts him in clear and present danger of holy matrimony.” Describing the man in this parable as an “Incompleat Fidelitarian,” the message was clear that becoming a “compleat fidelitarian” was a way of ensuring that one’s independence, authority, and masculinity remained intact.[417]

This article is also notable for its inclusion of a system for classifying listeners and their needs, which served as a way for readers to both identify where they were along the spectrum and to show them a path to greater hi-fi competence that would enable them to move up in the continuum and increase their social status. Conly identified five types of listener: “the Modicum Hunter, the Serious Listener, the Devotee, the Audio Exhibitionist, and the Gadgeteer.” Conly described the Modicum Hunter as follows:

comfort is paramount in his listening; he is not terribly exacting about sonic realism. It

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[416] Keightley, “’Turn it Down!,” 156-168, 171; Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 67-72.

[417] Conly, “Compleat Fidelitarian,” 32-33.

> would be unfair to call his music a home furnishing, but it probably is something he wants to be proud of in about the same degree as his martinis. He doesn't mind if his rig sounds like a phonograph so long as it sounds like a damned good phonograph.

Although he provided advice to the Modicum Hunter about purchasing components that would help him succeed at seduction, it was also clear that this type of hi-fi set up (a scant step above mere entertainment furniture) was only desirable if one's budget and/or competence forced one to remain in this category. The serious listener, on the other hand, was someone for whom getting "the absolute most out of his music" was of primary concern, which meant he was also someone who had or planned to have a good listening room.[418] The fact that one could be considered a serious listener before he acquired a good listening room indicated that there was room for social mobility both within and between categories of listeners. This reinforced the idea that the Playboy subjectivity was at least partially attainable while also always remaining aspirational. The knowledge and aspiration to improve one's hi-fi competence was enough in this instance to improve his social status in relationship to other types of listeners, such as modicum hunters and women, who were depicted as not taking their listening as seriously. At the same time, this description also directs readers toward a good listening room as a happy object, linking the Playboy man's happiness to his social mobility and sophisticated consumption.

While Conly stated that the Serious Listener was seeking satisfaction with the reproduction of his music, he argued that the Devotee wanted to improve music reproduction. He was a man with "his eye on the future," and he was knowledgeable of and eager to purchase the latest in hi-fi technology. Although never discussed in the negative terms used in women's and general interest publications, it was at the level of the Devotee and beyond that Conly began to describe men with the levels of hi-fi competence characterized elsewhere as signs of neurosis

[418] Ibid., 34, 42.

or addiction. Of the last two categories, Conly stated, "the well-versed Gadgeteer probably knows the subject as well as I do. And the Exhibitionist thinks he does." Conly admitted that an article such as "The Compleat Fidelitarian" had little to offer these competent men and explained that he only mentioned them because they exist. The accompanying photographs depicting each type of listener and his rig provided a different reason for the inclusion of these last two types; that is, each of them required a more expensive hi-fi set up than what had previously been recommended. Not only did these types provide readers with examples of other listening identities and levels of hi-fi competence to which to aspire, they also clearly linked expense to competence and sex. In fact, the Audio Exhibitionist is the only type of listener pictured with more than one woman (fig. 19). The caption states, "The Audio Exhibitionist cottons to the big sound, enjoys watching the little cracks appear in his plaster walls and the jolted expressions on the faces of his friends, who are many and fair."[419]

Figure 19. The Audio Exhibitionist.
Source: Conly, "The Compleat Fidelitarian," *Playboy*, October 1957, 33.

[419] Ibid., 33-34, 77.

The Gadgeteer was said to dig "dials and testing gear" and was described as having the competence to build both his own rig and the instruments for testing it.[420] As the highest level of hi-fi listener, the Gadgeteer was pictured with the most expensive hi-fi set shown in the article. This prompted at least one reader to express his indignation that Conly could possibly place the James B. Lansing Hartsfield speaker system, which was at the time one of the most (if not the single most) desirable speaker system on the market, in the category of a mere gadget. The editorial response to this criticism reinforced the reader's assertion that "the JBL system is, indeed, one of the finest in the world," which was precisely why it was shown in the Gadgeteer's system.[421] The editorial response also clarified that "our 'Gadgeteer' is no man who putters about in a home workshop…he's a real high fidelity expert."[422] This clarification was necessary due to negative characterizations of hi-fi hobbyists that proliferated in magazine and newspaper articles earlier in the decade and to the fact that this reader apparently associated "gadgets" with low levels of hi-fi competence. The characterizations that both *Playboy* and its vexed reader are pushing back against implied that fidelitarians, especially those on the Gadgeteer-end of the spectrum, were out of control. On the other hand, Keightley's analysis of men's use of hi-fi to stake out specifically masculine domestic space configures hi-fi as a means by which suburban husbands could regain control in the family home, and as Conly's parable indicated, it was also a means by which men could avoid losing control in the first place. The disorder caused by hi-fi enthusiasts puttering about in the family home was a central focus of articles penned by hi-fi widows, and *Playboy*'s Gadgeteer distanced hi-fi enthusiasts from both the family home and the

[420] Ibid., 32, 78.

[421] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, January 1958, 3.

[422] Ibid.

negative connotations of puttering by demonstrating how high levels of hi-fi competence enabled men to enjoy the finest things in life. Furthermore, *Playboy*'s response to this reader's letter was an important way of reinforcing among its readers that hi-fi was not a mere hobby; rather, it was an integral part of the Playboy lifestyle.

***Playboy*'s Hi-Fi Articles**

Playboy published at least one article dedicated to hi-fi during each of the next 15 years. Although the hi-fi articles that followed did not utilize Conly's classification system, they nevertheless linked hi-fi expertise and consumption with sex and upward mobility. One way a man could demonstrate his competence was through the rejection of pre-packaged sets and the purchase of separate hi-fi components. In an article appearing in March 1958, Conly was the first author in *Playboy* to make this point, saying of packaged sets:

> They deliver true three-dimensional sound—in fidelity equivalent to that available in table-top record players. Which is to say, the realism is convincing enough for the average listener whose ears are not 'educated' enough, or sufficiently sensitized, to discriminate those differences which are dear to the man who demands the height of fi. I am sure they will sell—and so they should, to those whose aims are adequate realism plus the convenience of ready-to-play equipment. But they are outside the province of this article, just as ready-made suits would find no place in an article on custom tailoring.[423]

As the quality of packaged sets increased, *Playboy* began to make qualified endorsements of them while making clear that such sets were the domain of men with little competence or cash. The right packaged set could be a good starter set for the neophyte on a budget just beginning to explore hi-fi, or it could function as a passable auxiliary set for the more experienced man who wanted to pipe music into different rooms of his home.

Playboy-produced ads also stressed that the true Playboy man was a connoisseur of components. The "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" ad campaigns provided the most glaring examples of the relationship of mutual aspiration that existed between the magazine and its

[423] Conly, "Music for People with Two Ears," 48.

readers. Using statistics culled from consumer market research, the primary aim of these ads was to sell *Playboy* and its readers to luxury brands with advertising dollars to spend. A secondary function of these ads was to provide the reader with a concrete way to measure himself against the ideal of the Playboy man. Many of the ads depict the Playboy man shopping, and in those where he is shopping for hi-fi, the Playboy man is naturally depicted in the component room. The June 1963 ad explained, "91.9% of Playboy's households own hi-fi equipment—either a packaged unit or component. 68.5% own at least one record player and 56.1% own component hi-fi stereo equipment."[424] While this ad admits that over one-third of households reached by *Playboy* owned packaged sets, the emphasis was clearly on the importance of hi-fi to the Playboy lifestyle, and the message to both readers and potential advertisers was that the majority of *Playboy* households were connoisseurs of components.

Other ads in the "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" campaigns depict the Playboy man in his natural surroundings, enjoying the good life, and naturally surrounded by admiring women. The ad from May 1965 foregrounds the Playboy man's hi-fi set up, which is pushed against the back of an orange couch (fig. 20). An attractive blond woman sits on the couch holding a set of headphones; the Playboy man is leaning over with one arm around her and the other arm turning a knob on his hi-fi rig. Behind them, two women and another man look at LPs in front of a massive fireplace. The ad proclaimed, "the Playboy reader has a natural talent for surrounding himself with the fairest femmes in sight—and finest gear in sound."[425] The photograph was based on a picture of Hefner taken at a gala house party he threw at the Playboy

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[424] Other ads in the same series that depict the Playboy man shopping for hi-fi components may be found in the October 1962 and July 1967 issues. Playboy, "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" Advertisement, June 1963, *Playboy*.

[425] Playboy, "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" Advertisement, May 1965, *Playboy*.

Mansion in celebration of the magazine's eighth anniversary of publication. The guests of honor at this celebration were a dozen former Playmates of the Month.[426] In one of the many photographs documenting the party, Hefner can been seen sitting on the same orange couch in front of the same fireplace featured in the "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" ad run four and a half years later. One Playmate sits on the couch next to Hefner, snuggled up behind him and peering over his shoulder, while he and another Playmate fiddle with knobs on the hi-fi. In the background, nine more Playmates lounge in front of the fireplace, drinking, reading, and eating popcorn.[427] Reinforcing the aspiration of becoming the man in the mansion, the May 1965 ad allowed the reader to imagine himself taking Hefner's place in the Playboy Mansion—the ultimate fantasy of upward mobility.

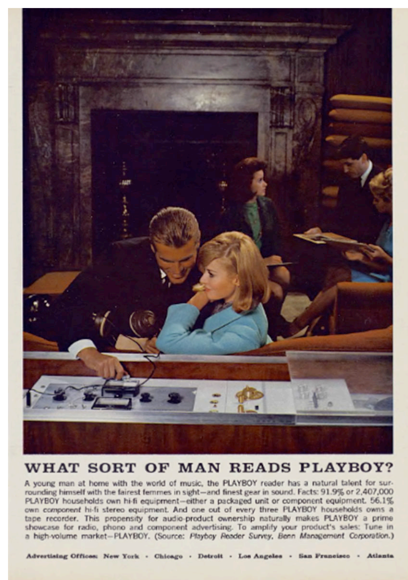

Figure 20. What Sort of Man Reads Playboy? Advertisement.
Source: *Playboy*, May 1965, 77.

Another way *Playboy*'s hi-fi articles promoted components was by comparing them to other luxury goods—linking spending power and social power. Multiple articles made analogies

[426] "Playmate Holiday House Party," *Playboy*, December 1961, 120.

[427] Ibid., 122-123.

between component manufacturers and Rolls-Royce. For example, January 1961's "The Strides of Stereo" included a parenthetical explanation that "Ampex is to tape apparatus as Rolls-Royce to motorcars."[428] "Sights and Sounds of '69" recommended integrated compact systems for those with modest listening requirements and limited budgets, driving home the undesirability of such systems by asserting, "A stereo compact compares with a sumptuous component rig about the same way a Volkswagen does with a Ferrari."[429] This comparison came at a time when Volkswagen was running ads urging consumers to "live below your means," a sentiment that was the antithesis of the Playboy lifestyle.[430]

Playboy's hi-fi articles also promoted components by comparing them to women and thereby linking hi-fi to heterosexual sex. "Hear! Hear!," a March 1959 article on the arrival of stereo, began, "That handsome hunk of electronic equipment nestled at the foot of this page between the twins, who symbolize stereo's dual sounds, is a dual preamplifier built by Fairchild and designed by Raymond Loewy."[431] The article went on to explain that this particular preamp was chosen as a symbol of the emergence of stereo design; however, this explanation would have been redundant to anyone who recognized the name Loewy as the "Father of Industrial Design" and creator of such iconic designs as the Lucky Strike logo and the Studebaker Starliner.[432] More interestingly, the preamp also functioned as a symbolic stand-in for the reader, who was

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[428] "The Strides of Stereo," *Playboy*, January 1961, 76.

[429] "Sights and Sounds of '69," *Playboy*, February 1969, 103.

[430] Regardless of the seeming incompatibility of their values, many Volkswagen ads from this campaign ran in *Playboy*.

[431] "Hear! Hear!," *Playboy*, March 1959, 59.

[432] Estate of Raymond Loewy, "Biography," *Raymondloewy.com*, accessed April 20, 2014, http://www.raymondloewy.com/about.html#biography.

encouraged to believe that with the right hi-fi set up, he might just be the next handsome hunk nestled between those twins. A decade later, the magazine was still drawing comparisons between women and sound sources. Dismissing the efficacy of recommending speakers, the article "Sights and Sounds of '69" explained, "Tastes in speakers are as unaccountable as tastes in girls. If doe-eyed brunettes turn you on, it won't matter how highly we rate blue-eyed blondes. The same applies to speaker systems."[433] This, of course, did not stop *Playboy* from recommending speakers. Every hi-fi article contained information about the latest improvements in speaker technology and design. "Sounds of '65" explored the latest innovations in bookshelf speakers, assuring readers small speakers could still provide top of the line sound. However, the article went on to state, "The fidelitarian with plentiful space and the requisite wherewithal will continue to give his custom to speaker systems of outsize dimensions, a breed that remains unsurpassed for heft and smoothness of over-all response."[434] To put it another way, *Playboy* appears to be saying that size does matter after all.

Images of Audio Technologies

For those readers on whom comparisons of components to cars and women were lost, or for those who might not entirely have been reading *Playboy* for the articles, the magazine offered plenty of pictorial content linking hi-fi to sex and upward mobility. These images sometimes accompanied articles about the latest innovations in hi-fi technology. The images accompanying "Sights and Sounds of '68" provide a good example. The first photograph shows a couple sitting on a love seat, leaning against opposite arms as far away from each other as they could possibly get on the small sofa. The brandy snifters in their hands and their body language indicate that

[433] "Sights and Sounds of '69," 194.

[434] "Sounds of '65," *Playboy*, February 1965, 150.

they are having a good time. The woman is wearing a set of headphones, and her head is thrown back; the man has his fist raised to his mouth in apparent contemplation of his companion. The room is littered with more audiovisual equipment than any single living room could realistically accommodate.[435] The second photograph displays even more elaborate configurations of home entertainment technologies. The near-empty brandy snifters sit on a cocktail table next to a bottle of cognac, and the woman is no longer wearing headphones. Her head is still thrown back, but now it rests against the arm of the loveseat and her eyes are closed. The man has his arms around her and is leaning over her about to kiss her neck.[436] In the final photograph, the décor of the room and the audiovisual technologies in it have once again changed. The now-empty brandy snifters are abandoned on the coffee table. The woman has kicked off her shoes, and her legs, crossed at the ankles, rest on the back of the loveseat. The only other part of the woman's body that is visible is her left hand, which rests on the back of the man's head (some hair and part of his jacket are all of him that is visible) as he kisses her.[437] As the reader progressed in the article, so too did the hi-fi aided seduction in the images, and the man's virtual disappearance into a background of sex and hi-fi components enabled the reader to more easily imagine himself within the scene. Linking hi-fi competence to sexual prowess, this series of images made it clear that the Playboy man was competent in more than one form of leisure.

The first image accompanying "Sounds of '65" is even less subtle in its linkage of hi-fi to sex and was arguably one of the most technopornographic images to appear in the magazine during the time period under investigation (fig. 21). The first six pages (those containing

[435] "Sights and Sounds of '68," *Playboy*, February 1968, 128-129.

[436] Ibid., 130-131.

[437] Ibid., 132-133.

photographs of the hi-fi components under discussion) of the article were printed with a centerfold-style layout.[438] Such a layout forced the reader to turn the magazine in order to read the text and examine the recommended components—an action ordinarily only required for his examination of the Playmate of the Month. The layout and the simple act of turning the magazine linked hi-fi both visually and physically to sex. An image of Barbra Streisand—just below the title word "Sounds"—was a nice added touch, with the layout making her appear to be lost in ecstasy rather than song.[439]

Figure 21. Centerfold-style layout of "Sounds of '65."
Source: *Playboy*, February 1965, 122-123.

Additionally, several Playmate of the Month spreads offered a direct link between hi-fi and sex by either including hi-fi in the centerfold—obviously a scene of successful seduction—or by including hi-fi in the text or images meant to humanize and show readers a day in the life of the centerfold. These were clearly women who would want to come up and listen to the reader's hi-fi. In several of these centerfolds, the Playmates appeared to be somewhere in the

[438] "Sounds of '65," 122-127.

[439] Ibid., 122.

process of putting on a record, from pulling a record out of its sleeve to dropping the needle onto the disc. Their various states of undress and the piles of records nearby indicated that they, as *Playboy* promised to do in its first issue, "are able to give the American male…a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age."[440] Other centerfolds show Playmates relaxing near turntables or leaning against high-end speaker cabinets while hi-fi was hinted at in the centerfolds that picture LPs but no means to play them.[441] Day-in-the-life images accompanying some Playmate of the Month spreads occasionally featured the Playmate inside a hi-fi shop, sitting near her favorite records, or posed near a hi-fi rig.[442] While hi-fi and sex tended to remain implicit in these last two types of images, they nevertheless communicated exactly what the Playboy man had to gain through simply browsing in hi-fi shops or putting a little mood music on the phonograph.[443]

Hi-Fi in *Playboy*'s Cartoons

Although this chapter has thus far focused only on articles and images directly related to hi-fi technologies and treated each type of content separately for ease of argument, the

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[440] For examples of these centerfolds, see "Cloud Nine," *Playboy*, July 1957, 36-38; "Photographing Your Own Playmate," *Playboy*, June 1958, 40-42; "Beat Playmate," 48-50; and "Revolutionary Discovery," *Playboy*, December 1969, 174-176. "Volume I, Number I," 3.

[441] See "Perky in the Straw," *Playboy*, June 1960, 50-52; "Nielsen Rates," *Playboy*, April 1961, 76-78; and "Hail Britannia!," *Playboy*, October 1964, 110-112. See "Member of the Wedding,"126-128; and "Hare Apparent," *Playboy*, June 1969, 132-134.

[442] See "Meet Barbara Cameron," *Playboy*, November 1955, 30; "Little Dipper," *Playboy*, August 1963, 75; and "Playmate of the Year," *Playboy*, August 1967, 110-111.

[443] Lisa Baker, 1967's Playmate of the Year, was first pictured fully nude on an animal skin rug surrounded by some of her favorite pop and jazz LPs in the November 1966 centerfold. Because the Playmate of the Year title goes to the previous year's "centerfold queen," sex and hi-fi are explicitly linked in the August 1967 photograph referenced above, which is a nude shot with the potential to be a centerfold rather than a more casual day-in-the-life photograph. "Playmate of the Year," 109, 111.

magazine's content as a whole linked leisure competence, sex, and upward mobility, and even content that was not explicitly about hi-fi could reinforce the messages of the hi-fi content. The ways in which seemingly disparate images and text work together to provide guidance about what constitutes appropriately sophisticated leisure for the Playboy man is evident when one compares the magazine's hi-fi content to that concerning other entertainment technologies, particularly television. Compared to 103 cartoons concerning television, only 26 cartoons concerning high fidelity or its components appear in the magazine through 1972. The centrality of hi-fi in the Playboy lifestyle meant that these cartoons rarely depicted it as an object of ridicule. Hi-fi was shown, instead, to be a means of seduction, a natural part of the mise-en-scène of cartoons set in bachelor pads, or, as part of the mise-en-scène of other domestic settings in which it is depicted as merely incidental within a cartoon otherwise about sex. Some cartoons also perpetuated the comparison of components to women.[444] Since wives were anathema to the Playboy lifestyle, discourse surrounding spousal conflict remained absent in these cartoons and was largely hidden in the rest of the magazine's treatment of hi-fi.

Of these 26 cartoons, 5 depict high fidelity or its components as sources of humor; however, they never go as far as marking hi-fi as an object of ridicule.[445] Two of these cartoons utilize tape recorders as their source of humor. In one, a man looks quizzically at a display of tape recorders in a hi-fi shop as a voice emanating from one of them is revealed to belong to someone being "held prisoner in Japanese tape machine factory."[446] The other tape recorder

[444] See Phil Interlandi, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, October 1972, 232 and Smilby, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, November 1969, 246.

[445] In addition to the cartoons referenced in this paragraph, see also Alden Erikson, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, March 1957, 25; and Gahan Wilson, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, March 1961, 47.

[446] Interlandi, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, March 1964, 187.

cartoon depicts a group of confused Christmas carolers gathered outside a snow-covered house. Through the window, a woman relaxing in a chair in front of a tape recorder and a man walking back from the door towards her can be seen. Outside, one of the carolers turns to the rest of the group and says, "He says he got us all down on tape last year, so he doesn't need us this year."[447] Other cartoons find their humor in the linking of high fidelity to sex. For example, one of the cartoons in "Cole's Forecast for 1956" depicts an older gentleman looking nervously in the direction of his hi-fi as he embraces a younger woman. The caption explains:

> After thorough research for the reasons into a recent dip in the sales of record-players, we've found a great many married playboys become conscience-stricken when their *infidelities* are played to the tune of *high fidelity*; they prefer to do their leman-squeezing sans this eternal etudic reprimand. We predict a boom in both music sales and philandering when this hypocritical misnomer, hi-fi, is renamed a stimulating "high frequency."[448] (fig. 22)

This is the only hi-fi cartoon in the time period that acknowledges that there was such a thing as a married Playboy. While it may seem a bit counterintuitive, this admission actually worked to reinforce the linkage of hi-fi and sex within the Playboy lifestyle in two main ways. Firstly, the caption indicated that sexual dalliances were both numerous and frequent even for married Playboys. Secondly, the caption's play on the word "fidelity" directly linked hi-fi to sex and reinforced the idea that the Playboy's hi-fi and sexual competencies were part and parcel of his overall leisure competence.

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[447] Smilby, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, December 1968, 310.

[448] Jack Cole, "Cole's Forecast for 1956," *Playboy*, January 1956, 16; emphasis in original.

Figure 22. Cartoon depicting the hypocrisy of associating fidelity with one's stereo rig.
Source: Cole, *Playboy*, January 1956, 16.

Another six cartoons demonstrated that hi-fi set ups and the mood music played on them are integral components of successful seductions. For example, a cartoon from March 1956 shows a man in a modern living room. Two wine glasses sit on the end table and records featuring music for various moods and activities are spread on the floor (e.g., *Music for Dancing*, *Music for a Mellow Mood*, and *Dinner Music*). The man is holding *Music for Dreaming* in his right hand and a cigarette in his left hand. He's dressed in a button down white shirt with an undone black bowtie and dark blue tuxedo pants. He is standing near the hi-fi, but looking into the open bedroom door, which exposes the corner of a bed with clothing draped on it. He says, to the unpictured but presumably nude woman occupying his bed, "They don't seem to have one for that."[449] A cartoon from January 1966 depicts a virile, younger man with a full head of hair propped contently in bed against his pillow. A longhaired, young woman is snuggling happily up to him. A stereo and record player are located next to the woman's side of the bed. Two LPs are strewn on the floor, and a copy of *Aida* is on the bed. Smiling to the man, his companion

[449] Al Stine, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, March 1956, 25.

asks for an “Encore!” (fig. 23) Through its inclusion of opera records and a musical caption, this cartoon linked hi-fi with tasteful consumption, and its depiction of a post-coital moment firmly linked hi-fi to masculine virility.

Figure 23. "Encore!"
Source: Sidney Harris, *Playboy*, January 1966, 234.

While the men in the two examples provided above are both young, *Playboy* also showed older men in the midst of musically aided sexual seduction. For example, a cartoon from November 1968 showed a middle-aged man in an ascot placing a record on his turntable. Nude paintings by Modigliani hang in multiple rooms of his bachelor pad. In the middle of the living room, a young woman stands holding a drink in one hand with her other hand on her hip. The bachelor looks angry as he turns towards her and snaps, “Sit down and shut up. I know what I’m doing. I was carrying out successful seductions before you were even born.”[450] While the cartoon implied that the young woman believed she would be able to resist the Playboy’s charms, he remained convinced that the hi-fi was the key to her successful seduction. In such

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[450] Handelsman, “Cartoon,” *Playboy*, November 1968, 227.

cartoons, a classy lifestyle, as depicted through the men's formal or at least very neat attire and stylishly decorated pads, was clearly more important than age when it came to matters of seduction. A corollary to this message was that, through the cultivation of the proper tastes, a classy and active life was open to men of all ages.

One cartoon even demonstrated how women might use hi-fi in order to seduce a man. In this example, a nude woman kneels on a couch as she puts a record on the hi-fi set. In front of the couch, the coffee table is set with hors d'oeuvres, a martini shaker, and two martini glasses. A well-dressed man leans over the back of the couch and says to the woman, "You certainly know how to entertain, Miss Frenhorn."[451] Although she appears to own a tabletop phonograph, an audio technology which was repeatedly linked to women and others with low hi-fi competence in *Playboy*'s hi-fi coverage, the cartoon nevertheless reinforced the notion that both hi-fi and women were important elements when it came to entertainment for men.

Only one cartoon depicts hi-fi as an impediment to sex (fig. 24). In it, a man and a woman are in bed. The woman is presumably nude as her nightgown is draped across the foot of the bed, but the man is wearing pajamas. Next to the man's side of the bed is an elaborate hi-fi rig with a speaker mounted in the corner of the room. Two LPs lay on the bed in between the couple, an added symbol of how hi-fi has come between them. The woman's brow is knit as the man fiddles with a knob on the hi-fi, turns to her smiling, and says, "Talk about concert hall realism!" While it is unclear whether the couple is married and the woman is a hi-fi widow or if the man simply does not understand the link between high fidelity and the Playboy's infidelities, it is clear that the fault lies with the man and his misplaced priorities rather than with hi-fi itself.

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[451] Interlandi, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, June 1958, 71.

Figure 24. "Talk about concert hall realism!"—hi-fi as an impediment to sex.
Source: Erikson, *Playboy*, October 1957, 71.

Twelve cartoons in addition to those discussed above depict hi-fi as a natural part of the mise-en-scène of the undeniably masculine domestic space of the bachelor pad or as incidental to the overall meaning of the cartoon, but nevertheless linked to sex, in those cartoons that take place in other domestic settings. In the eight cartoons set in bachelor pads, televisions are absent and the hi-fi system occupies pride of place in the main living area. The hi-fi rigs depicted in bachelor pads also tend to be more elaborate than those shown in other domestic settings. The captions to these cartoons leave hi-fi unmentioned, but the links between hi-fi, bachelor pads, and sex are undeniable. For example, in a January 1959 cartoon, the foreground depicts a bachelor's bedroom. A presumably nude woman reclines in his bed reading a magazine. Her stockings are strewn on the hi-fi next to a jazz LP, and on the floor rests a glass and an empty bottle of champagne. The view through the bedroom door reveals the bachelor returning home with another woman. As he takes off his coat, he says to his new guest, "I hope you don't mind,

but the old bachelor apartment is just the way I left it this morning."[452] This reinforces the claim from Cole's cartoon that Playboys' affairs are numerous and frequent, and it is apparent that his hi-fi played a role in the previous evening's successful seduction. In another cartoon, a middle-aged Playboy wearing an ascot leans angrily towards a young woman in a nightgown on his couch. An elaborate hi-fi set with many knobs is in the background of the scene. The man says to his companion, "Trivial affair? My dear young lady, I'm a serious collector." (fig. 25) As well as implying that the Playboy has had numerous affairs, the caption equates affairs with women to other types of collecting, such as modern art or record collecting, that enhance a Playboy's leisure competence.

Figure 25. "Trivial affair? My dear young lady, I'm a serious collector."
Source: Dick Ericson, *Playboy*, September 1962, 207.

When hi-fi is a part of the mise-en-scène of domestic settings other than bachelor pads, its presence tends to be less elaborate or more incidental to the sexual scene otherwise taking place. One such cartoon depicts a hippie orgy in a run-down apartment; a bare light bulb hangs from the ceiling, the walls are decorated in posters rather than priceless paintings, and a stained

[452] Interlandi, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, January 1959, 27.

mattress without any sheets rests on the floor (fig. 26). Several naked men and even more naked women lounge around on the floor and the mattress. The men wear long hair, beards, and round glasses; one of the men sits in the middle of the floor with a notepad, tallying the possible number of sexual combinations given the people present. In the foreground, a turntable rests on top of a crate; there are records missing their protective jackets strewn on top of the crate and on the floor, and a coffee mug rests on top of a stack of exposed LPs. Although this scene depicts frequent and numerous affairs, the hippies' apparently lackadaisical attitudes toward art, furnishings, records, and hi-fi technology mark them as outsiders to the taste culture of Playboy. Another cartoon shows a post-coital moment in a college girl's bedroom. The curtains tied back with purple sashes, floral wallpaper, a pennant pinned to the wall, and the tennis shoes peeking out from under the bed indicate that the bedroom belongs to a girl. An older man with a droopy-eyed look of satisfaction on his face looks in her direction as he leans against the wall, putting on his shoes. In the foreground of the image sits a tabletop phonograph with two sleeveless 45 rpm records resting next to it. A sleeveless LP sits carelessly on the floor.[453] Once again, the cartoon does link hi-fi to sex, but it does so in a way that highlights how intimately connected these forms of entertainment are to upward social mobility and masculinity in the Playboy lifestyle.

[453] Erich Sokol, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, June 1966, 135.

Figure 26. Cartoon depicting hippies' lackadaisical attitude toward markers of the Playboy taste culture.
Source: Sokol, *Playboy*, September 1969, 131.

Hi-Fi Advertisements

Advertising in *Playboy* remained virtually nonexistent throughout its first year as the magazine worked to establish its voice and reputation. In 1955, a handful of ads began appearing in each issue. In April of that year, an advertisement for an Admiral High Fidelity FM-AM Radio-Phonograph appeared on the back cover, marking only the second time an advertisement appeared in such a prominent place in the magazine.[454] The appearance of hi-fi-related ads in *Playboy* fluctuated between 1955 and 1972. Based on a sample of 38 comprised of two randomly chosen issues per each of the 19 years of publication under examination, hi-fi advertising peaked in *Playboy* in 1959, dipped noticeably in the mid-1960s from approximately 1964-1967, experienced a resurgence in 1968, and stayed fairly steady through 1972. The surges in advertising coincided with the popularization of stereophonic sound and the mainstreaming of rock culture, respectively. Hi-fi ads in *Playboy* featured products such as individual

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[454] Admiral Corp., "High Fidelity FM-AM Radio-Phonograph," Advertisement, April 1955, *Playboy*.

components; packaged sets; portable radios, turntables, and tape recorders; catalogs of components and/or component kits; car stereos; tape for home recording; tape decks; and accessories such as a brush that attaches to a turntable in order to dust one's LPs as they spin. While the types of products advertised remained fairly consistent, the sheer number of ads for tape recording equipment and blank tape reels and cartridges stands out particularly as tape technologies rapidly advanced in the late 1960s; however, it should be noted that four ads for Soundcraft Tape appear in the November 1959 issue alone. This is not surprising given the amount of space *Playboy* devoted to promoting tape recording and playback technologies in its annual technology review articles.[455] Another noticeable trend in *Playboy*'s hi-fi ads was the increase in full-page ads from 1969-1972.

While *Playboy* rarely admitted that the majority of its readers had wives, some of the companies advertising hi-fi components in the magazine directly addressed husbands. For example, a recurring ad from Chancellor Electronics, Inc. for the OKI 555 stereo tape recorder asked and answered six questions for the consumer. Among these questions was, "Will your wife like the way it looks?" and the answer assured the reader that "the OKI is a slim and attractive instrument designed to look good anywhere in your home. And to blend gracefully with any décor. Even with the décor of your office."[456] Such an ad invoked earlier discourses that marked hi-fi's bulk and technological appearance as points of contention in the family sphere. The last line, with its mention of the consumer's office, indicated that the hi-fi enthusiast

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[455] *Playboy* also published two separate articles specifically about tape: "The Case for Cassettes," *Playboy*, October 1970 and Morton M. Hunt, "The Next Sound You Hear," *Playboy*, September 1962.

[456] Chancellor Electronics, Inc., "OKI 555 Stereo Tape Recorder," Advertisement, November 1964, *Playboy*.

may have to settle for a masculine space on the periphery of the domestic, which had been part of the *Playboy* project all along. Similarly, Altec Lansing ran a series of ads called "11 Sneaky Ways to Beat Your Wife at Hi-Fi." One of these ads depicts a man cowering from his wife as she yells, "Who says I've got a tin ear?" at him as he attempts to plug in a component. The main ad text is the husband's reply as he attempts to dig himself out of a hole and into some new components by praising his wife's taste and sensitivity.[457]

Many hi-fi ads reinforced the rhetoric of *Playboy's* hi-fi articles by emphasizing the connoisseurship of components or calling the reader's competence into question. For example, an ad for a Miracord turntable states, "Frankly, most people get by with less sophisticated equipment. You can, too, if you don't mind or can't hear the difference, or if you don't care that your friends will."[458] Such an appeal demonstrated the desirability of leisure competence due to the way it marked one as sophisticated and therefore unlike most people. A Sony ad described a stereo tape recorder as "the perfect playmate for your record player."[459] The use of a term so synonymous with the Playboy lifestyle served to link Sony's hi-fi components to the Playboy's sophisticated consumption of audio and sexual entertainment. Ads occasionally also reinforced the idea that the Playboy man should never be sonically satisfied. For instance, an ad for an Ampex stereo cassette player and recorder advised, "If you still think stereo is a phonograph, go hop in your Edsel and go."[460] In its reviews of hi-fi technologies, *Playboy* tended to reserve the

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[457] Altec Lansing Corporation, "11 Sneaky Ways to Beat Your Wife at Hi-Fi," Advertisement, November 1959.

[458] Benjamin Electronic Sound Corp., "Benjamin Miracord Model 10," Advertisement, February 1963, *Playboy*.

[459] Sony, "Perfect Playmates," Advertisement, January 1965, *Playboy*.

[460] Ampex Corporation, "Ampex Micro 85," Advertisement, December 1968, *Playboy*.

term phonograph for simple to use table top models favored by women or the otherwise technologically incompetent. The *Playboy* reader would know that he should purchase a turntable as one of his core components. However, for those readers who had not yet listened to the magazine's advice about incorporating tape recording and playback technology into one's hi-fi rig, this ad helped to reinforce how hopelessly out of fashion they would remain until they did so.

Conclusion

Through advertisements, gift and gadget guides, cartoons, articles, technology reviews, and pictures of Playmates stretched languorously near LPs or leaning against hi-fi cabinets, it was clear that audio entertainment technologies occupied a privileged place in the Playboy lifestyle. Examining how this privileged place was defined and maintained provides insights into the complex ways in which music, masculinity, and social mobility were fundamentally entwined in *Playboy* during the mid-twentieth century. With *Playboy*'s admission that "we're not altogether certain whether high-fidelity gear should be classified as an example of conspicuous consumption or not," the magazine reinforced the status of the Playboy as a subdominant culture by acknowledging that it was encouraging its readers to engage in activities that could be read as simultaneously mass and anti-mass.[461] Through its discourses surrounding domestic technologies, *Playboy* delineated the boundaries of its taste culture and provided guidance for any man--bachelor or husband—who sought relief from the expectations of the breadwinner role, directing them on a path that sought autonomy and leisure competence through calculated consumption in a world overrun by conformity. As Keightley observes, "In a world where, white middle-class, masculine identity was thought to be under threat from increased

[461] "Sounds of '65," 152.

corporate conformity and a matriarchal society, hi-fi offered some men a means of distancing themselves from their perceived Others (women, the masses, television, and so on)."[462]

Playboy may have entered the culture at a time when audio entertainment technologies were rapidly developing, yet hi-fi and *Playboy* were more than merely coincidental post-war phenomena. *Playboy*'s treatment of hi-fi illustrates the complex social, cultural, and sexual politics of popular music and technologies related to its playback, during a period of changing attitudes toward conspicuous consumption, leisure, and taste. Through linking sophisticated consumer goods, such as hi-fi, to sex, and linking masculinity to leisure competence and upward social mobility, *Playboy*, as arbiter of a sophisticated taste culture, provided its readers with guidance on acquiring "all the components of good living."[463]

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[462] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity," 254-255.

[463] Playboy, "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" Advertisement, October 1962.

CHAPTER 5

"Teevee Jeebies": Gender, Taste, and Playboy's Uneasy Relationship with Television

> *The fact is, I don't think I need to waste your time by telling you that it is probably too kind to say that most television programs are lousy and that the medium itself is largely in the hands of irresponsible and rapacious men.*
> —A. C. Spectorsky, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers."[464]

While *Playboy*'s coverage of hi-fi technology was overwhelming marked by aspiration, its treatment of television was marked by apprehension if not, at times, by outright disapprobation. As a mass media outlet professing anti-mass tastes, Playboy's relationship to mass culture was necessarily complex and often contradictory. Its framing as entertainment for men and attempt to distance adult masculinity from the prevailing domestic ideology compounded its complex relationship to mass culture. That is, its cultivation of sophisticated tastes served to separate the Playboy taste culture from both the conformity of the masses and the bad taste of the girlie magazines that preceded it. While many critics at the time supported the negative assessments of television propounded in *Playboy*, television often functioned as a scapegoat in the Playboy lifestyle, providing evidence that no matter what one could critique *Playboy* for, mass culture always had something worse to offer.

Consequently, in many ways, television simply did not fit into the taste, class, and gender prescriptions of the Playboy lifestyle, and Playboy's embrace of television remained lukewarm despite its own production of two television variety shows. Although specific television content was rarely addressed in the magazine, editorial content did explore and critique the inner

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[464] Speech, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers," 1969, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection.

workings of the television industry and its regulation. Also critiqued were the formulaic and uncontroversial nature of content aimed to please mass audiences, the sometimes negative effects of the introduction of television technology into American homes, and innovations in television and home video technologies. This is not to suggest that Playboy was strictly anti-television; rather, it was against those aspects of the medium that could be considered overly commercial, feminizing, aimed at mass tastes and audiences, politically safe, and/or puritanical.

The magazine's coverage of the medium praised and called for more television content that it deemed hip, original, intelligent, offbeat, and/or politically or socially relevant. *Playboy* also championed sports, sex, and news as acceptably masculine viewing. Embracing techno-optimism, articles in the magazine also expressed hope that public service television and the creation of a public television network, satellite and cable broadcasting technologies, and home video recording and playback technologies would improve the quality of television content (and, thus, the quality of viewers' lives) by either enabling producers to court minority rather than mass audiences or allowing viewers to produce their own content.

In the simplest terms, during the time period examined, *Playboy* maintains an uneasy relationship with television. On one hand, the magazine finds television interesting as an evolving entertainment technology, but on the other, its promise of unsophisticated and passive entertainment runs contrary to the Playboy man's sophisticated and active lifestyle. Many of the tensions concerning television expressed in the pages of *Playboy* echo earlier discourses surrounding television, domestic space, and family relationships, which Lynn Spigel explores in depth.[465] Examining the main print and television content produced by Playboy during the corporation's first 19 years, I hope "to reveal a general set of discursive rules that were formed

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[465] See Spigel, *Make Room for TV*.

for thinking about television" and to demonstrate that these discursive rules were largely a perpetuation of discourses circulating elsewhere in the mass media that, particularly for men, defined high fidelity over and against television.[466] As Keir Keightley points out and as we saw in the preceding chapter, high fidelity in the mid-twentieth century could be considered television's technological opposite. *Playboy*'s treatment of television reinforced this opposition by emphasizing the ways in which television did not fit into a lifestyle it deemed sophisticated and masculine.[467]

Television as Entertainment Furniture

Although public exhibitions of television technologies were staged in the United States throughout the 1930s, television did not become commercially viable until after World War II. Production of television sets and programs along with the issuance of television licenses had been halted due to the war effort, but resumed after the war ended in 1945.[468] In 1946, DuMont and RCA made the first black and white television sets available to the public, but widespread adoption of the technology into the home would take several years. Spigel notes that television ownership was not attainable for most American families until 1955 when station penetration became more widespread due to relaxed FCC regulations and prices on sets dropped to more affordable levels. Prior to these developments, television viewing typically took place in public spaces such as bars or department stores.[469]

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[466] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 9.

[467] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity," 238.

[468] Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 99, 552-553.

[469] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 31-32.

Looking at television's subsumption into postwar homes, Spigel examines how "home magazines helped to construct television as a household object, one that belonged in the family space."[470] By the mid-1950s, the television would become the primary form of entertainment furniture in American family homes, a spot previously occupied by the phonograph and, before that, the family piano.[471] Although television and high fidelity technologies entered American homes concurrently, discourses about these entertainment technologies in the popular and specialist press helped to reinforce their opposition in terms of both the gender and cultural values associated with them. While high fidelity was often depicted as a source of spatial-spousal conflict in contemporary media, Spigel points to discourses in the contemporary popular press that situated the television and the new concept of the family room as additional means of organizing domestic space around familial togetherness. Because of depictions relating television to togetherness, Spigel argues that television "became the cultural symbol par excellence of family life" by the early 1950s.[472] *Playboy*'s coverage of television reinforced associations of the technology with housewives, children, and married and/or family life. Through these associations and other critical and satirical coverage of the television industry and its products, *Playboy* distanced itself from this symbol of togetherness in order to reinforce the masculinity of the Playboy man and position the bachelor pad and/or high fidelity listening room as an anti-domestic domestic space.

Although a 1954 national survey showed that "85 percent of the respondents kept their sets in the living room, so that the space for TV was the central, common living area in the

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[470] Ibid., 39.

[471] Barnett, "Furniture Music," 303.

[472] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 39.

home," a discourse of the family divided by television began circulating as well.[473] Propagating a discourse of division, home magazines began suggesting separate spaces for television viewing based on age and/or gender. As Spigel demonstrates through her analysis of advertisements containing images of both unity and division, though, "the social division of space was not simply the inverse of family unity; rather, it was a point on a continuum that stressed ideals of domestic cohesion."[474] David Riesman also notes the connections between television, domestic space, and family cohesion. He observes, "The open plan of the very newest ranch-style homes put the TV set on a swivel in the center, where it can be seen from all parts of the house, so that urban news, fashions, gossip, and jokes can circulate in the home throughout the daily cycle of the members of the family."[475] Whether viewed as a family or not, then, the television remained a technology of togetherness. Disputes over high fidelity did not work to reinforce this togetherness; rather, high fidelity was used to reclaim specifically masculine space within the family home.

Television as Feminine and Feminizing

As Kyle S. Barnett demonstrates, the key to the phonograph's acceptance into the family home was marketing it as home entertainment furniture rather than technology. This distancing of the phonograph and prefabricated radios from their technological roots feminized the technologies, which, in turn, enabled discourses linking high fidelity and masculinity to flourish in part because of their embrace of technological expertise and leisure competence. Also examining discourses in 1950s magazines, Keightley argues that "one of the factors that

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[473] Ibid., 68.

[474] Ibid., 67, 69-72.

[475] Riesman, "The Suburban Sadness," 398.

contributed to a view of television as emblematic of a 'low-feminine' was the presence of discourse that figured high fidelity as not only a 'high-masculine,' but crucially, as television's technological 'opposite,' as a kind of anti-television."[476] In other words, television came to be identified with a feminized and feminizing mass culture while high fidelity came to be identified with a masculine class culture.

Ethan Thompson argues that the little television coverage that appeared in *Playboy* from 1953-1960 largely takes the form of parodic cartoons. Thompson locates and analyzes three cartoons printed between 1956-1960, all of which suggested that "television existed primarily as either a prelude or obstacle to sexual seduction."[477] While this analysis is not incorrect, expanding the time frame and types of television coverage and comparing the cartoons that deal with television to those that deal with hi-fi gives a broader picture of how these entertainment technologies fit into the Playboy version of masculinity. While the themes Thompson identifies continue to circulate in the magazine's cartoons about television throughout and beyond the 1960s, analyzing the 105 cartoons related to television and home video technologies that appeared in the magazine between 1954-1972 illustrates that *Playboy*'s overall discourse surrounding television is more complex. In addition to the messages Thompson identifies, *Playboy*'s television-related cartoons also include commentary and critique of the medium's commercialism, content, and industrial practices; references to national and international politics; messages concerning the age, gender, taste, and class of television audiences; and, in several cases, offer a dystopian view of the power of television in modern life. It is important to note

[476] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity," 238.

[477] Ethan Thompson, "The Parodic Sensibility and the Sophisticated Gaze: Masculinity and Taste in *Playboy's Penthouse*." *Television & New Media* 9, no. 4 (2008): 299.

that while television is sometimes shown as a prelude to sex, unlike hi-fi, television and video technologies are never depicted as a means of seduction.[478] Those cartoons that do portray television as a prelude to sex are better interpreted not as showing television as a means of seduction, but as demonstrating sex as a more masculine and desirable alternative to television.

William Boddy and other scholars link "the ideological construction of television as [an] unworthy, emasculating, and bad cultural object" to the medium's inheritance of the industrial, regulatory, and creative structures and cultural and gendered positioning of commercial radio from the 1920s.[479] Detailing the same shift in marketing focus discussed by Barnett, Boddy shows that broadcasters began to cater to an imagined audience comprised of distracted housewives. Spigel discusses the ways in which advertisements for television promoted a similar imagined audience of distracted housewives. She explains that advertisements typically depicted women actively engaged in housework in front of the television while men were shown as passively relaxing in front of the technology. While a man's relaxation could be justified as revitalizing him after a hard day's work, Spigel notes, "it could well be concluded that the cultural ideals that demanded women be shown as productive workers in the home also had the peculiar side effect of 'feminizing' the father."[480] *Playboy*'s treatment of television often drew

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[478] The one cartoon that does show a man attempting to seduce a woman with visual media also shows such an attempt at seduction as a failure. The cartoon, which depicts an older Playboy playing a presumably pornographic film for a much younger girl, is captioned by the girl inquiring, "You call that <u>dirty</u>?" See Mort Gerberg, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, January 1969, 282; emphasis in the original.

[479] William Boddy, "Archaeologies of Electronic Vision and the Gendered Spectator," *Screen* 25, no. 2 (1994): 108.

[480] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 96.

attention to the thin line between the medium's revitalizing and feminizing effects. Herbert Gold made this line clear in a 1958 *Playboy* article on the origins of the Beat Generation, asserting:

> The extreme of a flatulent submission to the mass media eventually stops all experience in its tracks. Television as a medium of entertainment is not the villain any more than good whiskey is a villain; they can both be good friends. It is the bleared submission by depleted souls which destroys. Relaxation is one thing—sharing experience vicariously is a great experience to which the imagination entitles us. To be stunned is another matter entirely. Despair by electronic shock.[481]

Submission is a principle theme in *Playboy*'s cartoons concerning television, which often depicted television figuratively, and sometimes literally, controlling weak-willed members of both genders.

Television's associations with housewives and family life were *Playboy*'s primary means of feminizing the medium and its audiences. The idea that women are obsessed with television is addressed in 15 of the 105 cartoons concerning television or home video technologies that appear in *Playboy* between 1954 and 1972. While young, virile men seem able to resist the allure of television, *Playboy*'s cartoons depict women of all ages glued to their sets. Although it depicts a woman glued to a movie, a cartoon from the December 1966 issue aptly demonstrates the passivity and lack of control associated with television viewing. Standing on the threshold of the emergency exit of a recently crashed airplane, a woman is unable to remove her gaze from the love story unfolding on the screen. Outside in a life raft, her husband calls to her, "Helen—for heaven's sake—is it that important how it ends?" (fig. 27).

[481] Herbert Gold, "The Beat Mystique: What It Is—Whence It Came," 86.

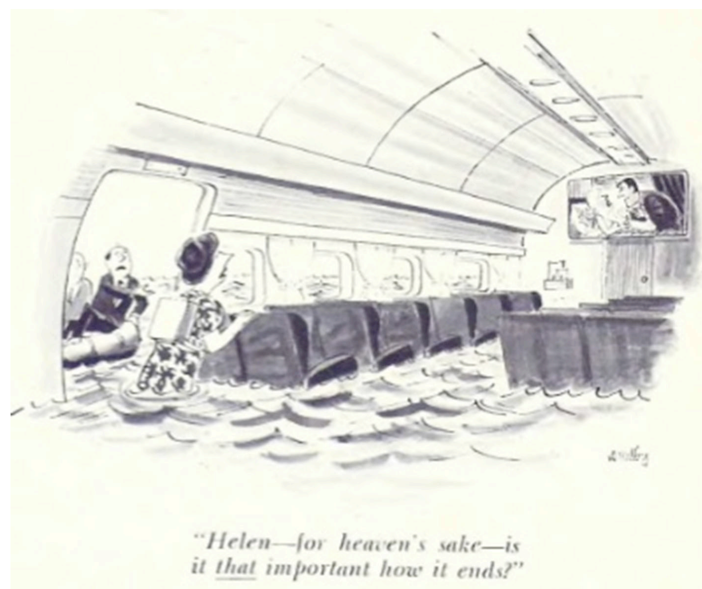

Figure 27. "Helen--for heaven's sake--is it that important how it ends?"
Source: Smilby, *Playboy*, December 1966, 307.

Another cartoon depicts a middle-aged woman who is overweight but well dressed, sitting on the couch in front of the television. Her husband, with his tie slightly askew and dark circles under his eyes, turns to her as he leaves the house and says, "You sing along with Mitch and I'll drink along with Barney!" (fig. 28). Although it appears that the husband may have already begun drinking along without Barney, his wife and her bad taste in television and music are clearly the butts of the joke. Even though the show encouraged participation by displaying lyrics and enjoining the home audience to "sing along," this cartoon illustrates that it was not simply the passivity normally associated with television that is feminizing or undesirable; rather, cartoonist Phil Interlandi is pointing out that the problem lies in the larger taste culture surrounding those television programs and popular songs produced for mass appeal. The disdain the cartoon exhibits for the show is due in part to the fact that the music featured on the program and the numerous albums that preceded it couldn't be more antiquated, square, unsophisticated, or out of line with the Playboy lifestyle. Miller himself even admitted to avoiding "songs with chic or sophisticated lyrics, which he [felt were] great for the night clubs and Broadway musicals

but not for his living room type entertainment."[482] This cartoon also clearly delineates gendered forms of relaxation. The caption indicates that it is acceptable for a woman to wile away her evening listening to old familiar songs, many of which comprised the hit parade long before she was born; however, in this instance of spatial/spousal conflict over the audiovisual dimensions of domestic life, the husband must escape to the masculine space of the neighborhood bar. While *Playboy's* depictions of women passively attached to their sets contravened the images of the productive housewife in front of the television discussed by Spigel, they did serve to mark television as a feminine pastime in *Playboy*.

Figure 28. "You sing along with Mitch and I'll drink along with Barney!"
Source: Interlandi, *Playboy*, July 1963, 116.

In addition to television's associations with bad taste, 15 of the *Playboy* cartoons depict television as an impediment to sex. This is a problem that affects men and women of all ages as demonstrated through depictions of television impeding sex for everyone from newlyweds to

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[482] Cynthia Lowry, "Mitch Miller Breaks the Ratings Barrier," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 22, 1961.

those residing in retirement homes.[483] For example, a December 1966 cartoon shows a young couple in bed. At the foot of the bed sits a television on a cart. The man is leaning over embracing the woman and attempting to kiss her. Without taking her eyes off the set, she says, “Please Fred—not during prime time!” (fig. 29). In a similar cartoon, an elderly couple in their pajamas sits on the couch in front of the television. The man leans over, sliding his hand up his wife’s nightgown as he attempts to kiss her. Without taking her eyes from the screen, she says, “Please, Sam. Not during a Billy Graham Crusade!” (fig. 30). According to such depictions, even when a man remains uninterested in television, the medium can have negative consequences for his sex life that may call his sexual prowess and masculinity into question; these men’s skills of seduction appear to be no match for the temptation of television.

Figure 29. "Please, Fred--not during prime time!"
Source: Harris, *Playboy*, December 1966, 273.

[483] See Interlandi, “Cartoon,” *Playboy*, June 1960, 38, for a cartoon featuring a new bride more interested in watching television than consummating her marriage. This cartoon is also discussed in Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 92-93.

Figure 30. "Please, Sam. Not during a Billy Graham Crusade!"
Source: John Dempsey, "Passion in Senior City!," *Playboy*, July 1972, 155.

Television as Emasculating

In some cases, television itself, rather than the watching of it, is depicted as an impediment to sex. For example, a March 1954 cartoon depicts a television repairman working on a set in an apartment. He has removed the screen and back panel of the television to reveal that the set has been placed in front of the window, blocking the view to the neighboring apartment where a young woman can be seen dressing (fig. 31). In other cartoons, television content is shown to impede sex. In one example, a couple is naked in bed; the television at the foot of the bed is still on, but their attention has clearly turned to other forms of entertainment. The man is leaning over with his hand in the air as if he is about to grab the woman's breast; however, the couple looks in the direction of the television shocked as the announcer says, "Uh-uh-uh! Don't touch that dial!" (fig. 32).

Figure 31. The television set as an impediment to sex.
Source: Arv Miller, "The Magic Box," *Playboy*, March 1954, 22.

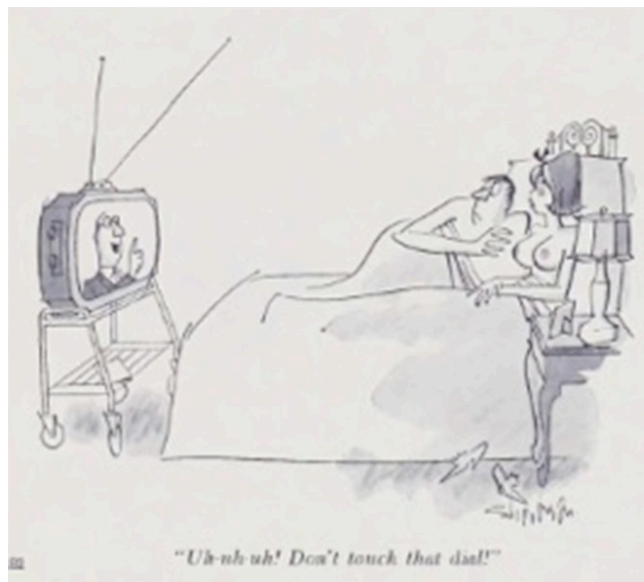

Figure 32. "Uh-uh-uh! Don't touch that dial!"
Source: Vahan Shirvanian, *Playboy*, July 1970, 182.

When men are shown glued to their sets, it is apparent that these are not Playboy men. Men who prefer television to sex are depicted as undesirable through markers of lower class status and lack of control, such as poor dress or drunkenness, as well as through physical characteristics, such as being overweight or bald. For example, a November 1968 cartoon depicts a bald man sitting in an easy chair with his eyes glued to the television. In an attempt to

rekindle her husband's interest in sex, his wife has apparently hatched a plan with one of her friends. Having delivered a drink to her husband, the housewife returns to the dining room, empty tray at her side, wearing high heels, a skirt, and an apron. Standing in the entranceway topless, she remarks to her friend, "He didn't even notice" (fig. 33).

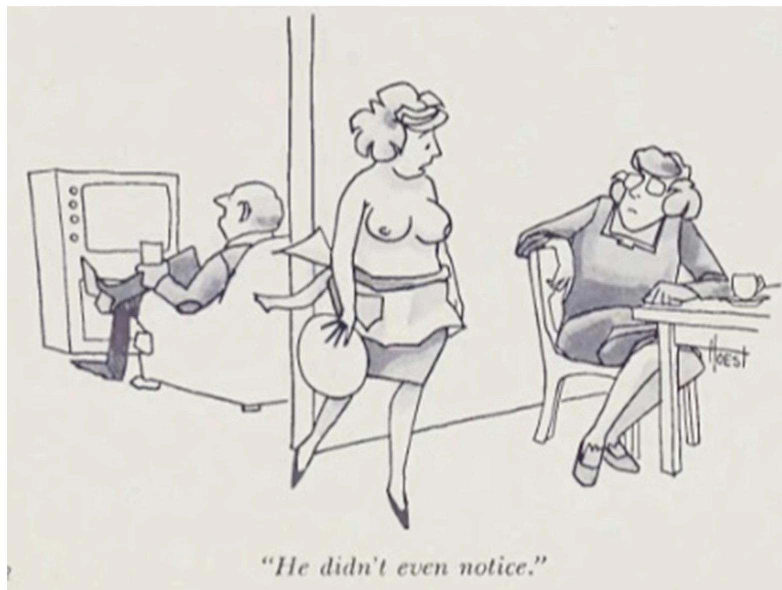

Figure 33: "He didn't even notice."
Source: William Hoest, *Playboy*, November 1968, 212.

A March 1967 cartoon also shows a man in an easy chair in front of the television. He is overweight and wearing an undershirt, pants, and slippers. In his right hand, he is holding a can of beer, and in his left hand, he has a cigar. The blinds on the window next to him are crooked, and there are five empty beer cans scattered next to his chair. His wife is standing next to his chair, staring at him angrily. She is stout and wears a housedress, an apron around her waist, slippers, and saggy stockings. Her husband yells at her, "…And behind every man who's a failure there's a woman, too!" (fig. 34). This and similar cartoons perpetuated discourses associating television with low taste and behavior, lower class status, and low ambition.

Figure 34. "And behind every man who's a failure there's a woman, too!"
Source: John Ruge, *Playboy*, March 1967, 138.

Television was rarely depicted as enabling sex, and in the cartoons where it was, there were often other negative and/or emasculating associations with television depicted. Most commonly, television was depicted as enabling sex through its associations with adulterous housewives, precocious teenagers, and distracted and/or clueless parents. In three of the four television-related cartoons that depict unfaithful housewives, television was shown to enable the affair with women in two cartoons carrying on affairs with the TV repairman. Unlike the ads discussed by Spigel, these cartoons insinuated that far from spending their days engaged in mindless household chores in front of their television sets, housewives actually were not busy enough and might turn to extramarital activities to fill their days.

Other cartoons portraying television as enabling sex were associated with family life, usually in the form of sexually active teenagers or young adults and naïve, clueless, or distracted parents. In one, a man tiptoes past the doorway to a living room on his way to a tryst with a young woman, who is waiting for him on the staircase. In the living room, an old man, presumably the father (or perhaps even the grandfather) of the young woman, sits smiling and

glued to his television set. The woman reassures her lover, "It's safe—*Disneyland* is on tonight!"[484] This cartoon reinforces that there are more desirable ways for the playboy man to spend his free time than in front of the television while also associating television with undesirable men and unsophisticated tastes. While this and similar cartoons indicate that television may provide a cover for sexual activity for young couples, many more *Playboy* cartoons indicate that television inhibits sex for adults.

Leisure Competence and Control

From complaints and jokes about television programming to critiques of the technology, industry, and its audiences, *Playboy*'s overall treatment of television indicates that it is more often than not a form of leisure catering to and based on technical incompetence and cultural passivity. As entertainment furniture, analog television sets require even less technical and leisure competence than operating a tabletop phonograph. As a broadcast technology, television offered viewers little control over programming beyond switching the dial either to another network or off altogether. This lack of viewer control was taken to the extreme in two cartoons that depict a dystopian view of audiences and the outside world controlled by television. For example, a 1972 four-panel comic strip shows a man using a remote control to turn off a television airing a Western. As he walks away from the television, beams shoot toward him from the remote control. The final panel depicts the now frowning man once again watching the Western; the choice of what to watch and when is out of his control (fig. 35). While such extremely negative portrayals of television were rather rare in *Playboy*, the desire for control over television technologies and programming cropped up repeatedly in articles and short stories.

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[484] Miller, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, November 1956, 64.

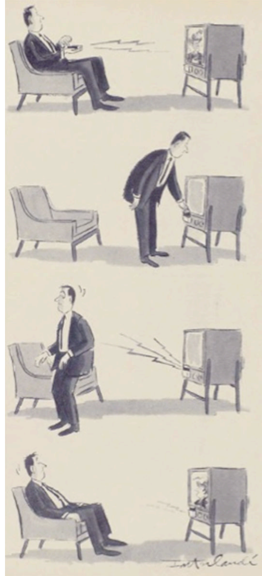

Figure 35. Helpless under the control of TV.
Source: Interlandi, *Playboy*, September 1960, 125.

It is hardly a surprise, then, that *Playboy*'s coverage of television and home video technologies tended to focus on those aspects of the technologies that required some leisure competence or engendered a modicum of viewer control over the viewing experience. In terms of television, *Playboy* only recommended the latest technology; however, its reviews often sang the praises of older audio technologies. Because analog television sets require no technical skill to operate, staying abreast of technological developments in television and home video technologies, learning how to incorporate these technologies into larger home entertainment installations, and consuming sophisticated programming were the primary means *Playboy* offered for developing leisure competence around the medium. Television received perhaps its hardiest endorsement from *Playboy* through its inclusion in gift guides for Christmas, Father's Day, and graduations, appearing in two-thirds of the 51 gift guides that were published between 1956 and 1972.[485]

[485] While many reviews and articles about hi-fi appeared in *Playboy* throughout its first two decades, television and home video technologies were not added to the annual review of entertainment technologies until 1966. While these articles offer more detailed information

The technological developments most remarked upon in *Playboy*'s annual review of audiovisual equipment were improvements to the portability of sets and the quality of color television. This emphasis on portability might have been one means of removing the television from the family room and gaining some control over at least where one watches. When console sets were recommended, the emphasis was on design and flexibility. In terms of design, *Playboy* often recommends consoles with walnut finishes and tambour doors to hide the set when it is not in use. The emphasis on the ability to hide the devalued technology of television within desirable furniture of modern Scandinavian design recalls earlier commodity inhibitionism expressed in women's magazines over hi-fi components. Even though television was described as a poor substitute for life elsewhere in the magazine, the luxury status of the models recommended by *Playboy* actually worked to reinforce the notion that the Playboy man is one who knows how to live well. As David Abrahamson explains, "the purchase of high-quality goods may in some sense have been regarded as a protest against mass consumption."[486]

Home video technologies received positive and optimistic reviews. *Playboy* called excitement over the commercial release of home video recorders in 1966 natural due to the newness of the gadget and explained that the device "permits you to record a TV program *in absentia* for later viewing at a convenient time."[487] The Playboy's desire to time-shift his viewing indicated his desire to exercise control over an entertainment form whose content and timing was usually out of his hands. By freeing viewers "from the time tyranny of the local TV

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about television and home video than do the gift guides, the relative lack of column space devoted to these visual technologies and their juxtaposition with unabashed hi-fi enthusiasm somewhat diminishes *Playboy*'s endorsement of them.

[486] Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America*, 47.

[487] "Sights and Sounds of '66," *Playboy*, February 1966, 190.

schedule," it was said that video cartridge recording and playback technologies would allow them to "become [their] own program director."[488] As *Playboy*'s coverage of home video technologies progressed so, too, did its optimism that innovations in video recording and playback technologies along with the creation of video rental libraries would improve the overall quality of television content. It was hoped that the creation of rental libraries would hamper the production of programming designed to skirt controversy and appeal to the masses and lead to higher quality programs aimed at minority audiences.[489] Additionally, portable video cameras offered the Playboy man complete control over his viewing by allowing him to create his own content.

While broadcast television was depicted as tranquilizing and emasculating, it was suggested that video recording and playback technologies might enhance one's sex life. In addition to freeing one from the control of the television schedule and its limited programming choices, home video also freed one from having to "worry whether or not Kodak will decide he's gone too far in filming his girlfriend and refuse to return his shots. And sooner or later, of course, video-tape equipment will end up in the bedroom. After all, there's no reason the instructional uses of video tape should stop at the tennis court or golf course."[490] An October 1972 cartoon is indicative of *Playboy*'s technophilia regarding home video technologies. It shows a man, wearing nothing but socks and garters, holding a telephone receiver in one hand and a whip in the other. Through the doorway, one can see a naked woman, dangling happily from the chandelier while smoking a cigarette. A video camera sits on a tripod in the room

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[488] "Shoot and Show!," *Playboy*, May 1972, 118.

[489] Alan Adelson, "Leisure in the Seventies: At Home," *Playboy*, December 1970, 337.

[490] "Shoot and Show!," 190.

behind her. The man says to the person on the phone, "Just taking a few home movies with the wife. What are you doing?"[491]

Unlike television, which *Playboy*'s cartoons generally depicted as an impediment to sex (especially with one's wife) or otherwise emasculating, this cartoon depicts home video technologies as sexually stimulating. In a January 1972 article, science and science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke praised the audio tape recorder as a good technology, or one that "enhances and enriches your life."[492] He suggested that the coming of the video tape recorder would be "even more marvelous" and have the added function of "enrich[ing] one's lovemaking a great deal."[493] However, Clarke's optimism regarding video tape recorders and advancements in television technologies, such as satellite transmission, was not limited to individual enrichment or enhanced sexual fulfillment. In fact, his hopes--that these technologies would prove to be more than mere entertainment through allowing the creation of local and global TV communities, enabling direct democracy through electronic voting, and spreading educational programming from Europe to countries such as India—echoed concerns and visions over the present and future of television mentioned in earlier *Playboy* articles about the television industry.[494]

In addition to the many other undesirable characteristics of television, *Playboy* was "fed up with the paltry low-fi sounds of most TV sets."[495] By recommending sets that came with

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[491] Sokol, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, October 1972, 99.

[492] Arthur C. Clarke and Alan Watts, "At the Interface: Technology and Mysticism," *Playboy*, January 1972, 264-265.

[493] Ibid., 265.

[494] Ibid., 266, 271-272.

[495] "Sights and Sounds of '69," 194.

special jacks to pipe television audio through one's hi-fi rig, the magazine also demonstrated how hi-fi could help distance the Playboy man from the average television viewer by adding a level of leisure competence to his viewing experience. In the April 1960 issue, *Playboy* Picture Editor Vincent T. Tajiri penned an article offering information on the latest innovations in 8mm and 16mm home movie cameras. As with later coverage of home video technologies, sound was of special concern, and Tajiri expressed excitement over the release of the first 8mm sound-on-film camera for hobbyists.[496] Moreover, as an early and enthusiastic proponent of audiotape and tape recorders, in a later article, *Playboy* framed the video tape recorder as a technology that opens up the visual world to those who are already "adventurous tapists" in the sonic realm.[497] However, the endorsement of video tape recorders was qualified due to the lack of standardization of video tape size and speed. The article predicted, "it looks like we're in for a battle of the speeds reminiscent of the imbroglio over 33 and 45 rpm."[498] Another article predicted that video tape recording would become the most popular of all hobbies due to the fact that "Porta-Paks bridge the gap between the film buff and the audio freak."[499] In addition to improving the status of video technology by linking it to hi-fi, video tape recording also turned television into a more active leisure pursuit through both the act of creation and the need for technical skill.

Although most of the ads in the "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" campaigns focused on more active leisure pursuits than television or on the consumption of luxury goods, the few

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[496] Vincent T. Tajiri, "Lights! Action! Camera!," *Playboy*, April 1960, 76.

[497] "Sights and Sounds of '68," 155.

[498] Ibid., 155-156.

[499] "Shoot and Show!," 191.

ads that did delve into the consumption of television by *Playboy* readers highlighted ownership of and the ability to purchase the technology rather than its use. For example, the November 1964 ad showed the Playboy man shopping for a color TV with an attractive brunette clinging to his arm and his every word. The text explained, "Color-TV ownership among *Playboy* households is three times that of the national average."[500] This ad and the one from July 1966 highlighted that *Playboy* surpassed all other magazines surveyed for number of households purchasing a new TV set within the previous 12 months.[501] The latter ad, which featured the Playboy man laying on the beach watching a portable TV while two bikini-clad women smiled at him, also emphasized that over 2.6 million *Playboy* households owned a portable television. Portable televisions, the purchase and ownership of which was promoted in this ad as well as in *Playboy*'s technology reviews and gift guides, offered flexibility; even though, the Playboy man might have no control over the broadcast schedule, a portable set allowed him to watch television with minimal impediment to the rest of his own daily schedule.

Regardless of such endorsements of television, *Playboy* continued to mark television viewing as a lowbrow pursuit. The relative absence of television reviews in the Playboy After Hours section of the magazine reinforced that the Playboy man's time was better spent on one of the other leisure pursuits that were reviewed, such as dining and drinking, records, books, film,

[500] Playboy, "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" Advertisement, November 1964, *Playboy*.

[501] The 1964 ad utilizes statistics from the *1964 Starch Consumer Magazine Report*, and the 1966 ad utilizes statistics from the *1965 Starch Consumer Magazine Report* and *1965 Standard Magazine Report* by W.R. Simmons and Associates. Ibid.; Playboy, "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" Advertisement, July 1966, *Playboy*.

or theater—all of which fit more comfortably into Playboy's upper middlebrow taste culture.[502] First appearing in the March 1956 issue (which featured *Playboy*'s TV Playmate) and disappearing after the April 1956 issue, the television subsection returned to Playboy After Hours in February 1972 with a review of *Elizabeth R.*, "a highbrow serial that won the largest audience in British TV history when it was shown on the BBC."[503] While the review praised the urbanity of *Masterpiece Theatre* host Alistair Cooke and the seamless way in which the segments of the miniseries meshed despite having different writers, it remained lukewarm at best with its assertion that U.S. audiences would require "nothing short of a genealogical chart and a cram session in 16th century English history" in order to identify characters and follow the plot.[504] The review was capped off with the suggestion that U.S. audiences would "probably feel more at home" when an eight-part dramatization of *The Last of the Mohicans* began airing in March. This can be read as a swipe at both the average American television viewer and a swipe at the industry's predilection for Westerns.

The "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" ad that ran in the same issue serves as further evidence that the magazine's attitude toward television and its place in the Playboy lifestyle could hardly be said to have mellowed. On the contrary, the ad, which featured the Playboy man

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[502] A subsection for television reviews appears in Playboy After Hours only four times between November 1955, when the section first appears in the magazine, and December 1972, where the scope of this project terminates. In contrast, reviews of musical recordings appear in every Playboy After Hours section during the time period under examination. Two of the television subsections appear in 1956, and the other two run in 1972. None of these four television subsections provides a wholehearted endorsement for television viewing. The March 1956 "review" recounts being entertained at a party by a comedian who has appeared on television, and although the other reviews praise certain aspects of programs, they also make disparaging remarks about television generally, other programs, or their audiences.

[503] "Playboy After Hours: Television," *Playboy*, February 1972, 38.

[504] Ibid.

diving in a coral reef with two bikini-clad women, unequivocally stated that *Playboy* attracts a different and better audience than television. The ad's text reads:

> A man who experiences life firsthand. One place you won't find him is sitting in front of a television set; he's too busy living to do much looking. Facts: Playboy delivers more men under 50 years of age than any regularly scheduled TV show. And when it comes to men under 35, Playboy outdraws the top prime-time program by 5% Want your ad seen by 13,000,000 affluent, on-the-go males? Schedule it in Playboy.[505]

While the ads touting television ownership by *Playboy* readers belied the fact that there was undoubtedly overlap in the audiences for the magazine and primetime television, the above ad copy made it clear that whatever else watching television might be considered, it was not living. Men in need of relaxation, who were desirable to both advertisers and bikini-clad women, read *Playboy*, which served as a guide for experiencing life firsthand. *Playboy* readers were left with the mixed message that the ownership of color or portable televisions situated them as above average, yet viewership could threaten both their masculinity and their status in a sophisticated taste culture. For the Playboy man, television should be consumed as simply another technological gadget rather than a pastime.

The idea that television is more desirable to own than to watch was reinforced through its inclusion in fantasy blueprints for bachelor pads and electronic entertainment walls. *Playboy* explained the desirability and purpose of the electronic entertainment wall to the Playboy man as follows: "In this electronic age it is both meet and proper that the knowledgeable bachelor should have for his avocational center of attractions an area replete with all the latest electronic inducements to keep him—and whoever he chooses to share his company—indoors."[506] The

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[505] Playboy, "What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?" Advertisement, February 1972, *Playboy*.

[506] "Playboy's Electronic Entertainment Wall," 122.

first mention of an electronic entertainment wall appeared in September 1956 in the magazine's debut in a series of features on bachelor pads. The fantasy blueprints for "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment" include "a fourteen-foot wall faced with two-foot-square primavera panels, with flush-mounted color TV and built-in stereophonic speakers and hi-fi components behind them."[507] While most of this section of the article was devoted to the hi-fi features and functions of the electronic entertainment wall, the installation also included movie and stereo projectors. Although using the color television was never mentioned, its inclusion in this installation illustrated that the Playboy man was on the cutting edge of entertainment technology. At the time, color television sets had been commercially available for less than 2 years and were owned by less than 1% of television households. It seemed to matter little that there were only 216 hours of color network programming during the 1955-1956 season; it was the ability to watch color television and not the actual watching of it that demonstrated leisure competence for the Playboy man.[508] Asserting itself as "no champion of the sedentary life," *Playboy* made it clear that the purposes of these electronic entertainment walls included only "leisurely unwinding," seduction, impressing and entertaining guests, and "mark[ing] the electronically up-to-the-minute urbane life."[509] These entertainment installations were always equipped with more than one screen in order to offer more than one form of visual entertainment, freeing the Playboy man from the broadcast schedule, allowing him to preview what he wished to show on the main screen, or enabling the scanning of "other channels when the plot of the late-night movie

[507] "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," September 1956, 59.

[508] Daniel E. Garvey, "Introducing Color Television: The Audience and Programming Problem," *Journal of Broadcasting* 24, no. 4: 517-519.

[509] "Playboy's Electronic Entertainment Wall," 122, 164.

becomes too depressingly familiar."[510] They also offered him control and flexibility by allowing him to pre-program audio-visual material for the evening's enjoyment. "Playboy's Wonder Wall" suggested that users "may want to start with *Laugh-In*, break for a light show, follow with a video-taped feature film and finish with quiet music."[511] Even for those who could not afford the electronic entertainment wall described, this suggestion for pacing and programming an evening provided the reader with a recipe for a successful evening of sophisticated electronic entertainment. However, a feature on a ready-made "self-contained entertainment center," at the heart of which was an oversized bed, reminded readers that this "assemblage of audio-visual gear...includes *almost* everything you and your bed partner need for an evening of at-home entertainment."[512] Such a reminder served as another caution to readers not to get so caught up with their electronic entertainment that they neglect other, more virile, leisure pursuits.

Television as a Bad Cultural Object

One of the primary concerns *Playboy* expressed about television was the low quality of most programming and the related notion that, as TV critic John Crosby put it in 1961, "it's

[510] The main electronic entertainment wall (there is a smaller version in the master bedroom) in this fantasy blueprint features three color televisions onto which "both 8mm silent and sound movies and 2" x 2" slides (all with a synchronized audio tape) can be electronically projected." "Playboy's Wonder Wall," *Playboy*, November 1971, 201. See also "Playboy Plans a Duplex Penthouse," 233.

[511] "Playboy's Wonder Wall," 201.

[512] This is the only ready-made electronic entertainment installation featured in *Playboy* through 1972. While other articles discussing electronic entertainment walls offer designs featuring the best and most cutting-edge entertainment technology available (or, in some cases, not yet commercially available) at the time, they also encourage readers to customize these plans to fit their spatial and financial limitations. "Switched-On Superwall," *Playboy*, November 1970, 168; emphasis in original.

becoming a medium for the shut-ins and children."[513] While matters of taste certainly factored into the magazine's coverage of the medium, the low quality of television was primarily seen as an institutional problem; the impact of this low quality on popular culture and audience tastes was a secondary effect. That is, in spite of the fact that *Playboy*, as Barbara Ehrenreich claims, "is all about making money and spending it," it repeatedly cited the commercialism of television as the medium's fundamental problem.[514] This commercialism, which was evident in accusations that sponsors and ad agencies treated the cost per thousand index as a bible, meant appealing to the largest audience possible at the expense of quality, originality, and social relevance.[515] *Playboy* and television industry figures writing for the magazine repeatedly claimed that the overemphasis on ratings and appealing to mass audiences by sponsors and networks led to repetitive, formulaic programming; censorship and the avoidance of controversial subjects; and a prioritizing of commercial goods over the public good.

Between 1961 and 1970, *Playboy* published three critical articles about the medium penned by some of the most influential men in the television industry. All of these articles expressed disdain for commercial television's reliance on formula and the economic reasons behind it. In the Playboy Panel on television, David Susskind summarized the problem as follows:

> The increasing, spiraling astronomical costs of television have driven people in their frenzy—the advertising agencies, the sponsors and the networks—to seek the largest audience at the lowest cost. Numbers have become the be-all and end-all of the broadcasting industry. The ratings are the Ten Commandments of our life, and if that be

[513] "The Playboy Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects," *Playboy*, November 1961, 132.

[514] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 50.

[515] Al Morgan, "And Now, a Word from the Sponsor," *Playboy*, December 1959, 112.

> true it would seem that the largest number of millions can be captured by the cheapest kind of programming.[516]

Such financial concerns were exacerbated by producers, like Goodson, who believed that the mass audience and most television programs were mediocre, meaning that the programs and the tastes of the audiences for them fell mostly in the middle of a continuum that ran from terrible to distinguished. Such beliefs allowed producers to argue that they were merely providing audiences with what they wanted. Susskind took issue with Goodson's claims, calling his argument "ancient and rather dull" and arguing that "the *tradition* of the television dial, with some brilliant exceptions" was to either give audiences programming that was mediocre or "shockingly bad." It was not that this was what audiences wanted; it was that audiences have been bred on low quality programming. Susskind went on to explain, "After a while, they become inured to it, they get used to it and they like it."[517] Returning to the disconnect between producers' assumptions about and audiences' actual desires, Susskind asserted:

> This is the real irony, the real anomaly of television—that it is inhabited, populated by fine men, erudite, cultured, educated, who personally pursue interesting, exciting and worthwhile investments of their time. But when they put on their professional clothes in the morning they practice a kind of vocational schizophrenia. They drop off their personal ideals and they drop away their personal tastes and they buy for an unknown, unseen, unidentified *them*….They make a terrible, and I think specious, distinction between themselves and the audience. The real fine producers all through history—theatrical, motion pictures and television—always practiced a single commandment. They tried to please themselves artistically on the theory that what pleased them would perhaps please a large audience. *These* men are pleasing themselves in their own private times, by never turning on their television sets.[518]

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[516] "The Playboy Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects," 38.

[517] Ibid., 36; emphasis in original.

[518] Ibid., 46-47; emphasis in original.

Bound up in these claims were the ideas, expressed elsewhere in *Playboy*'s entertainment coverage, that television was not an interesting, exciting, or worthwhile use of one's time and that television was most pleasing when it's turned off.

These articles also provide evidence of the cycle of blame for this mediocrity, with critics on both sides pointing at the commercial model of television as the culprit, albeit for different reasons. These remarks hinted at an industry operating on a feedback loop that constantly works to reinforce formula, mediocrity, and low quality. The success of one program leads to others like it while reinforcing that mediocrity is what audiences want. Critics like Susskind, Minow, Johnson, and Crosby pointed their fingers at an industry too intent on serving corporate interests to bother with programming for a minority audience. At the same time, some industry executives blamed the low quality of programs on the mass audience's taste and the industry's need to appeal to it. In a December 1959 *Playboy* article, Al Morgan summarized the problem as follows, "[The sponsors] don't want to offend anybody and it is one of the odd axioms of this world that if you start out not to offend anybody you frequently wind up not pleasing anybody either."[519] Cartoons and other humor pieces that lampooned television's tendency toward repetition and tried and true programming formulas reinforce such criticism. For example, an August 1963 cartoon depicts a man on an analyst's couch confiding, "I'm a TV producer. My dreams are having summer repeats."[520]

The most well known (and reportedly well-received) humorous send up of the repetition of television was the "Teevee Jeebies" series created by Shel Silverstein. This series ran for 29

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[519] Morgan, "And Now, a Word," 98, 111; Dennis Hevesi, "Al Morgan, Novelist, Playwright and Television Producer, Is Dead at 91," *The New York Times*, March 14, 2011.

[520] Al Ross, "Cartoon, " *Playboy*, August 1963, 126.

installments between July 1959 and October 1966, including naturally one installment titled "The Wonderful World of Teevee Jeebies." [521] Due to the overwhelming popularity of the series, Playboy published two collections of it, with the first collection appearing in 1963 and the second in 1965. "Teevee Jeebies" consists of a series of stills from late-night movies to which humorous captions have been added. The edges of the pictures are rounded to give the impression that one is viewing them on a television screen. However, the introductory text accompanying the first installment encouraged readers to think of "Teevee Jeebies" as more than a piece of printed satire; it was a game that readers could play at home in order to make television viewing both more active and enjoyable. The rules were as follows: "Turn down the audio, and create your own scenario for the stirring scenes that move across your screen. (If you turn off the video as well, you may improve matters further, but you won't be playing the game.)"[522] The parenthetical addendum to the rules made it clear that the low quality of television fare was a pervasive problem. Although introductory comments were dropped once the series was established, those installments that did explain the purpose of the series suggested that playing "Teevee Jeebies" might provide some relief "next time you're being etherized by the not-so-magic box."[523] Just as Abrahamson argues that the purchase of luxury goods may be seen

[521] Silverstein, "The Wonderful World of Teevee Jeebies," *Playboy*, September 1964, 174.

[522] Thompson also discusses "Teevee Jeebies" as a way to make viewing more active. See Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 96. Silverstein, "Teevee Jeebies," *Playboy*, July 1959, 77.

[523] Ibid.; Silverstein, "More Teevee Jeebies," *Playboy*, January 1960, 69; Silverstein, "Son of Teevee Jeebies," *Playboy*, March 1961, 99; Silverstein, "Bride of Teevee Jeebies," *Playboy*, July 1961, 89; Silverstein, "The Return of Teevee Jeebies," *Playboy*, November 1961, 127.

as a form of protest against mass consumption, *Playboy* was also arguing, in part, that satirizing television might be considered one form of protest against the medium.

Intimately tied to the issue of television's reliance on formula was the issue of sponsor control and censorship of programming. As Minow explained in 1968, the financial model of commercial television meant that it "has limited opportunity to offer programs appealing to small audiences or to that side in the mass audience that occasionally yearns for something different."[524] The endless drive to attract the largest audience possible meant avoiding topics that may stir any controversy, which also meant failing to address topics of social relevance such as integration. Preoccupation with the cost-per-thousand index on the part of sponsors meant that anything but the highest ratings were considered failures. Susskind called this perspective "insanity," and insisted that the quality of television could be improved if sponsors and the industry could "begin to realize that nine and fourteen million are not *no* people….It is a terribly important segment of the population."[525]

In addition to being an economic concern, the avoidance of controversy by the television industry and its sponsors was also indicative of the Cold War political climate. Frankenheimer described the political and economic reasons behind sponsor control as follows:

> But gradually, as the cost of television programming became greater, the advertiser got more and more cautious, and also as the climate of fear began to hit this country with Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee and all those pressure groups—you know, fear began to be more and more of a problem. In every area, not only television. There began to be, in a sense, almost a form of mental isolationism, so that gradually more and more advertisers decided that they really

[524] Newton Minow, "Must the Tedium Be the Message?" *Playboy*, July 1968, 117.

[525] "The Playboy Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects," 42; emphasis in original.

> couldn't do anything controversial at all because more and more of these pressure groups would write."[526]

Frankenheimer experienced this fear-induced censorship firsthand as a director for *Playhouse 90*. In 1958, Frankenheimer directed *A Town Has Turned to* Dust, a drama concerning the lynching of a Mexican boy written by Rod Serling. In a 1958 profile of the director in *Playboy*, Frankenheimer recounted that he had to fight the sponsors for 10 months before the program was finally aired.[527]

Morgan also addressed Frankenheimer's experience, and those of other writers, producers, and directors, with sponsor censorship in an article on the topic in the December 1959 issue of *Playboy*. Morgan painted a dystopian view of the situation, repeatedly referring to sponsors as Big Brother and providing numerous examples of sponsor interference with programming, ranging from the absurd (e.g., removing the Chrysler Building from the New York City skyline in a program sponsored by Ford) to the socially irresponsible. *Noon on Doomsday*, another Rod Serling-scripted drama about lynching, is a good example of the latter. The original script told a story inspired by that of Emmett Till, an African-American teenager who, in 1955 while visiting relatives in Mississippi, was tortured and savagely beaten to death by two white men for allegedly whistling at a white woman. By the time the program aired, the cast contained no African Americans, the location had been changed to New England, and all references that might be interpreted as Southern were removed. It was exactly this type of sponsor interference

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[526] At the end of the article, Morgan likens the control of sponsors over media content to that of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda. Ibid., 39-40, 115.

[527] "On the Scene: John Frankenheimer," *Playboy*, December 1958, 62.

that led Morgan to claim television "is an industry that may have the all-time patent on timidity and fear."[528]

While *Playboy* celebrated those writers and producers, such as Frankenheimer, Serling, and Susskind, who are willing to fight with sponsors in an attempt to promote high quality, socially conscious programming, Morgan's article made it clear that even men of as high a stature as these three were often forced to compromise with, if not outright defeated by, the unprecedented power of sponsors. Due to the overwhelming challenge of making a program that addressed issues, such as race relations, Morgan noted that many writers simply stopped submitting scripts about such issues.[529] In fact, Boddy notes that the *First Interim Report* published in 1960 by the FCC office of network study found that "the widespread self-censorship practiced by television writers and producers" was more significant than explicit censorship.[530] This avoidance of socially relevant issues by sponsors, and eventually also by writers and producers, reinforced discourses surrounding the trivial nature of television programming and the low-tastes of audiences.

Improving Television Content

While much of the coverage of television found its impact to be negative, *Playboy* and its contributors were not short of suggestions for how to improve the medium. Even the most critical articles demonstrated a desire for a television industry that could serve both corporate and public interests. As one means to that end, critics, such as Seldes and Johnson, suggested that

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[528] Morgan, "And Now, A Word," 95, 98.

[529] Ibid., 98.

[530] Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 203.

purposive television programming could help raise the overall cultural tastes of audiences. Since *Playboy*'s taste culture was built upon distinguishing itself from the unsophisticated mass audience, the magazine and its contributors were also outspoken proponents of programming for minority audiences. Public television, home video technologies, and cable television were portrayed as promising outlets for programs that were willing to take on controversial issues, showcase dissenting voices, and promote topics of special interest. Additionally, *Playboy* found most television to be lacking in sex appeal. While the promotion of more sex on television by a magazine known for nude or semi-nude centerfolds may seem unsurprising at best or objectifying and misogynist at worst, *Playboy* saw the censorship of sex on television as indicative of the country's Puritanism, which Hefner railed against in his 23-part series on "The Playboy Philosophy." In the third installment, he argued that publishers and producers were strongly pressured into making media "'suitable for children' or 'entertainment for the entire family.'" He went on to assert:

> And the net effect of that, of course, is a society in which much of our popular culture and communication is strained to a thinness (all meat removed and sweetener added) pleasant to the taste and easily digested by children….Instead of raising children in an adult world, with adult tastes, interests and opinions prevailing, we prefer to live much of our lives in a make-believe children's world.[531]

For *Playboy*, then, the effects of low-quality, unsophisticated television were not just emasculating, they were also infantilizing.

It is evident from the testimony advertising executives gave at the 1959 FCC hearing on network programming that the sponsors and critics were working from different definitions of taste.[532] For advertising agencies, good taste meant creating inoffensive entertainment

[531] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, February 1963, 47.

[532] See "How Big a Stick Agencies Swing," *Broadcasting* 57, no. 2 (1959): 31+.

appropriate for a family audience. In other words, good taste upholds the corporate interests of the client by maintaining favorable associations with the client's products while attracting the largest audience possible. On the other hand, for critics, such as *Playboy*, good taste was a means of defining and distinguishing one's cultural identity, a way of claiming membership in a class audience rather than a mass audience. While *Playboy*'s critical coverage of television touches on some of the issues surrounding "the association between television, art, and cultural uplift" that has existed since the advent of the medium, it also held that the quality of programming and tastes of audiences could be elevated without succumbing to "pure eggheadism."[533] Susskind, fearing that critics like Seldes wished to "turn television into symphony, ballet, and Shakespeare," called for a more balanced television programming diet; one that uses such quality arts programming to counterbalance lower quality programs with mass appeal. However, Seldes proposed a different approach than Susskind suggested, an approach concerned with improving the overall quality of television no matter the type of program. Seldes claimed, "If I had to make a choice between improving the quality of the Westerns and adding ten percent of Shakespeare, I would say improve the quality of the Westerns."[534] This model of constant improvement held that a mass audience that had become inured to mediocrity was also capable of learning to like and demand higher quality programming whereas Susskind's suggestion of a balanced programming diet was the cultural equivalent of pleading with the audience to eat more vegetables.

Minow's optimism about the promise of public television, which had been created as a national service by the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, illustrates that appealing to minority

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[533] Spigel, *TV by Design,* 2; "The Playboy Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects," 37.

[534] "The Playboy Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects," 37.

audiences and not shying away from controversy or dissent were held by critics of commercial television as key means of improving the overall quality of programming.[535] Since public television was not beholden to a financial model centered around corporate sponsorship and ratings and because of its mandate to act in the public interest, critics of commercial television lauded public television's ability to cater to the interests and concerns of minority audiences. Minow cautioned, "To be truly exciting, PTV will have to avoid the temptation in any publicly supported medium to play it safe, to make culture uniform and to strengthen majority consensus. PTV will not simply have to make space for the radicals and dissenters (of any persuasion), it will have to actively seek them out."[536]

Sophisticated, Masculine Viewing

This is not to suggest that *Playboy* did not promote some types of television as acceptably sophisticated and masculine for its readers. The types of programming most often endorsed by *Playboy* included news, sports, anything with sex appeal, and sophisticated comedy and drama. *Playboy*'s first article about television appeared in its second issue and provided readers with instructions for how to score a televised boxing match at home. The main purpose of the article was to give readers the leisure competence necessary to make watching a televised boxing match more active and enjoyable, thereby distancing the Playboy man from the stereotype of the passive viewer.[537] The first article to be categorized as about television in *Playboy* appeared in the February 1955 issue. The article, which was mostly a pictorial spread of stills of Voluptua, a

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[535] Patricia Aufderheide, "Public Television," in *Encyclopedia of Television*, ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1854-1855.

[536] Minow, "Must the Tedium," 200.

[537] "Scoring a TV Fight," *Playboy*, January 1954, 17-18.

statuesque blonde who hosted a program of old romance films for Hollywood's KABC-TV, begins, "It's 9:30 p.m. in Hollywood and you're seated before your television set, sipping at a scotch and wondering whether you should jump in your Jaguar and take a tour around town in search of something exciting, when just what you had in mind unexpectedly appears on the screen."[538] In a single sentence, *Playboy* conjured the image of the Playboy man; that is, a man with class tastes and the financial ability to fulfill them (as evidenced by the scotch and Jaguar at his disposal) who finds women a far more exciting pursuit than watching television. Providing her height, weight, and measurements, the article also made it clear that, on the rare occasion that television showed a woman or program with sex appeal, watching such programming could provide suitable entertainment for a man in need of a relaxing evening at home alone. However, television reviews and profiles of and interviews with industry figures indicate that *Playboy*'s tastes generally ran to more sophisticated entertainment, such as the socially conscious comedy offered by *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* or *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*. Thompson characterizes these programs in particular as "key programs where viewers could find parodic and sometimes controversial takes on current events while the majority of television entertainment ignored the social upheavals of the 1960s."[539]

Examining the relationship between parody and taste in U.S. postwar television, Thompson asserts, "a taste for parody allowed one to take pleasure in TV, meanwhile signaling one wasn't totally *taken in* by it."[540] As one of the few scholars to examine the relationship

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[538] A March 1960 article promoting Playboy's first television venture, *Playboy's Penthouse*, is the only other article that appears under the television category through 1972. See "Playboy's TV Penthouse," *Playboy*, March 1960. "Voluptua," *Playboy*, February 1955, 41.

[539] Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 5.

[540] Ibid., 4; emphasis in the original.

between *Playboy* and television in the postwar period, he argues that the scant television coverage in the magazine combined with "the urbane and varied performances of *Playboy's Penthouse*" created a "model for masculine, sophisticated 'seeing.'"[541] He argues that the magazine's negotiation of its relationship to television helped men conceptualize their own identities in relation to mass culture. That is, the Playboy could distance himself from the low- and middlebrow masses even while watching television by learning how to watch television differently from the masses.[542]

Beyond providing readers with a way to distance themselves from ordinary television and the mass audience viewing it, *Playboy*'s "very specific agenda in relation to promoting parody and satire as sophisticated TV and appropriate material for masculine watching" spoke to the

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[541] Thompson argues that this sophisticated way of seeing is the result of developing a parodic sensibility, which provided readers with strategies that enabled them to enjoy low quality television that would otherwise be excluded from Playboy's taste culture. Although Thompson has chosen to characterize Playboy's relationship to television as parodic, I have chosen to classify it as satiric. First of all, satire or, the more generic, humor are the labels that the magazine most often uses to categorize its pieces poking fun at television. Secondly, while parody suits the content Thompson covers and is the focus of his larger project, I find that it is too narrow a category to encompass the wider chronological and textual scope of my analysis. Elsewhere, Thompson, along with Jonathan Gray and Jeffrey P. Jones, argues that the primary difference between parody and satire is that parody draws on textual conventions while satire draws on social ones. Thompson argues that this line became blurred during the 1950s and chooses to use parody as the blanket term for the encoding and decoding practices he examines. However, for my purposes, satire provides a more accurate categorization for *Playboy*'s approach to television since parody can be a tool used in satire and because *Playboy*'s ridicule of television is not purely textual and frequently passes judgment on the industry and gender, taste, and class associations with the medium. Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson, "The State of Satire, the Satire of the State," in *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, eds. Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 17; Thompson, "The Parodic Sensibility," 286; Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 10, 80.

[542] Thompson, "The Parodic Sensibility," 289.

larger role of humor in Playboy's taste culture.[543] Humor, and satire in particular, are key components of *Playboy*'s editorial persona even when television is not the object of ridicule. While the humor in *Playboy*'s cartoons and articles frequently tended toward the blue, the television shows and figures it endorsed indicate a deeper appreciation for sophisticated comedy. *Playboy*'s affinity for satire is unsurprising given that the magazine's editorial credo was founded on bucking the social conventions regarding how both masculinity and entertainment are defined. Furthermore, "satire demands a heightened state of awareness and mental participation in its audience (not to mention knowledge)."[544] In other words, consuming satire as entertainment requires its own form of leisure competence.

Through 1972, half of *Playboy*'s articles and profiles featuring specific programs or performers showcase comedies or comedians. As alluded to previously, the most column space and hardiest endorsements are given to *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* (1968-1973) and *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* (1967-1969). Much like *Playboy*, these shows were known for having both mass appeal and taking on controversial issues and espousing anti-establishment views. Both series were also appealing to a different kind of viewer; rather than attracting viewers away from other programs, they were attracting viewers who had previously shunned television. These programs also attracted affluent, educated, professional viewers, who mostly lived in major cities, which means there was a large overlap between the demographics of their audiences and those of *Playboy*'s.[545] Unwittingly echoing Susskind's claim that the best

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[543] Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 89.

[544] Gray, Jones, and Thompson, *Satire TV*, 15.

[545] In 1969, when *Playboy* published its interview with Rowan and Martin, *Laugh-In* had 45,000,000 viewers. It should also be noted that *Playboy*'s article about *The Comedy Hour* was also published in 1969, meaning, in part, that the series received no substantial coverage in

producers follow the single commandment of creating programming to please themselves, Dan Rowan told *Playboy*'s interviewer, Assistant Editor Harold Ramis, that while they were glad the public liked their show, it was something that they were making as a personal statement for themselves, and this, Rowan, asserted was the key to good programming.

In addition to depicting the ways that television was incongruous with the Playboy lifestyle, the magazine's cartoons occasionally offered qualified endorsements for masculine viewing practices. Out of the 103 cartoons concerning television examined, only 13 depict what the men are watching and portray these viewers' masculinity as firmly intact. Of these 13 cartoons, 3 show men watching news or current affairs programming, 5 show men watching showgirls or beauty pageant contestants, and the remaining 5 show men watching sports. Such programs were consistent with the types of television content promoted elsewhere in the magazine. A cartoon in the October 1970 issue illustrates that *Playboy*'s cartoons that depict masculine viewership were often about pastimes other than television watching. The cartoon depicts a man watching a football game while smoking a cigar in his recliner. His son stands next to him, also watching the game. The father says, "Remember, son, it's not whether they win or lose. It's the point spread" (fig. 36). Gambling, rather than television, was the pastime promoted by the cartoon due, in part, to the fact that betting adds another dimension of leisure competence to watching televised sports, which already demands an understanding of rules and

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Playboy until after its cancellation. The series did garner a brief mention in the Playboy After Hours section of the October 1968 issue, and Tommy Smothers was a guest on two episodes of *Playboy After Dark* that aired in early 1969. *Playboy After Dark*, an update of *Playboy's Penthouse*, debuted in January 1969, and given the nature of the program and *Playboy*'s relationship to television, the corporation had much to gain by associating itself with these two popular, yet still anti-establishment programs. David Bianculli, *Dangerously Funny: The Uncensored Story of "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*" (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 255; Richard Warren Lewis, "St. Thomas and the Dragon," *Playboy*, August 1969, 189; "Playboy Interview: Rowan and Martin," *Playboy*, October 1969, 98; "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy*, January 1969, 204; "Playboy After Hours," *Playboy*, October 1968, 25.

strategy pertaining to the sports themselves. Two other cartoons involve homosocial bonding over a wardrobe malfunction or otherwise disrobed woman on live television. Such cartoons were consistent with *Playboy*'s calls for more sex on television. An additional seven cartoons published between 1954 and 1972 depict *Playboy*'s desire to see more sex on television even though they do not depict anyone watching television. These cartoons are often set in television studios where sexual acts are being or have just been broadcast. One such cartoon, published in the September 1957 issue, made the connection between *Playboy* and sex on television even more explicit by marking the camera as belonging to HEF-TV.[546] Although most of the cartoons addressing this theme were published in the late 1960s and early 1970s, reflecting the changing sexual mores of U.S. society, these early examples demonstrate that television's lack of sex appeal was a concern of *Playboy*'s since both the magazine's and television's earliest days as widespread commercial media.

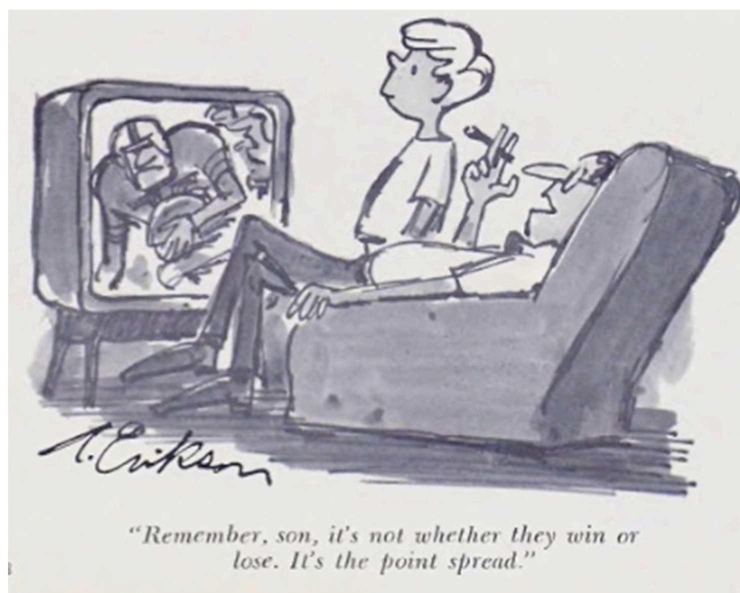

Figure 36. "Remember, son, it's not whether they win or lose. It's the point spread."
Source: Erikson, *Playboy*, October 1970, 188.

[546] Dempsey, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, September 1957, 31. See also Harris, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, January 1972, 277; and Bernard Kliban, "Cartoon," *Playboy*, January 1967, 237.

Regardless of how sophisticated or masculine the programming, many cartoons and other pieces of commentary concerning television in *Playboy* indicated that sex was always a more desirable alternative to television. In a November 1970 cartoon, a young couple lays nude on a couch in front of a television, looking at each other knowingly with satisfied smiles. The sportscaster on the television, says, "Ah, the pomp, color and excitement of college football! What <u>better</u> way to spend an autumn afternoon?" (fig. 37). While several other cartoons depict watching television as an acceptable post-coital activity for men, this and similar cartoons depict television as a brief distraction and reinforce that even after sex, more sex is still a better alternative than television.

Figure 37. "Ah, the pomp, color and excitement of college football! What <u>better</u> way to spend an autumn afternoon?"
Source: Marty Murphy, *Playboy*, November 1970, 192.

Playboy also utilized the centerfold to distance television from sex and reinforced that television was hi-fi's technological opposite. Numerous hi-fi centerfolds demonstrated the desirability of women interested in sophisticated entertainment technologies along with hi-fi's ability to attract desirable women, but *Playboy*'s few television centerfolds tell a different story. While it was common for the text accompanying the Playmate of the Month centerfold to

mention the woman's taste in music and other leisure pursuits, when television was mentioned at all, it was either because the model was an aspiring actress who had had some minor television parts or it was used as another opportunity to disparage viewership as a pastime. Of the two centerfolds that visually reference television, one shows the model holding a strategically placed television script as she stands nude in the doorway to her dressing room. One of *Playboy*'s harshest indictments of television appeared in the March 1956 centerfold spread featuring "Playboy's TV Playmate." Playmate Marian Stafford was an aspiring actress whose television experience at the time of publication had "been confined to smiling prettily in commercials" and working as "a human test pattern on color television." In her centerfold photograph, which was remarked upon approvingly in reader letters for both Stafford's beauty and *Playboy's* transition to a three-page gatefold layout, Miss Stafford smiles broadly as she gleefully tears a copy of *TV Guide* in half.[547] (fig. 38) These television centerfolds demonstrated that the perfect Playmate was one who also did not have much time for or interest in watching television. A representative of *TV Guide*'s Midwest publisher reiterated this point in a letter to the editor. He wrote, "We were very proud to note a copy of *TV Guide* in the hands of the loveliest female we have ever seen…Our beloved magazine is pictured being torn in half and we should be highly incensed at

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[547] Thompson claims this centerfold is an endorsement of feminine viewing practices, writing, "Miss March smiles at the camera while holding a copy of *TV Guide* below her open night gown. As we might expect, Miss March, in addition to being an aspiring actress and human test pattern, was also a television viewer herself. She poses reading *TV Guide*, no doubt searching for her passive feminine entertainments even as she remains the object for the active male gaze." However, the intended anti-television message of the photograph is quite clear, and subsequent letters to the editor corroborate that contemporary readers received this message. "Playboy's TV Playmate," *Playboy*, March 1956, 35-38; Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 91.

such treatment, but we are the first to admit that we and any other male in his right mind would rather spend our playtime with this Playmate than watch TV or study our magazine."[548]

Figure 38. Marian Stafford, *Playboy*'s TV Playmate.
Source: "Playboy's TV Playmate," *Playboy*, March 1956, 36-38. Photo by Ruth Sondak.

***Playboy* on Television**

Despite the myriad problems that television posed for *Playboy*, the medium held a promise of audience and, more importantly, advertiser reach that the magazine could not resist. *Playboy's Penthouse* (1959-1961), the first of two Playboy-produced and Hefner-hosted television variety shows, was created to both promote and improve the image of the magazine. In a 2002 interview, Hefner explained his company's embrace of television as follows, "By the end of the fifties, we had reached a circulation of a million copies a month…but because of the nudity, we were not getting advertising. And I thought doing the show would open that door, and it did."[549] The primary reason that *Playboy's Penthouse* and, as Hefner pointed out in a

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[548] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, June 1956, 5.

[549] Barbara Dixon, "Conversation with Hugh Hefner," (The Museum of Television and Radio Seminar Series, The Museum of Television and Radio [now The Paley Center for Media], Los Angeles, CA, June 26, 2002), The Paley Center for Media, New York City.

2006 interview, the opening of the Playboy Clubs gave legitimacy to the magazine was because Hefner and his production team worked hard to distinguish the variety show from ordinary television. Thompson argues that this distinction and distancing was necessary because the masculinity proffered by Playboy was "frequently at odds with television's dominant presentation of the American male," and as Thompson and I both demonstrate, this version of masculinity was also at odds with much of the rest of what network television had to offer.[550] The magazine's television coverage set the Playboy man up as an "anti-TV TV watcher;" as Spigel explains, these were "people who watched only certain shows they felt were entirely different from the rest of TV."[551] The format of *Playboy's Penthouse* was that of a party being held in Hefner's penthouse apartment. Playmates and other attractive extras mingled with guests that included Playboy executives, musicians, comedians, authors, actors, and many other show business luminaries. Guests drank real cocktails, and interviews were intended to appear as casual party conversation.

Another way that Playboy distanced itself from ordinary television was through its attraction of a class audience. Promoted as "*Playboy* on television," *Playboy's Penthouse*, with its sophisticated entertainment, was able to demonstrate to previously reluctant advertisers that its television and print fanbase had "more discerning tastes than average consumers." As Spigel goes on to explain, sponsors considered class audiences "to be willing to spend discretionary income on those tastes."[552] The status of Playboy's audience as a class one was reinforced by the

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[550] Thompson, "The Parodic Sensibility," 285; "Interview with Hugh Hefner 2006."

[551] Spigel, *TV by Design*, 200.

[552] *Playboy's Penthouse*, "Playboy on Television," Advertisement, February 1960, *Playboy*; Ibid., 28.

initial success of the Playboy Clubs. Even though anyone meeting the minimum age requirement who could pass a credit check and afford $50 (later reduced to $25) to cover the lifetime membership was eligible for a Playboy Club key, the Clubs' members-only status and their association with the magazine gave them an air of exclusivity and distinguished them from other nightclubs. One feature that distinguished the original Chicago Playboy Club from other key and nightclubs was a room patterned after *Playboy's Penthouse*'s television set.[553]

The series premiered on October 24, 1959, and cost over a quarter of a million dollars to produce with a considerable amount of the budget going towards set construction. In a March 1960 article promoting the show, *Playboy* stated, "What appeared to be a handsome bachelor apartment was actually an elaborate set in a TV studio of WBKB Chicago, complete with wood-burning fireplace, fish tank and an electronic entertainment wall that included stereo hi-fi, panels that hid both television and a movie screen, and a revolving bookcase that turned into a bar."[554] Each episode began with Hefner welcoming guests, both in the studio and at home, as they exited the elevator and entered a seemingly intimate and exclusive party in his penthouse apartment. The set along with appearances by guests, like Lenny Bruce and Sammy Davis, Jr., who had or would be the subjects of *Playboy* profiles or interviews brought the Playboy lifestyle into viewers' homes and provided people with a new way to experience the brand and its values.[555] Despite paying scale to performers, the series was able to attract a lot of topflight talent. Guests were recruited when they came through town to perform in one of Chicago's

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[553] "The Playboy Club," 42.

[554] Brady, *Hefner*, 128; Goldberg, *Big Bunny*, 43-46. Inside Stuff—Radio-TV, *Variety*, October 7, 1959, 60; "Playboy's TV Penthouse," 41.

[555] Gunelius, *Building Brand Value*, 29.

many nightclubs, and the series was shot throughout the entirety of the day, with performances filmed when the performers were available, and then edited for broadcast.[556]

Playboy had several reasons for making the series as a first-run syndication. First of all, securing a sponsor for the series would have been challenging given the difficulty the magazine was having convincing advertisers of its legitimacy. Hefner's hands-on approach to the magazine would translate to the series, and given *Playboy*'s intolerance for network or sponsor censorship, syndication provided the company with a means of maintaining control over the content, ensuring that the series would be an accurate reflection of Playboy's taste culture and lifestyle. Furthermore, the centrality of jazz to the Playboy lifestyle and the intimate party setting of the series meant that the show would regularly feature black guests commingling with white ones, a prospect that virtually guaranteed that the series would not be picked up in the South. In an article appearing in *Variety* on February 10, 1960, promotion manager Victor Lownes III charged that Playboy was being actively discriminated against in the South. Of the 16 markets that had picked up the series, only one—Fort Worth, Texas—was in the South. Reportedly, at least one station manager feared fraternization on the show would lead to his transmitter being "turned into a fiery cross."[557] While in later interviews, Hefner seems to take the series' rejection in the South as a point of pride, he took less credit for integrating the series in his 2002 interview at the Museum of Television and Radio. He explained:

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[556] "2006 Interview with Hugh Hefner."; Dixon, "Conversation with Hugh Hefner."

[557] A February 1960 ad for the series indicates that the initial run of *Playboy's Penthouse* was aired in the following markets: Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Spokane, Baltimore, Kansas City, Fort Worth, Cleveland, St. Louis, and was scheduled to appear soon in other cities. By late 1960, *Playboy's Penthouse* had acquired a Canadian distributor, Telefilm of Canada. "Charge Discrimination on 'Playboy's Penthouse,'" *Variety*, February 10, 1960, 30; *Playboy's Penthouse*, *Advertisement*, January 1961, *Playboy*; *Playboy's Penthouse*, "Playboy on Television."

> It isn't a matter really of taking credit for it because it was the way I was raised. I grew up on jazz, and I think that the first color barrier really got broken down by jazz music. I used to go to the black and tan clubs on the South Side where the audience was mixed, and I simply grew up that way. So when I was throwing a party in my home or on television, it was black and white—it always was.[558]

Scholars, such as Murray Forman, have documented both the necessity and desirability of African American musical performance on early television along with controversies surrounding the mixing of black and white guests and performers and barriers to African American television hosts. The mixing of races on television by 1959 was not as uncommon as Hefner sometimes makes it out to be in interviews; however, the intimate, domestic setting and private party atmosphere set *Playboy's Penthouse* apart from other variety shows where the occasional black performer entertained a majority white studio or home audience. While acknowledging that the racial and sexual relations depicted on *Playboy's Penthouse* "were entirely symptomatic of the moment," Spigel argues that due to "the history of taboos around mixed race performances on television, the show must have appeared radical for its time."[559]

Playboy's Penthouse, which ran for 32 installments over two seasons before Playboy's money and attention was given over to the establishment of more Clubs, received mixed reviews from critics.[560] Hefner was often criticized for his stiffness as a host, and several critics noted

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[558] Dixon, "Conversation with Hugh Hefner."

[559] For discussions of racial relations on an episode of *Playboy's Penthouse* featuring Dizzy Gillespie, see Robert K. McMichael, "We Insist—Freedom Now! Black Moral Authority, Jazz, and the Changeable Shape of Whiteness," *American Music* 16, no. 4 (1998): 375-416; and Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 86. Spigel, *TV by Design*, 56.

[560] In Hefner's 2002 interview with the Museum of Television and Radio, it is claimed that 32 episodes were filmed, but most sources seem to back up the claim that there were only 26. Indeed, in the fall of 1960, full-page ads appeared in *Variety* and *Broadcasting* offering up 26 new, one-hour episodes for syndication. However, some of these 26 installments were edited versions of the original run of episodes, which had lasted 90 minutes, and it was reported that six to twelve of these 26 episodes would be completely new and that filming of new episodes had

that the extras failed to convince home audiences that they were having any fun.[561] There are occasionally lulls in conversation and action during the series and its later incarnation, which is something one would expect from a real party or a night on the town, but not from an edited television program. A review of the series premiere that appeared in *Variety* labeled the episode as "not a complete fiasco," but condemned the amount of tastelessness "perpetrated in the name of sophistication."[562] Thompson argues that such negative reviews were actually a sign of the show's success, stating, "this tastelessness was deemed appropriate to *Playboy*'s cultivation of a sophisticated—but not traditionally highbrow—taste. This negative review signifies that the program successfully broke the mass-market tastes endorsed by *Variety*, and as a syndicated program independently produced in Chicago, further threatened the Hollywood status quo."[563] As *Playboy's* examinations of the television industry made clear, good taste, for sponsors and networks, often meant programming that was family appropriate, so being proclaimed as tasteless in this sense was desirable for Playboy. Such criticism had been lobbed at the magazine, and subsequently shrugged off by Hefner, for years, and Hefner made it clear from the first issue that his magazine was not intended for women or children. In a 1956 interview with

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begun by May 1960. Although it was reported that *Playboy's Penthouse* would stop airing in February 1960, Official Films stepped in to handle distribution for the 1960 television season. Dixon, "Conversation with Hugh Hefner"; "OF, Playboy Mag Syndication Pact," *Variety*, July 27, 1960, 28; "'Penthouse' to Get '60-'61 Reprieve," *Variety*, May 4, 1960, 27; *Playboy's Penthouse*, Advertisement, September 26, 1960, *Broadcasting*; *Playboy's Penthouse*, Advertisement, September 21, 1960, *Variety*; "'Playboy's Penthouse' $100,000 in the Red, Goes Off in 3 Weeks," *Variety*, January 20, 1960, 35.

[561] Les. "TV-Film: Syndication Review: Playboy's Penthouse," *Variety*, September 21, 1960, 28; "Playboy's More Polished," *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 21, 1960.

[562] Les. "Radio-Television: Television Reviews: Playboy's Penthouse," *Variety*, November 4, 1959, 42.

[563] Thompson, *Parody and Taste*, 86.

Mike Wallace, Hefner defended *Playboy* by explaining that the publication was "aiming at a very specialized audience—literate, urban, and adult male—we recognize the publication is not suited in all ways to mom and the kiddies, and we don't think it would be an honest job if it were."[564] For *Variety*, giving over a large portion of the show to comedian Lenny Bruce's attempts at breaking broadcast taboos was not only tasteless but also a waste of time; e.g., the comedian, while resisting the label of his comedy as "sick," made an extended production out of blowing his nose on television. For Playboy, however, this "was hip and inside humor, the sort not often found on TV," and the show as a whole represented "the kind of fresh and offbeat programming that TV needs."[565] It also demonstrated that the series was doing an honest job as a televersion of the magazine.

In fall 1968, Playboy revived the series as *Playboy After Dark,* or *P.A.D.* While the new series was taped in color at CBS Studios Television City in Los Angeles, little else about the format changed.[566] Hefner, who had retreated from public life and rarely left the Playboy Mansion for most of the sixties, returned as host, and as with the earlier variety-party series, some critics noted his stiffness and the "forced frivolity" of the show. *Washington Post* TV critic Lawrence Laurent quipped, "As a TV personality-host he succeeds in the impossible: He

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[564] *Night Beat*.

[565] "Playboy's TV Penthouse," 41; "Playboy's Penthouse," *Playboy After Dark*, volume 1, disc 1.

[566] For the filming of its second season, *Playboy After Dark* moved to Gene Autry's KTAL-TV studios in Los Angeles. This series received wider distribution than *Playboy's Penthouse*; an advertisement from July 1970 indicates that the series was then airing in 45 markets, including several in the South. *Playboy After Dark*, Advertisement, July 27, 1970, *Broadcasting*; "Shows: 1968," *CBS Television City*, accessed October 30, 2015, http://www.cbstelevisioncity.com/shows#.

makes Ed Sullivan seem animated and witty."[567] Such criticism was not completely unfounded; for example, Hefner's formal attire, which was the norm on *Playboy's Penthouse*, made him appear out of place and uncharacteristically prim among guests who had embraced more relaxed and colorful contemporary fashions. Although *Playboy After Dark*, like *Playboy's Penthouse* before it, showcased many jazz and folk standards, changing musical tastes meant that the series also featured a number of irresistibly danceable R&B and rock performances. Additionally, the hiring of a lead dancer and creation of a rumpus room on the set, where bands performed while guests danced, made the party atmosphere and fun being had on the latter series much more convincing than that on the former. However, the generally labored laughter of the extras during segments featuring comedians did contribute to an air of forced frivolity.

In spite of such criticisms and the fact that *Playboy After Dark* also paid its guests scale, the series continued to attract top talent, including rock bands such as The Grateful Dead and Canned Heat; R&B chart-toppers like James Brown and the Ike and Tina Turner Revue; and hip comedians, such as Tommy Smothers and George Carlin. Such guests were largely an attempt to demonstrate that the Playboy lifestyle was still culturally relevant and attract a younger audience to both the magazine and the Clubs. Nevertheless, the updated series garnered more positive, yet still mixed, reviews and achieved better ratings than its predecessor. Hefner wanted the series to have "higher production values than any other late night show," and the company spent nearly $30,000 to produce each episode.[568] While some reviewers did note the show's solid production, *P.A.D.* also benefitted from the popularity of other sophisticated series, such as *Laugh-In* and

[567] Dixon, "Conversation with Hugh Hefner"; Lawrence Laurent, "Playboy After Dark," *The Washington Post*, July 3, 1969.

[568] Warga, "Hefner Hops Aboard."

The Comedy Hour, and Hefner's own celebrity status. At the time *Playboy's Penthouse* began airing, Hefner had yet to embrace the playboy lifestyle to his fullest capacity. Although he had gained some recognition as the Editor-Publisher of a highly successful and controversial magazine, he had yet to transform himself into Mr. Playboy.

Articles in the trade press and Playboy's own ads for the series played up the masculine appeal of P*.A.D.* For example, a trade press article from 1969 contended that the series, "seems to have recaptured TV's 'lost audience'—that is, men in the age group 18 to 49. The latest ARB figures show that in New York the series reached 65 of these men in every 100 homes tuned into 'Playboy'—considerably more than the average evening network program, which reached 38 men per 100 homes in November and December."[569] As with *Playboy's Penthouse* before it, it was the sense of place created by the elaborate construction of a convincing penthouse pad within a television studio upon which critics most frequently and positively remarked. Columnists from the *Chicago Tribune* repeatedly likened the setting to "the swinging parties he throws at his Chicago mansion," and a *Variety* review stated that "the background is a refreshing change from ordinary TV variety."[570] Hefner partially explained the sense of place created by the set as follows, "Television is much more intimate, and we'll be intimate, too. We're doing the show in a plush study copied from the mansion with pretty bunnies who will not be in costume."[571] Despite touting *P.A.D.* as "television for the seventies," ads for the series, like

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[569] "'Playboy After Dark' Scores with Men," *Back Stage*, April 18, 1969, 3.

[570] Bill, "Radio-Television: Syndication Review: Playboy After Dark," *Variety*, February 15, 1969, 48; Norma Lee Browning, "Hefner Turns to Movies, Talks about Sex in Films," *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 12, 1969. See also Norma Lee Browning, "Hef's TV Show Swings Along," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1968; and Robert Wiedrich, Tower Ticker, *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 1970.

[571] Warga, "Hefner Hops Aboard."

those for its predecessor, focused on the show as being more sophisticated, more exciting, and attracting higher quality entertainment and more desirable women than other television shows. Harkening back to *Playboy's Penthouse* and the nightclub settings of variety shows before it, a September 1969 ad claimed, "*Playboy After Dark* was 'more like a night on the town than a tryst with the tube.' It's a full hour of song, sizzling sound and bright comedy—a lavish TV production to make your evening an entertainment event."[572] The equation of watching the series with an entertainment event or a night on the town served as another way of distancing the Playboy man from the average, passive viewer. The same ad reinforced that the Playboy taste culture involved, in part, the cultivation of a sophisticated gaze when it states, "You have a special way of looking at things. *Playboy After Dark* should be one of them."[573]

Conclusion

The discourses surrounding television that circulated in *Playboy* from 1954-1972 were largely a reflection of and response to the sometimes conflicting discourses that circulated in the mainstream press and popular culture as the new entertainment technology was quickly adopted into U.S. homes in the mid-1950s. As a magazine built on redefining what it meant to be a white and upwardly mobile man in the years following World War II, *Playboy* was especially sensitive to the gender, class, and taste connotations of the new medium. Television, as both a technology and a form of entertainment, posed a number of problems for the Playboy man; the greatest of which were its threats to diminish his status as a sophisticated consumer, his claims to masculinity, and, for married *Playboy* readers, his dominance in the family home given the overwhelmingly family friendly and feminized address of television. *Playboy's* coverage of

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[572] *Playboy After Dark*, Advertisement, September 1969, *Playboy*.

[573] Ibid.

television, whether serious or satirical, consistently associated television with bad taste, low quality, and tendencies to emasculate or infantilize its audiences.

The magazine's treatment of television largely revolved around the two poles of television viewership delineated by Gold in an article appearing in the February 1958 issue. According to Gold, at its best, television could enable viewers to vicariously share in the experiences unfolding on their screens, but at its worst, viewership could devolve into submission. Ordinary television and ordinary television viewers were frequently depicted as submissive, either bowing to the fears of sponsors or passively consuming the formulaic and mediocre television fare on offer. *Playboy*'s articles and cartoons provided readers with a set of discursive rules to help distance themselves from ordinary consumers of television. These rules functioned to add a level of leisure competence and sophistication that was supposedly missing in the mainstream mass audience. Furthermore, *Playboy*'s television discourse allowed its readers to simultaneously embrace and distance themselves from television by providing them with the leisure competence to purchase and consume television in ways that might also serve as forms of protest against the medium's mass and commercial status. Most importantly, by sustaining its critique of television as the worst that mass culture had to offer, Playboy also helped to legitimate its own taste culture and mass media fare and shore up its magazine against charges that it was anything like "the old-fashioned, shame-thumbed girlie magazine[s]."[574]

[574] "Think Clean," *Time*, March 3, 1967, 76.

CHAPTER 6

From the Upbeat to the Backbeat: Playboy's Negotiation of Gender, Race, and Musical Taste

One cannot hope to understand the influence of any one medium, say music, without an understanding of the total character structure of a person. In turn, an understanding of his musical tastes, and his use of them for purposes of social conformity, advance, or rebellion, provides revealing clues to his character, to be confirmed and modified by a knowledge of his behavior and outlook in many other spheres of life.
—David Riesman, "Listening to Popular Music"[575]

Jazz has never been just music—it's been a cornerstone of the modern cultural imagination, an archive of mythological images, and an aesthetic model for new modes of writing, seeing, and moving. Across the spectrum of high, middlebrow, and low culture, from symphonies and modern dance to cartoons and advertising, jazz has been appropriated, remembered, dismembered, loved, and abused.
—John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*[576]

Everybody means what he means when he says jazz. He doesn't always mean what you or I mean.
—Ralph J. Gleason, "The Playboy Panel: Jazz—Today and Tomorrow"[577]

For Hugh Hefner, Playboy was, at least in part, an attempt to recreate or make up for the party that he had missed in the Jazz Age. In a 2006 interview, Hefner claimed that he escaped the repression of his childhood home through "romantic dreams that were fueled by the movies and the music of my childhood." In high school in the early 1940s, Hefner had even penned a record column for the school newspaper that was entitled "Platter Patter" and ran with the byline "Hep

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[575] David Riesman, "Listening to Popular Music," *American Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1950): 371.

[576] John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 4.

[577] "The Playboy Panel: Jazz—Today and Tomorrow," *Playboy*, February 1964, 38.

Hef." Having grown up during the Great Depression, Hefner asserted that the Jazz Age was "the party that I thought I had missed" and argued that "the music represented a certain kind of freedom and sophistication that I didn't know in my own life."[578]

Hefner's nostalgia aside, *Playboy*'s jazz coverage made clear that the connections to freedom and sophistication that jazz gained as swing gave way to new sounds in the postwar era were also central to jazz's place in the Playboy taste culture. During 1936-1945, which coincided with Hefner's formative years, swing "thoroughly dominated the hit charts…to an extent rarely if ever equaled by any other subgenre of popular music."[579] Jazz had been "a music of marginalized African-Americans" prior to swing's acceptance by the mainstream; however, the rise of bebop in the mid-1940s marked "the historical transition of jazz from an entertainment music to an art music."[580] As an art music, jazz sought "the deliberate marginality of a more select audience."[581] Of this select audience, Ingrid Monson states, "It was an elite of the socially progressive and politically aware that constructed itself as both outside of and above the ordinary American, black or white."[582] Taking *Playboy* magazine as a conduit for Hefner's interests and aspirations, it is unsurprising that from the beginning, music, particularly jazz, was a central part of the deliberately marginal Playboy lifestyle. Playboy's own presentation of popular music, both in the magazine and on television, continually drew connections between popular music,

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[578] "Interview with Hugh Hefner 2006."

[579] Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 128.

[580] Gendron, *Between Montmartre*, 121; Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," 126.

[581] Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," 126.

[582] Ingrid Monson, "The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48, no. 3 (1995): 397.

freedom, and sophistication.

Despite actively targeting youth audiences on college campuses and Barbara Ehrenreich's assertion that the magazine reveled in its immaturity, *Playboy*'s coverage of music reflected the decidedly adult tastes of its founder, who is an avid fan of jazz and pop standards.[583] With a particular bent toward mainstream jazz, and a worshipful stance toward Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald, the first decade of the magazine's reviews of recordings clung to nostalgia for tunes and musicians who rose to popularity through World War II era big bands and favored contemporary purveyors of cool jazz and hard bop in addition to pop vocalists. Though hardly a cutting edge choice, a feature on the Dorsey Brothers in its first issue also helped establish jazz as a key component of *Playboy*'s entertainment orientation. Over the years, this commitment to jazz has continued to be expressed through interviews and features on musicians; the production of jazz festivals, jazz polls, and both variety shows hosted by Hefner; the entertainment circuit provided by the Playboy Clubs; and the launching of record labels.[584]

This chapter aims to build on previous work by offering a case study of musical taste as disseminated by *Playboy* between 1953 and 1972. This discourse not only demonstrates *Playboy*'s attempts to remain culturally relevant, it also reveals historical transitions in the field of popular music. Scholars, such as Matt Brennan, Bernard Gendron, and Keir Keightley, have thoroughly examined the industrial and cultural shifts behind rock's cultural accreditation, which was impossible to ignore by the summer of 1967. These shifts included jazz's transition from mainstream popular music to marginal art music in the mid-1940s, the segmentation of audiences

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[583] Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 50.

[584] Nina Gordon, "Playboy and Jazz: A History," *All About Jazz*, February 26, 2010, http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/news.php?id=50626.

by age and the subsequent definition of adult popular culture over and against teen culture, rock's move away from singles to an album-oriented format, the masculinization and masculinism of rock, and the coverage of rock in the jazz press and other distributors of cultural capital like *Village Voice*, *New Yorker*, and *Playboy*.[585] Additionally, in her discussion of the counterculture's relationship to women, Sheila Whiteley draws attention to music's "evangelical purpose which tied it to the values of the group, expressing its attitudes, providing a particular location for self-identity, and establishing common cultural and political bonds."[586] A key means through which the values of the Playboy lifestyle were disseminated was through the delineation of sophisticated musical tastes. These tastes shaped not only what should be considered good or bad music; they also reinforced Playboy readers' masculinity, heterosexuality, and liberal subjecthood and tied the readers together as members of an affective community. From this understanding of popular music's functions in everyday life, it is not difficult to understand how changing musical tastes can prove threatening to one's personal and cultural identity. Consequently, the story that unfolded throughout the pages and sound stages of *Playboy* was one often framed in terms of oppositions—such as masculine vs. feminine, class vs.

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[585] For more on jazz's transitions from popular to art music in the 1940s and the cultural accreditation of rock in the 1960s, see Gendron, *Between Montmartre*. Keightley's work deals with these topics and pays particular attention to taste formations in the mid-20th century. See: Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock;" Keightley, "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song: Adult Audiences, Taste Panics, and the Idea of the Standard," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 13 (2001): 7-40; and Keightley, "Music for Middlebrows: Defining the Easy Listening Era, 1946-1966," *American Music* 26, no. 3: 309-335. For information on *Down Beat*'s coverage of jazz, see Matt Brennan, "Down Beats and Rolling Stones: An Historical Comparison of American Jazz and Rock Journalism," (doctoral dissertation, University of Stirling, 2007); and Brennan, "Down Beats and Rolling Stones: The American Jazz Press Decides to Cover Rock in 1967," *Popular Music History* 1, no. 3 (2006): 263-284.

[586] Sheila Whiteley, *Women and popular music: Sexuality, identity, and subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 23.

mass, jazz vs. rock, and Playboy vs. counterculture—which served to both define and defend the identities at stake in these configurations.

Returning to Whiteley's claim about the evangelical purpose of music, I argue that the tensions between the allegedly alternative masculinities offered by *Playboy* and the counterculture are illuminated by the tensions between jazz and rock—the respective musics of these cultures—expressed in the music press during the 1960s. Although the centrality of jazz and musical consumption in *Playboy* has remained largely ignored by scholars, I further contend that *Playboy* should be taken seriously as a part of this music press.[587] Finally, before delving too far into these tensions, it is necessary to avert any tensions that may arise from the uses of terms such as jazz, rock, and pop that follow in this chapter. Following Keightley's claim in "Reconsidering Rock," I hold that it is more useful to treat these terms as larger musical cultures rather than specific genres.[588] Additionally, my use of these terms is derived from the ways that they are deployed within *Playboy* itself, and it is important to bear in mind that *Playboy* deploys these terms with great flexibility.

Good Music

Much like Playboy's promotion of good design, its promotion of good music also helped to legitimate the taste culture it promoted as upper middlebrow. Keightley notes, "Until the 1940s, 'good music' had been used exclusively as a codeword for classical music and opera, but by the 1950s it began to encompass adult pop as well." He argues that the notion of the standard traveled from classical to jazz to adult popular music, and each culture that absorbed the standard

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[587] A popular press book on music and Playboy was released in late 2015. See Farmer and Friedwald, *Playboy Swings*.

[588] Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," 110.

also absorbed some of the prestige of the good music that came before it. Consequently, as jazz moved into the realm of elite art music, the cultural capital associated with adult pop increased. "Easy listening" was an alternate name for "good music," and, as such, it became an umbrella term for the adult mainstream. However, "good music" was not aimed at just any adult; it was especially connected to the Silent Generation (of which Hefner is a member), which came of age at the height of swing's popularity. Like *Playboy* was and rock would become, the standard "functioned as the emblem of a distinctively anti-mass sensibility within mass culture."[589]

Keightley dates the easy listening era from 1946-1966, and as we will see, *Playboy*'s (along with the rest of the popular and jazz press's) music coverage changed radically in 1967, marking the cultural accreditation of rock. Discussing *High Fidelity* magazine's popular music column entitled "The Music Between," Keightley makes an important distinction in the hierarchy of musical tastes during this period. That is, easy listening did not fall between the high taste formation of classical and the low taste formation of jazz. What was most important in this period (and the rock era that followed it) was an adult taste formation. This distinction positioned both classical and jazz in the high position of art music while the failure to mention the subordinate position in this taste binary served to reinforce just how low teen musics, such as novelty songs and rock 'n' roll, really were.[590]

Record Reviews in *Playboy*

In November 1955, *Playboy* introduced "Playboy After Hours," a new department

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[589] Keightley, "You Keep Coming Back," 9, 12, 17, 22.

[590] For more on how, in the 1950s, technology, industrial practices, and taste worked together to provide cultural legitimacy to adult-oriented popular music while denying legitimacy to teen-oriented popular music, see Keightley, "Music for Middlebrows," 324 and Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," 112-113, 116, 118. Keightley, "Music for Middlebrows," 321-322.

designed to “tip you off to the movies, plays, records, books, eateries, drinkeries and nighteries most likely to succeed with you and yours.”[591] While the content of the department varied from issue to issue (e.g., plays may not have been reviewed every month and the amount of space given to topics also varied), between the department’s inception and December 1972, records were the only cultural objects to be reviewed in every issue. Before 1964, *Playboy*’s “Recordings” section covered a wide range of music, including pop (singers of pop-standards), comedy, opera, classical, blues, gospel, Broadway, bossa nova, mood music, and folk. Coverage of country music was extremely rare, and prior to 1967, its coverage of guitar music was limited to classical and Spanish guitar virtuosos and established jazz players, such as Joe Pass and Charlie Byrd. While classical and opera crept into the reviews on a fairly regular basis, they figured most prominently in the January issues. Since the issue would have arrived in December, there was still a heavy emphasis on gift giving within the January issues, and *Playboy* offered up numerous nicely packaged classical and opera recordings as a classy gift for anyone on its readers’ lists.

The overall emphasis, though, was on jazz with long-established bandleaders, their most noteworthy sidemen, and vocalists being particularly favored. Most of the reviews of vocal albums did not attach genre labels to the works because the readers should have already known that jazz was the Playboy man’s music of choice, and *Playboy* repeatedly reminded readers that jazz singing encompassed a wide range of performers and vocal styles. For example, in the July and August 1961 issues, the magazine ran a two-part article on the history of jazz singing. Bruce Griffin began the first article by arguing:

> When Sammy Davis saunters onto the stage of New York’s Copacabana, snaps his fingers, kicks with the band and belts out a blues, he’s providing the best possible proof

[591] “Playbill,” *Playboy*, November 1955, 2.

> that talent is never born in a vacuum. What Sammy sings and how he sings it—no matter how 'commercial' his style may be dubbed by some—has its roots deep in the mainstream of jazz, back in time through literally thousands of singers who have wailed, moaned, chanted, grunted, shouted, scatted, hummed, warbled, rhapsodized, torched, larked, agonized, blasted, gurgled, whispered, crooned, smeared and riffed their way through six-odd decades of jazz in the U.S.[592]

Similarly, in the second installment of the article, Sinatra's claim that his vocal style was inspired by Tommy Dorsey's trombone playing provided him with enduring jazz credibility no matter what songs he chose to record. Griffin explained, "The distinction between jazz and popular singing was never a clear one, except during the earliest years of jazz…There can be no question that Sinatra's inflections, bent notes and special phrasings…are consummate expressions of the personal kind of musicianship that is the very essence of jazz."[593] Even then, Sinatra was widely considered one of the great performers of standards.[594] However, *Playboy*'s emphasis on what made his singing "personal" mitigated any association with conformity that might be drawn from either Sinatra's phenomenal popularity or the mass appeal of reliable standards.

Moreover, Playboy repeatedly used its own proximity to Sinatra to reinforce its own jazz credibility, masculinity, and hipness. For example, Sammy Davis, Jr., and other members of the Rat Pack appeared on *Playboy's Penthouse* and *Playboy After Dark*; articles about and interviews with Sinatra linked his tastes and values with those of the Playboy lifestyle; and the company used both its print and television outlets to report that Playmate Joyce Nizarri played a

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592 Bruce Griffin, "The Jazz Singers," *Playboy*, July 1961, 39. See also Griffin, "The Jazz Singers," *Playboy*, August 1961.

593 Griffin, "The Jazz Singers," August 1961, 74.

594 Keightley, "You Keep Coming Back," 29.

bit part in *A Hole in the Head*, a 1959 comedy starring Sinatra.[595] In a November 1958 article, Robert Reisner, whom John Gennari describes as "the Village hipster of the jazz critical establishment," stated, "It is doubtful that anyone, anywhere, makes out any better than Sinatra. And that is partly because 'the broads,' as he calls them, are an obsession with him. He is as intense in his pursuit of a better broad as he is of a better song or better part in a picture."[596] These examples illustrate how Playboy blurred jazz and adult mainstream into a taste formation it held up as decidedly sophisticated, adult, and masculine. In many ways, Sinatra was held up as an exemplar of Playboy subjectivity; i.e., as a successful man who took his pursuits of both work and pleasure seriously. Hefner has admitted, "Sinatra was the Playboy ideal, a man who represented the best in his chosen profession, who was populist and yet sophisticated, a leader and at the same time—in the parlance of the day—a chaser."[597] Furthermore, Sinatra's election into the first Playboy Jazz Hall of Fame in 1966 alongside Louis Armstrong and Dave Brubeck demonstrated that thousands of *Playboy* readers also upheld the magazine's flexible genre boundaries.[598]

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[595] See Robert Legare, "Meeting at the Summit," *Playboy*, June 1960; "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy After Dark*, disc 3, episode 2, directed by Dean Whitmore, aired December 1968 (Ventura, CA: Morada Vision, 2006), DVD; "Playboy After Hours: Films," *Playboy*, July 1959, 20-21; "Playboy Interview: Frank Sinatra," *Playboy*, February 1963; "Playboy's Penthouse," *Playboy After Dark*, disc 1, episode 1; "Playboy's Penthouse," *Playboy After Dark*, disc 1, episode 2, directed by Dan Schufman, aired November 1960 (Ventura, CA: Morada Vision, 2006), DVD; "Slick Chick Flick Pick," *Playboy*, May 1959, 67.

[596] John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot*, 313; Robert George Reisner, "Sinatra," *Playboy*, November 1958, 63.

[597] In fact, jazz and Sinatra were so connected in the Playboy taste culture that when Sinatra was unable to perform at the 1959 Playboy Jazz Festival due to his filming schedule, Playboy hired Duke Hazlett, a Sinatra impersonator, to perform in his stead. Farmer and Friedwald, *Playboy Swings*, 33, 47.

[598] Nat Hentoff, "Jazz '66," *Playboy*, February 1966, 86.

Overall, the record review section tended to be positive, and bad reviews were usually given with tongue firmly planted in cheek, or, if given in earnest, they usually went to performers who were not a part of the jazz world. When *Playboy* did give a bad (or more likely, mixed) review to a jazz musician, the fault was usually placed on the material rather than the performer. For example, the June 1964 issue offered the following review of *These are the Blues* by Ella Fitzgerald:

> her voice is just too true, too absolutely self-assured, too lacking in the essential base of suffering. Whatever the reason, Ella misses the blues boat on this LP despite a repertoire that includes such evergreens…The only saving grace of the recording is that, in revealing a chink in Ella's vocal armor, it makes her a little more human.[599]

Although the evergreen material covered on this album should be good, the album did not work for a reason that *Playboy* was reluctant to fully disclose; rather than truly disparaging Fitzgerald's performance, they used it as a means to reinforce her superhuman status as a vocalist.

More commonly, *Playboy*'s record reviews lavished praise on the performers and performance, highlighting characteristics of the musicians or their music that aligned with the hallmarks of the Playboy lifestyle. For example, drawing attention to the album's association with the Playboy Jazz Polls of 1957 and 1958, *Playboy* lauded Barney Kessel, Shelly Manne, and Ray Brown as "maestri" and reviewed their 1958 album, *The Poll Winners*, as follows: "the guitar, bass and drums make delightful and intricate music (intricate but not that overdone musical embroidery which is too often supposed to be the hallmark of modern jazz) and great charm and good taste characterize the playing on every band."[600] In order to display leisure

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[599] "Playboy After Hours: Recordings," *Playboy*, June 1964, 32.

[600] "Playboy After Hours: Records," *Playboy*, February 1958, 13.

competence as a music listener, one has to be able to make fine distinctions between music by "maestri" and those who are overdoing it. By focusing its critical eye on those albums it deems worthy of listening to repeatedly rather than simply reviewing the newest or most popular LPs, *Playboy* offered its readers guidance on what good music should sound like. The need for this type of leisure competence was not limited to more marginal forms like modern jazz; it also extended to the adult mainstream, including the decidedly middlebrow genre of "mood music," which enjoyed booming popularity in the early 1950s.[601] This was evident in the magazine's inaugural record review section, which contained the following review:

> There is so much over-orchestrated, romantic mood-music on the market these days, we'd almost welcome something like 'Fiddles for a Foul Frame of Mind,' just to help clear the air. Capitol's new album, 'For Young Moderns in Love,' is an exception, however. You'll find no thousand violins or mandolins here, just the simple, pleasant sounds of four trombones, four rhythm and Sam Donahue's saxophone. Dedicated to love, as it is, the recording should function well in the confines of your own apartment. Feed her plenty of Scotch and start talking quietly about that wonderful warmth which is at once the simplest and most complex of all human emotions.[602]

As this review indicates, even the sound of albums that were never intended for attentive listening was important as having the leisure competence to pick an LP that would set the chosen mood could affect the Playboy man's chances for a successful seduction.[603] In other words, the magazine's record reviews inextricably linked readers' musical tastes to their status as Playboy men.

The Playboy Jazz Poll

For its June 1955 issue, *Playboy* commissioned Jack Tracy, then editor of *Down Beat*, to

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[601] Keightley, "Music for Middlebrows," 318.

[602] "Playboy After Hours: Records," *Playboy*, November 1955, 8.

[603] For more on the connections between music and seduction in *Playboy*, see chapter 5.

choose “Playboy’s All-Time All-Star Jazz Band.” For this article, he was asked to put together his ultimate fantasy of a big band, choosing the greatest players, living or dead, from any era of jazz history. Then, in October 1956, following magazines, such as *Down Beat, Metronome*, and *Esquire*, *Playboy* launched its annual jazz poll with results appearing in February 1957. The jazz poll consisted of a ballot by which readers could elect musicians to the Playboy All-Star Jazz Band, which was arranged like a big band; for example, readers, like Jack Tracy before them, could vote for only one drummer, but they could vote for first through fourth chair trombonists. Results were reported in the following February issue along with a review of happenings in jazz from the previous year. In its December 1956 and January 1957 issues, *Playboy* published Jazz Poll Reports, which provided preliminary results and letters from readers concerning the poll. These reports served to reinforce the legitimacy of *Playboy* as a source of jazz news and criticism. For example, one reader wrote, “Your magazine is the most, but as a musician, I want to tell you you can never receive enough acclaim for your promotion of good jazz. So many of the musicians I work with feel indebted to you and I am speaking for them.” Also included in the reports was the fact that over 20,000 ballots had been cast in the poll; by the time the poll ended, the count was over 21,000 ballots and more than 430,000 individual votes.[604] To put these numbers in perspective, the 1956 circulation rate for *Playboy* was 741,779 copies per issue while *Down Beat*’s was a mere 44,140 copies.[605] In other words, the amount of ballots cast in the first Playboy Jazz Poll was equivalent to about 48% of *Down Beat*’s readership, and

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[604] “Jazz Poll Report,” *Playboy*, January 1957, 5.

[605] Association of National Advertisers, *Magazine Circulation*, 67; N. *W. Ayer & Son’s Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals, 1956* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1957), 245.

Playboy's circulation rates dwarfed *Down Beat*'s about 17 times over. If the sheer number of votes was not enough to prove *Playboy* and its readers' commitment to jazz, in January 1957, they also announced that renowned jazz critic and contributor to *Down Beat* and *Metronome*, Leonard Feather, had joined the staff of *Playboy* as jazz editor.[606]

In addition to furnishing *Playboy* with hip credibility and cementing the place of jazz in the Playboy lifestyle, the jazz poll also allowed readers to reaffirm or reshape the boundaries of Playboy's taste culture by professing their tastes back to the magazine. Although the magazine's nominating board, which was comprised of musicians, critics, and record company executives, provided numerous options in each ballot category, readers always had the option to write in their favorite candidates. Beginning with the 1966 Jazz Poll, the ballot for which appeared in the October 1965 issue, *Playboy* added two new categories offering readers the chance to award six honors on a purely write-in basis. Three of these honors were spots in the Playboy Jazz Hall of Fame, and readers could vote for "any instrumentalist or vocalist, living or dead." The other three honors belonged in the Records of the Year category and were intended for the best instrumental big band, instrumental small combo, and vocal LPs.[607] The Playboy Jazz Poll was more than a simple report of readers' musical tastes; through confirming or contesting the values associated with these tastes in the Playboy lifestyle and wider American culture, the poll also functioned as a primary means through which readers could assert and maintain their ties as members of an affective community.

Examining changes over time in the jazz poll results and comparing the readers' choices with those of the All-Stars reveals a widening gap in the mid- to late 1960s between the musical

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[606] "Playbill," *Playboy*, January 1957, 2.

[607] "The 1966 Playboy Jazz Poll," *Playboy*, October 1965, 131.

tastes the magazine attempts to cultivate in its readers and the readers' actual musical tastes.[608] Additionally, these results provide insight into wider discourses concerning the cultural statuses of jazz and rock music. When comparing the results of the readers' and the All-Stars' polls, two important matters become clear. First, there appears to be little upon which the readers and All-Stars agree, and second, the All-Stars' All-Stars Band remains fairly stagnant from the poll's inception through the results of the 1973 jazz poll, where this research concludes. In fact, the only category in which the readers and All-Stars consistently agree is that of trombone, with J. J. Johnson winning first chair every year through 1973. There is almost full agreement on the baritone saxophone, except that the All-Stars give the honor to Harry Carney in 1971, ruining Gerry Mulligan's sweep of both polls.

As evidenced by the example of Mulligan, the jazz poll categories reflecting the least change were those for instruments that were less regularly incorporated into other forms of popular music. Conversely, (with the notable exception of the bass as far as the All-Stars were concerned) instruments, such as guitar, drums, and piano, that enjoyed wider use along with categories that encompassed vocalists or established groups, such as best combo and best vocal group, demonstrated the most variation in awardees over time.[609] These changes in the jazz poll results echo those evident as the wider American public's tastes in popular music shifted from

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[608] Monson demonstrates that the *Down Beat* jazz polls also registered a difference in the tastes of critics and readers, noting that the critics seemed to have "'blacker tastes'" than the readers. The same trend occurs in *Playboy*. The Playboy Jazz Poll results published between 1957 and 1973 reveal that the readers' top choices included 47 different musicians, 70.2% of whom were white. By contrast, from 1959-1973, the All-Stars chose only 36 different musicians, 63.9% of whom were black. Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 66-68.

[609] The All-Stars named Ray Brown the best bassist from 1959-1973, and until 1964, the readers agreed, also choosing Brown for top honors beginning with the first jazz poll. However, readers awarded the honor to Charles Mingus from 1965-1969, with Paul McCartney taking first place from 1970-1973.

the big band singers who had made their names in the swing era to pop and folk and finally to rock. Overall, the readers' choices appear to reflect tastes that were changeable and did not adhere strictly to the boundaries delineated by the label "jazz," whereas the All-Stars' choices remained more wedded to the boundaries of jazz even while recognizing the great variety of styles encompassed by that label.

Even though the All-Stars tended to vote mainly for themselves and their choices of winners, such as Duke Ellington (band leader 1960-1973) and Frank Sinatra (male vocalist 1959-1971), certainly reflected the tastes of *Playboy* and its founder, the relative stagnation of the All-Stars' choices over the years spoke to more than a selfish desire to maintain their own top-rated statuses. An examination of some of the categories on which the readers and All-Stars disagreed will demonstrate how the All-Stars' steadfast commitment to their choices operated as a means of pushing back against mainstream musical tastes and contributed to the elevation of the cultural status of jazz. The differences recorded in the poll results for top band leader offers a particularly telling example. The All-Stars' choices for best band leader were Count Basie (1959) and Duke Ellington (1960-1973); however, the readers' favorite band leaders were Stan Kenton (1957-1963), Henry Mancini (1964-1970), and Doc Severinsen (1971-1973). While all of these band leaders fit within the Playboy taste culture, Basie and Ellington are the ones with the most enduring jazz legacies while Mancini and Severinsen are remembered best for their show business legacies. Basie, Ellington, and Kenton led some of the most popular bands of the Swing Era, and they all continued to push the boundaries of big band sound into the modern jazz era.[610] Many of their current and former sidemen also received top honors in Playboy's jazz polls; e.g., drummer Shelly Manne and tenor saxophonist Stan Getz played with Kenton,

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[610] Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 259.

Mulligan had worked with Kenton as an arranger, trombonist J.J. Johnson performed with Basie, and critic Ralph Gleason described baritone saxophonist Harry Carney's playing as the single most important element defining the "Ellington sound."[611]

Although Ellington's scoring would earn three Grammy Awards for Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) and a 1962 Academy Award nomination for *Paris Blues* (1961), Mancini was, as *Playboy* dubbed him, the "swinging sultan of the sound track." His compositions for films and television shows, such as *The Pink Panther*, *Peter Gunn*, and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, garnered most of his accolades, including four Academy Awards and two nominations, 20 Grammy Awards and 72 nominations, two Emmy Awards and two nominations, and one Golden Globe Award and nine nominations over the course of his career.[612] However, *Playboy*'s appreciation of Mancini's work had more to do with the performance of his compositions than the compositions themselves. In a March 1963 profile on the composer-band leader, *Playboy* explained, "Mancini's formula for his vinyl smashes—LP sales of his movie and TV themes measure in the millions—is a simple one: discarding the original sound tracks, he re-orchestrates and re-records his themes. As a consequence, eminent jazz musicians, unencumbered by plotline, have had a chance to let loose at length."[613] Despite this

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[611] Gioia, *History of Jazz*, 268; Ralph J. Gleason, *Celebrating the Duke: And Louis, Bessie, Billie, Bird, Carmen, Miles, Dizzy and Other Heroes* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 189; Nat Hentoff, "Jazz '67," *Playboy*, February 1967, 137; Bill Russo, "Kenton," *Playboy*, February 1956, 46.

[612] "Awards," *HenryMancini.com*, accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.henrymancini.com/theman/awards; "On the Scene: Henry Mancini," *Playboy*, March 1963, 116; "Past Winners Search," *Grammy.com*, accessed January 28, 2016, https://www.grammy.com/nominees/search?artist=duke+ellington&field_nominee_work_value=&year=All&genre=All; "The 34th Academy Awards 1962: Winners and Nominees," *Oscars.org*, accessed January 28, 2016, https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1962.

[613] "On the Scene: Henry Mancini."

endorsement, the magazine never reviewed one of Mancini's widely popular LPs, preferring instead to review albums featuring Mancini compositions performed or led by the likes of cornettist Bobby Hackett or Quincy Jones.[614] The two Mancini albums *Playboy*'s editors did recommend as belonging in "The Playboy LP Library," *The Blues and the Beat* (1960) and *Combo!* (1960), reflect Mancini's jazzier work rather than his accomplishments at scoring and composing theme songs. While Mancini won a Grammy for Best Jazz Performance (Large Group) for *The Blues and the Beat*, it should be noted that *Combo!*'s inclusion of "Playboy's Theme," written by Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh at the request of *Playboy* and used as the theme for both of the organization's television variety shows, is reason enough for the album to be included in any Playboy man's LP library.[615]

Although he would have been known to jazz enthusiasts as a former sideman for Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman and an April 1964 review of the Urbie Green 6-Tet in *Playboy* calls Severinsen's trumpet playing "formidable," by the time he topped the readers' choice as band leader, he had been a member of the Tonight Show Band for eight years and its leader for three.[616] In other words, like Mancini, Severinsen's most famous work was done for the screen. While Basie and Ellington could be held up as elder statesmen, whose influence could be traced to and heard within modern jazz, Mancini and Severinsen were best known for what was

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[614] "Playboy After Hours: Recordings," *Playboy*, December 1963, 37; "Playboy After Hours: Recordings," *Playboy*, September 1964, 43-44.

[615] "Awards," *HenryMancini.com*; "The Playboy LP Library," *Playboy*, February 1964, 67; Björn Werkmann, "Exotica Review 230: Henry Mancini – *Combo!* (1960)," *AmbientExotica.com*, published June 22, 2013, http://www.ambientexotica.com/exorev230_henrymancini_combo/.

[616] "Bio," *DocSeverinsen.com*, accessed January 29, 2016, http://www.docseverinsen.com/about/; "Playboy After Hours: Recordings," *Playboy*, April 1964, 25.

essentially background music accompanying the real entertainment of popular film and television.

The widening gap between *Playboy* readers' musical tastes and those of the All-Stars was punctuated by two significant breaks occurring in 1964 and 1967-1968. In the 1963 jazz poll results, Hentoff wrote, "No balloting was more closely contested than in the vocal-group category…as folk-singing newcomers, Peter, Paul & Mary, unlisted a year ago, finished only a handful of votes out of the number one spot."[617] From 1964-1966, Peter, Paul and Mary were readers' top choice for vocal group, marking the first time folk musicians walked away with Playboy Jazz Poll honors. However, neither *Playboy* nor its readers remarked upon this change (at least not in any form that made it to publication) until 1965. In its May 1965 issue, *Playboy* printed three letters (one positive and two negative) from its readers in response to February's release of the results of the annual Playboy Jazz Poll. Those who were upset expressed outrage that the increasing inclusion of pop and folk in readers' choices meant that the poll had strayed too far from its jazz roots.[618] *Playboy*'s response to these letters reflected both the association between jazz and pop as components of an adult taste culture and Gendron's observation that the jazz press deflected the perceived threat of other genres by pointing out the connections between these genres and jazz. Defending Barbra Streisand's win for Best Female Vocalist, *Playboy*

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[617] Peter, Paul & Mary came in third, separated from first-place winners, Lambert, Hendricks & Bavan, by only 324 votes. Hentoff, "The 1963 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1963, 143, 145.

[618] Readers Thomas Reilly and Frank Weiss both took umbrage to other readers' choices of Peter, Paul & Mary and Barbra Streisand as Best Vocal Group and Best Female Vocalist, respectively. Reilly was also dismayed at the honors bestowed on Mancini as Best Band Leader, predicting sarcastically that "jazz giant Lawrence Welk" would be among the winners the following year. "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, May 1965, 10.

made the following familiar argument:

> The line of demarcation between American pop music and jazz was always a tenuous one, but it disappeared forever in the Thirties, when jazz evolved into the big-band swing of Benny Goodman, Count Basie and the Dorsey brothers. And if swing is recognized as a form of jazz, then the vocalists with these bands must, logically, be considered jazz singers—not just the obviously jazz-oriented ones…as well as all similar singers who, for whatever reason, never happened to work with a swing band. The distinguishing factor between such a wide variety of performers then becomes one of quality; and—recognizing that any poll of this kind is, in the final analysis, nothing more or less than a popularity contest—a reflection of how well the performers have been received by the public.[619]

This argument defended both the magazine's own tastes, reflected in its record reviews, and deflected any real criticism onto its readers. Cementing the cultural legitimacy of its own tastes, *Playboy* concluded, "And, of course, for the serious jazzophile—whatever his area of interest—there are the Playboy All-Stars' All-Stars, made up of the jazz musicians' own favorites."[620]

The next major shift in the Playboy Jazz Poll began in 1967 when the magazine made the decision to change the contest to the Playboy Jazz & Pop Poll. The text accompanying the ballot for the 1968 poll defended the decision to make this change, citing jazz musicians' increasing recording of rock and folk songs, the incorporation of rock musicians into jazz combos and vice versa, and the increased coverage of pop and rock by other jazz critics and magazines, such as *Down Beat*. The ballot stated, "It has been that kind of year, with the boundaries between pop and jazz becoming less and less visible. No one, it appears increasingly obvious, can tell where jazz leaves off and pop begins. With this in mind, we have adjusted and expanded our poll to encompass a much broader spectrum of performers."[621] With this expanded coverage, the All-Star Jazz Band became simply the All-Star Band even though it maintained its configuration as a

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[619] "Dear Playboy," May 1965, 10, 12.

[620] "Dear Playboy," May 1965, 12.

[621] "The 1968 Playboy Jazz & Pop Poll," *Playboy*, October 1967, 121.

big band until 1976, when pop and jazz were dropped and the poll became known as simply the Playboy Music Poll.[622] The major changes in the readers' choices for the 1968 poll included Herb Alpert dethroning Miles Davis (winner 1960-1967) as top trumpeter, sitar player Ravi Shankar breaking the reign of the vibes as the top "other instrument," Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass replacing the Dave Brubeck Quartet as Best Instrumental Combo (winners 1957-1967), and the Beatles becoming the first rock group to win in the Best Vocal Group category.[623] Of these upsets, Alpert's and the Beatles' wins are the most significant. The Beatles paved the way for rock bands to dominate the Vocal Group category and take over the categories related to standard rock instrumentation—namely, guitar, bass, and drums—and Alpert's wins would come to alter the shape of the Playboy Jazz Hall of Fame.[624] In response to these changes, *Playboy* published two letters supportive of the readers' choices in its May 1968 issue. One of these letters, from Thom Trunnell of KCPX radio in Salt Lake City, upheld the magazine's earlier arguments about the fluidity of genre boundaries, stating, "The fact that Charlie Byrd and Wes Montgomery appear in the same 'top ten' with George Harrison and Mike Bloomfield is, indeed,

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[622] "The 1976 Playboy Music Poll," *Playboy*, December 1975, 195; "Playboy Music," *Playboy*, April 1976, 150-151.

[623] The vibraphone had dominated the Other Instruments category since the poll's inception, with the readers choosing Lionel Hampton from 1957-1967 and the All-Stars choosing Milt Jackson from 1959-1969. Beginning with the poll for 1970, vibes became its own category, opening the way for other instrumentalists to be honored in the broader category. "The 1970 Playboy Jazz & Pop Poll," *Playboy*, October 1969, 158-159; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '68," *Playboy*, February 1968, 140-141.

[624] The rock bands that won in the Best Vocal Group category were the Beatles (1968-1970); Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young (1971); the Moody Blues (1972); and the Rolling Stones (1973). Jimi Hendrix (1969-1970) and Eric Clapton (1971-1973) earned honors as top guitarists; Paul McCartney was voted the readers' favorite bass player from 1970-1973; Ginger Baker of Cream was voted Best Drummer from 1970-1971; and Joe Cocker (1971), Rod Stewart (1972), and Mick Jagger (1973) were all named readers' favorite male vocalists.

proof that terms such as 'jazz' and 'rock' simply describe different kinds of creativity."[625] As is evidenced by changes to the Jazz Hall of Fame, *Playboy*'s own reaction to the increasing diversity of readers' choices was not as open-minded as that of Trunnell.

Although the Playboy Jazz Hall of Fame was open to any vocalist or instrumentalist living or dead, the intention behind the honor had been to enshrine the readers' choices from among "the list of revered names in jazz history." Because the honor was awarded on a purely write-in basis, newcomers and non-jazz artists quickly dominated the Jazz Hall of Fame.[626] In 1969, Alpert replaced Ray Charles as the youngest inductee, and with Alpert's induction, the name was changed to the Playboy Jazz & Pop Hall of Fame even though the ballot category had referred to only jazz. Hentoff offers the following explanation for the choice of 1969 inductees, which also included Miles Davis and the recently deceased Wes Montgomery:

> Almost all forms of jazz—from Dixieland to avant-garde, from swing to soul—are now represented in the Hall of Fame. And as our roster of greats grows annually, so does the music we honor. Jazz, despite the Cassandras who keep predicting its demise, continues to adapt itself to the country's lifestyle—adding the best from contemporary idioms, augmenting its basic structure and remaining America's one truly indigenous art form.[627]

Describing Davis and Alpert as "two trumpeters, whose poll-winning sounds are poles apart," Hentoff's profile of Alpert focused more on his commercial success than his skill or sound. While Hentoff acknowledged that Alpert was "an arranger par excellence," the sound of his Tijuana Brass was described as containing only "a dollop of jazz," and his success as a singer

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[625] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, May 1968, 16.

[626] The 1966-1968 inductees into the Playboy Jazz Hall of Fame were Frank Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, John Coltrane, Benny Goodman, and Ray Charles. Hentoff, "Jazz '67," 136; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '68," 142-143; "The 1969 Playboy Jazz & Pop Poll," *Playboy*, October 1968, 138.

[627] Hentoff, "Jazz '69," *Playboy*, February 1969, 126-127.

was characterized as predictable.[628] Readers appeared to have little problem with the addition of pop to the Hall of Fame. The only letter to the editor printed about the 1969 poll was concerned with Hentoff's characterization of race relations within popular music rather than the poll results themselves, and in subsequent years, readers repeatedly inducted rock musicians into the Jazz and Pop Hall of Fame.[629] Although the October 1972 ballot described readers as having "refreshingly divided loyalties" between jazz and rock, it also made an ultimately unsuccessful move to mitigate the dominance of rock in the Hall of Fame, reducing the number of inductees to only the top choice. Despite Eric Clapton's win that year, this change to the number of inductees prevented rock musicians from outnumbering jazz musicians until Ringo Starr took the honors in 1977.[630] *Playboy*'s addition of "pop" to both its annual poll and its Jazz Hall of Fame betrayed the fact that while the Playboy taste culture, and certainly its readers, might be open to a broader range of musical styles, the magazine still wished to make distinctions that defined jazz over and against pop, and especially rock.

Consequently, the attitudes toward music expressed in the explanations for the discrepancies between the readers' and All-Stars' choices for top talent can be traced back to attitudes about music as mass culture expressed by Theodor Adorno in essays written during the

[628] Hentoff, "Jazz '69," 126.

[629] In 1970, readers inducted Bob Dylan, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney into the Hall of Fame; in 1971, they chose Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and Elvis Presley; and in 1972, the inductees were Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison, and George Harrison. Eric Clapton was the sole inductee in 1973. "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, May 1970, 18; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '70," *Playboy*, February 1970, 158-159; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '71," *Playboy*, February 1971, 154-155; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '72," *Playboy*, February 1972, 158-159; and Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '73," *Playboy*, February 1973, 147.

[630] As rock came to dominate the Hall of Fame, *Playboy* more willingly embraced Alpert's place on the jazz side of the divide. Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '75," *Playboy*, February 1975, 145; "The Playboy Music Hall of Fame," *Playboy*, April 1977, 161.

swing era. Primarily, these attitudes concerned the divide between music as an art form versus music as mere entertainment, and, this divide took on a greater importance in both *Playboy* and the wider discourse concerning popular music as rock attained cultural legitimacy in the late 1960s. Since matters such as readers' choice polls are anathema to Adorno's criticism of popular music's standardization and "cult of personality," *Playboy* necessarily tempers his concerns, approaching them from an alternative perspective similar to one proposed by David Riesman. In a response to both administrative researchers, who studied popular culture for the benefit of the advertising industry, and the theoretical works of left-wing cultural critics "who see popular culture as an antirevolutionary narcotic," Riesman suggested the possibility "that it is the audience which manipulates the product (and hence the producer), no less than the other way around."[631] Indeed, *Playboy*'s music criticism and music poll results offered support for Riesman's judgment "that the same or virtually the same popular culture materials are used by audiences in radically different ways and for radically different purposes."[632] Furthermore, the entire Playboy Empire was built upon the notion that distinctions in taste mattered while Adorno opined that "the concept of taste is itself outmoded." Although Adorno stresses that "the difference between popular and serious music can be grasped in more precise terms than those referring to music levels such as 'lowbrow and highbrow,' 'simple and complex,' 'naïve and sophisticated,'" *Playboy* fell into the convention, common among cultural critics in the mid-twentieth century, of dividing cultural forms into high-, low-, and middle-brow statuses while

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[631] Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass* Culture, ed. J. M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991), 26, 28; Riesman, "Listening to Popular Music," 359, 361. See also Theodor W. Adorno with George Simpson, "On Popular Music," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard D. Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 437-469.

[632] Riesman, "Listening to Popular Music," 361.

repeatedly making judgments as to the sophistication of its own taste culture. In the process, *Playboy* maintained Adorno's notion of two musical spheres (although it redefined the boundaries of those spheres in ways that take popular music and, at least a portion of, its audiences seriously) along with a healthy skepticism towards the meaning of commercial success. These stances helped the magazine cope with changing musical tastes while maintaining an attachment to jazz it could claim as progressive. To demonstrate this, it is necessary to place *Playboy*'s music coverage within the wider discourses of jazz and rock at the time.

The Cultural Accreditation of Rock

Gendron traces in detail the cultural accreditation of rock that begins in 1964 and is affirmed by its takeover of the LP market in 1967. Cultural accreditation refers to "the acquisition of aesthetic distinction as conferred or recognized by leading cultural authorities, which, in the case of performers, means the acquisition of the status of 'artist' as opposed to 'entertainer.'" Gendron notes that, in order to gain legitimacy, both jazz and rock had to overcome initial rejection by cultural authorities due to accusations of vulgarity and hypersexuality.[633] Therefore, it was more than just a sound that was seeking cultural acceptance. Sound is bound up in the raced, classed, and gendered bodies of its performers, and each musical culture has its own rules of performance that govern both its sounds and the bodies that make them. Examining how *Playboy* participated in the cultural accreditation of rock illuminates the ways in which musical cultures are also bound to the raced, classed, and gendered bodies of their listeners.

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[633] Gendron, *Between Montmartre*, 161.

While scholars such as Gendron and Brennan have addressed the overlap and tension between jazz and rock as rock gained cultural legitimacy in the 1960s, little attention has been paid to *Playboy*'s role in negotiating this period's changing musical tastes despite the facts that: 1. its official coverage of rock began the same month as *Down Beat*'s (June 1967), 2. the discourses of jazz and rock that *Playboy* circulated paralleled those in both the specialist music and mainstream general interest press at the time, and 3. *Playboy* shared critics with publications such as *Down Beat* and the *Village Voice*. Following this work, I aim to show that *Playboy*'s absence from this history indicates a significant gap in our understanding of the histories of popular music and popular music journalism as well as the relationship between postwar popular music and masculinities.

Outside of the jazz poll, *Playboy*'s coverage of rock paralleled the rest of the mainstream press's coverage as detailed in Gendron's account of rock's rise to cultural legitimacy. This is best demonstrated through the magazine's coverage of the Beatles, which began in February 1965 when the group was the focus of "A Playboy Interview." The Beatles took the opportunity to poke fun at *Playboy* by repeatedly pointing out that the magazine's tastes were out of date and out of touch with the younger generation. For example, when Jean Shepherd asked if they thought the forthcoming London Playboy Club would be a success, Ringo Starr replied, "They're for dirty old men, not for the likes of us—dirty *young* men."[634] Their digs revealed that while *Playboy* was attempting to remain culturally relevant by devoting space to an interview with the Beatles, the magazine's real tastes, which made them hip and almost radical in the 1950s, now only made it appear too adult and almost regressive.

The following month, March 1965, *Playboy* dismissed the Beatles as merely an annoying

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[634] "Playboy Interview: The Beatles," *Playboy*, February 1965, 60.

fad and a source of temporary teenage hysteria. This came in response to a letter sent into the magazine's advice column, "The Playboy Advisor," by a mother concerned over her teenage daughter's and her daughter's friends' obsessive worship of the band. Echoing the rest of the press's disdain for the Beatles at that time, *Playboy* advised, "We suggest you keep cool until the Beatle bugaboo likewise passes away, as it most assuredly will. In the meantime, when Susan plays her records, do your listening with earmuffs. Yeah, yeah, yeah."[635] This advice dismissed both the cultural and musical legitimacy of the band. Throughout the rest of 1965, *Playboy*'s only other mention of the band had nothing to do with their music. Although the positive review of the film *Help!* that ran in "Playboy After Hours" acknowledged the Beatles as good, it emphasized that they were mostly lucky.[636] However, by September 1967, the magazine had jumped on the Beatles bandwagon with a positive review of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*—the magazine's first review of a Beatles record.[637]

Unlike changes to the jazz poll, *Playboy* never defended or even discussed its decision to start reviewing rock. In fact, the magazine simply started talking about rock as if it had always been a part of the magazine. For example, the September 1967 recordings section not only referenced *Revolver* in its review of *Sgt. Pepper's* as if the magazine had always reviewed the Beatles, the paragraph following the Beatles review namedrops the group seven times while reviewing albums by six bands, including the Hollies, Tommy James and the Shondells, the

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[635] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, March 1965, 38.

[636] "Playboy After Hours: Movies," *Playboy*, October 1965, 26.

[637] Gendron argues that "the narrative for the cultural accreditation of rock music begins…with the Beatles' invasion of North America in 1964 and reaches its apogee in 1967, contemporaneously with the release of the *Sergeant Pepper* album to a torrent of accolades." Gendron, *Between Montmartre*, 162-163; "Playboy After Hours: Recordings," *Playboy*, September 1967, 44, 46.

Buckinghams, and The Monkees. This embrace of rock criticism as natural was an indication of Gendron's observation that "the interval of accreditory quietude suddenly came to an end in early 1967 with an accelerating outpouring of approbations for rock music more voluminous and laudatory than anything before."[638] A non-Beatle-referencing review of Country Joe and the Fish seems awkwardly tacked on to the end of this paragraph, betraying the fact that the relationship between *Playboy* and rock was not an easy one. Unlike the angry responses to the jazz poll in May 1965, in August 1967, the magazine printed two letters from readers commending the magazine on its recent recognition of non-jazz popular music.[639]

As Brennan outlines, in the June 1967 issue, *Down Beat* editor Dan Morgenstern felt compelled to both include rock coverage and defend the decision to do so. Despite earlier coverage of genres such as R&B and country and western, its status as primarily a jazz magazine, unlike *Playboy*'s more general status as "entertainment for men," meant that *Down Beat* could not simply start covering rock without accompanying commentary. Furthermore, the magazine's circulation numbers (69,164 copies per issue as compared to *Playboy*'s more than 4.2 million in 1967) meant that it was particularly vulnerable to pressure from advertisers, whom Brennan reports were able to convince *Down Beat*'s publisher that covering rock was essential to the magazine's survival. Brennan argues that "Morgenstern's editorial philosophy ensured that…almost without exception, jazz was presented as a music to which rock musicians ought to aspire; while rock musicians were praised for developing more 'sophisticated' music, it was

[638] Gendron, *Between Montmartre*, 193.

[639] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, August 1967, 10.

usually according to the criteria of jazz music."[640] Widening one's scope beyond the specialized music press, it is evident that this phenomenon was not simply a reflection of the philosophies of Morgenstern and *Down Beat*; rather, it was part of a wider popular music discourse as evidenced by *Playboy*'s similar treatment of the relationship between jazz and rock. For example, *Playboy*'s February 1968 review of *Strange Days* by the Doors stated, "Jazzmen take heed: The Doors can *play*," and described the band as "the best pop group to appear in eons."[641] This proved that *Playboy* still had its priorities straight; i.e., it was still more interested in musicianship than it was in mass appeal. In addition to the growing sophistication of rock music, Morgenstern at *Down Beat* and Feather and Hentoff at *Playboy* all noted collaboration and crossovers among jazz and rock musicians as well as reminding readers that rock and jazz shared musical roots. This latter point was one that Feather had made when dismissing rock 'n' roll in the June 1957 issue of *Playboy*, but as rock's cultural legitimacy grew, the associations of rock and jazz began to seem more like arguments for the continued legitimacy of jazz.[642] That is, by associating rock and jazz, *Playboy* was not necessarily attempting to introduce its older readers to rock as much as it was targeting a youth market who might be turned onto jazz along with other facets of the Playboy lifestyle.

Playboy's critical treatment of Bob Dylan illustrates that mass appeal did sometimes have the power to alter the magazine's reception of a particular musician. The magazine's early reviews of Dylan's work were largely negative. For example, *Playboy*'s claim that "the self-

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[640] Brennan, "Down Beats and Rolling Stones: An Historical Comparison," 137; *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals, 1967* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1968), 269, 283.

[641] "Playboy After Hours: Recordings," *Playboy*, February 1968, 27; emphasis in original.

[642] See Leonard Feather, "Rock 'n' Roll," *Playboy*, June 1957, 76-77.

styled poet of protest never sounded so good" came in reference to the album, *Odetta Sings Dylan*. In the same issue, the magazine said of Dylan, "Songwriter, yes; poet, perhaps (if your taste runs to self-conscious illiteration); but we're not yet ready to call him a singer."[643] In contrast, when Dylan was elected to the Playboy Jazz and Pop Hall of Fame, Hentoff declared, "Dylan's greatest contribution to modern music has been to show that popular-song lyrics can be poetry of the highest order."[644] Regardless of the motives, *Playboy*'s coverage also proved that rock could now be seen as a serious music. Rock's subdominant status, as explained in detail by Keightley, allowed it to cling to the more desirable label of youth while staking "its claims to seriousness on the historically 'adult' musical institutions of the album…and the extended career, rather than on the 45-rpm record and one-hit wonder typical of teen music."[645] As Norma Coates and others have demonstrated, this claim to adult seriousness also relied upon the naturalization of masculinity in rock through a process of tying teens and pop to the feminine.[646] In other words, rock had successfully shed its ties with feminine frivolity. While rock's seriousness and masculinity enabled *Playboy* to cover rock without associating with bad taste, rock culture threatened the relevance of the Playboy lifestyle with its own non-dominant masculinity.

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[643] "Playboy After Hours: Recordings," *Playboy*, September 1965, 65.

[644] Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '70," 158.

[645] Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," 123.

[646] For more on rock's masculinism, its separation from pop by labeling pop as feminized, and the counterculture's relation to women, see Norma Coates, "Teenyboppers, Groupies, and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15, no. 1 (2003): 65-94; Frith and McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality;" Railton, "The Gendered Carnival of Pop;" and Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music*.

Although *Down Beat* and *Playboy* both had image issues to consider when deciding to cover rock, it is arguable that *Playboy* had more to lose than circulation numbers. While Morgenstern may have felt that *Down Beat*'s reputation as a jazz publication was on the line when it took up rock criticism, *Playboy* was risking no less than the version of masculinity upon which it had been built. *Playboy*'s fraught and uneasy relationship with rock throughout the 1960s points to taste as an embodied experience, inseparable from the factors, such as age, gender, race, and industrial practices, which inform it. Despite the magazine's increasing attention to rock, it remained conscious of rock as a larger musical culture extending beyond genre boundaries. *Playboy*'s treatment of rock demonstrates an attempt to simultaneously recognize its readers' changing musical tastes while maintaining a distance from the values and location for self-identity that rock provides.

Before the counterculture emerged, androgyny was a source of humor (initially directed at rock musicians) for *Playboy*. For example, a cartoon in the February 1966 issue features three young people dressed in leather jackets, tight pants, and boots. All of them have long hair. They are standing in a record label office. One of the youth has leaned a guitar against the label executive's desk. This youth leans over the desk of the balding, cigar-smoking executive and explains, "We call ourselves the Fortuna Brothers, but actually one of us is a Fortuna sister." (fig. 39) In such a way, gender was used once again to dismiss the legitimacy of rock culture. Growing alongside the legitimacy of rock culture, the counterculture seemed poised to legitimate androgyny while the Playboy ethos was based in proving that one was all man. While making fun of androgynous rock musicians, *Playboy* ran numerous other cartoons that indicated that a man's taste in classy music like opera and jazz could lead to sexual conquest, the ultimate proof of the masculinity and heterosexuality of the Playboy.

Figure 39: "We call ourselves the Fortuna Brothers, but actually one of us is a Fortuna sister."
Source: Harris, *Playboy*, February 1966, 166.

In addition to being threatened by rock's association with the androgynous counterculture, *Playboy*'s version of masculinity was also threatened by rock's appeal to youth. According to Keightley, rock's cultural accreditation marked "an important cultural shift in the relative valorisation of 'adulthood' and 'youth'…Rather than striving for adulthood and its traditional privileges, the desire to stay 'young' for a longer period had become more and more widespread."[647] While making a conscious effort to gain the readership of college-aged men since 1955, the lifestyle that *Playboy* offered its readers had always and necessarily been an adult alternative to hegemonic masculinity with adult tastes, concerns, and responsibilities. As the Beatles pointed out in February 1965, it seemed that *Playboy* had little to offer "dirty young men." Although rock had gained legitimacy, it was still a youth music no matter the age of its listeners.

Maintaining Space for Jazz

Other content in the magazine served to counterbalance coverage of rock and/or the

[647] Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," 123.

counterculture and attempted to reinforce the cultural relevancy of jazz and the Playboy lifestyle. For example, in the issue following Herbert Gold's article on the counterculture entitled "The New Wave Makers," an article examining free jazz entitled "The New Thing" appears. Gold dismissed the canonization and commercialization of rock in an otherwise sympathetic article, stating, "Rock music came to life from a Negro tradition blues, jazz and rock 'n' roll, after a sea change in Liverpool before it was shipped back by the Beatles who have now been canonized through a habit of the times of producing Instant Tradition." He continues, "Initially, the new groups are attracted by the slogans of Zen and Leary; they want to see truly and do little; but then the pleasures of money and esteem come in and they feel they can change the world by making the millions listen, and so enter the managers and agents and echo chambers and the soaped-up lyrics. Climb On, Cash In, Cop Out."[648] The next month, Michael Zwerin lamented, "The State Department exports jazz as a highly productive sales aid in a campaign to sell the world our way of life. At home, however, the jazz musician is neglected, unwanted and hungry."[649] The notion of the jazz musician as neglected at home while lauded abroad was a refrain often repeated by Hentoff in the article accompanying the results of the annual jazz poll. Such coverage painted the success of rock musicians as largely commercial while upholding the artistry and political potential of jazz musicians.

While *Playboy*'s initial impetus for covering jazz stemmed from Hefner's personal tastes and a desire to define a sophisticated taste culture centered around "entertainment for men," as the 1960s progressed, *Playboy* utilized its entertainment outlets—the magazine, chain of Playboy Clubs, and both television variety series—to create and maintain space for the performance of

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[648] Gold, "The New Wave Makers," 195-196.

[649] Michael Zwerin, "The New Thing," *Playboy*, November 1967, 220.

jazz and to advocate for and pay greater respect to jazz musicians. Although *Playboy* drew on the similar roots of jazz to pop, folk, and rock in order to mitigate their increasing inclusion in spaces ostensibly reserved for jazz, at the same time, it maintained distance from rock by carving out two levels of popular music. By continually making comparisons between jazz and classical music, *Playb*oy marked the high culture status of jazz and aided in its elevation from popular to art music. At the same time, rock, which had initially gained entrée to the Playboy taste culture through its popularity with both *Playboy* readers and the wider population of white, middle class youth, was relegated to the lower level of musical taste. This contradictory stance toward rock allowed Playboy to cater to current tastes while upholding jazz as rock's more authentic and respect-worthy forebear.

Accordingly, this contradiction is evident in both advertisements for *Playboy After Dark* (*P.A.D.)*, the late 1960s reprise of the television variety party Hefner had hosted as *Playboy's Penthouse* beginning in 1959, and on the series itself. While the series provided space for performances by legendary jazz musicians and pop vocalists, it also catered to the more contemporary tastes that *Playboy*'s readership had been professing through its responses to the jazz and pop poll. Patty Farmer and Will Friedwald provide the following apt description of the entertainment on *P.A.D.*: "In an attempt to please the widest possible audience, Las Vegas and Haight Ashbury were thrust together with predictably awkward results."[650] Every issue of *Playboy* in 1969 ran a full-page, full-color advertisement for *P.A.D*. While these ads played with Timothy Leary's command to the counterculture to "Turn on, tune in, [and] drop out," *Playboy*'s advertisements for the show indicated that the Playmates would be the "turn on" and that one should "tune in" to *P.A.D*. The use of the phrase, "Drop in!" in these ads functioned both as an

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[650] Farmer and Friedwald, *Playboy Swings*, 96.

invitation to the party and as an inversion of the counterculture's message to drop out.[651]

Additionally, the location of performances on the set of *P.A.D.* helped to mark jazz as music that required respect and attentive listening. These assertions were also apparent within the ads for *P.A.D.* that ran in the magazine. While the ads highlighted the show's musical performers and other guests, the rock groups were described as "wild," "new," "hot," and as providing "ear-stretching" or "mind-blowing" sounds to which one might groove. In fact, the descriptor "rock" only appeared in the ad that ran in the July 1969 issue.[652] Descriptors such as "most celebrated performers in show business," "superb song stylings," "stars," and "the greatest performers around" were reserved for the likes of Tony Bennett, Sammy Davis Jr., Billy Eckstine, Joan Baez, Vic Damone, and Buddy Rich. In other words, rock was touted for its novelty while jazz and jazz-related performers, such as pop vocalists and folksingers, were revered for their skillful performances.

Linda Ronstadt's performance and Hefner's introduction of her performance on an October 1969 episode of *P.A.D.* highlighted the ways in which musical taste intersects with notions about gender, broader taste cultures, and class or sophistication as well as the role of televisual space in reinforcing ideologies concerning the ways in which these markers of identity "should" intersect. The scene opens with a close-up of "an authentic Dobro" resting on Hefner's lap while Hefner and his girlfriend, Barbi Benton, run their fingers across the strings. Hefner asks the guests gathered around them on the living room staircase, "Does anybody know what this is?" Benton replies, "If I tell you, will you stop playing it?" Turning to her, Hefner states, "Well, it's very obvious to me you don't appreciate true musical genius." He then goes on to

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[651] *Playboy After Dark,* Advertisement, April 1969, *Playboy*; *Playboy After Dark*, Advertisement, March 1969, *Playboy*.

[652] *Playboy After Dark*, Advertisement, July 1969, *Playboy*.

explain that the Dobro is "the great grandfather of the electrical guitar" and is "used quite often in country music." Amid the chorus of disapproval elicited by Hefner's inquiry as to whether his guests would like to hear some country music, one can hear Byron Gilliam (the series' dance supervisor) protest, "It's not your image, Hef. Stick to playing the pipe, Hef. Alright?" By calling out the seeming incompatibility of country music and Hef's image, Gilliam was actually contributing to the conscious identity work, in which Hefner and the *P.A.D.* crew were engaged, in order to justify Ronstadt's performance within the Playboy lifestyle.[653]

Despite Hefner's lesson about the Dobro, an "electrical guitar" accompanied Ronstadt on an electrified and countrified version of "Walkin' Down the Line," a song that was written and originally recorded by Bob Dylan and covered and recorded extensively by a variety of musicians ranging from Odetta to Ricky Nelson throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By alluding to a more "authentic" musical history wherein the Dobro is the respected patriarch of a guitar family, Hefner was reiterating a broadening of the categories of jazz and pop that *Playboy* magazine had been contending with since Leonard Feather's June 1957 article on rock 'n' roll. By the late 1960s, with folk, pop, and rock performers incorporating "country roots" into their sounds and country artists crossing over onto the pop charts, *Playboy*'s jazz critic, Nat Hentoff, began addressing the rising popularity of country sounds. So while country music was certainly not central to the Playboy lifestyle, it was not entirely alien to Playboy either.[654]

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[653] "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy After Dark*, disc 2, episode 1, aired October 1969 (Ventura, CA: Morada Vision, 2006), DVD.

[654] It should be noted that six months prior to the airing of this episode, Dylan had released his own country album, *Nashville Skyline*, and had also recorded 15 duets with Johnny Cash while he was in Nashville finishing the album. Additionally, in the 1970s, country music would find a bigger place within the Playboy taste culture as Barbi Benton went on to become a regular on *Hee-Haw* and to record country albums for the Playboy Records label launched in 1971. The label's biggest selling artist was country star Mickey Gilley. Farmer and Friedwald,

Nevertheless, at the end of Ronstadt's performance, Hefner worked to distance the Playboy lifestyle from country music by opining, "You play country music with a difference."[655] As Ethan Thompson argues in his analysis of Hefner's original TV variety-party, "the urbane and varied performances of *Playboy's Penthouse*" create a "model for masculine, sophisticated 'seeing.'" Being able to recognize this unnamed difference and to "appreciate true musical genius" is a key component of the leisure competence that Playboy aimed to foster in its audiences for the magazine, television show, and chain of Playboy Clubs. With cultural formations that did not fit neatly into the Playboy taste culture, Playboy exhibited a tendency to simultaneously embrace and disavow the cultural formation in question, whether it was a particular genre of music or a medium like television more generally. In the episode, the presence of country music in the Playboy lifestyle was embraced by Hefner's display of the Dobro and Ronstadt's performance of a folk song in bare feet and a minidress—a look which maintained her own recent folk past with the Stone Poneys while blending in with the other "girls next door" on set. Hefner's comment served to disavow country music more generally by marking her performance as a particularly, to borrow Keightley's phrase, "'special case' of mass consumption," and the initial boos of Hefner's guests indicated that despite growing acceptance of country music among mainstream audiences, Playboy audiences would not be incorrect to approach the genre with skepticism, or more accurately, elitism.[656] However, at the end of the

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63; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '70," 177; Clarence Petersen, "Barbi Benton: Comfortable Company," *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 14, 1972; Jann S. Wenner, "Bob Dylan Finishes New LP, Records with Johnny Cash," *Rolling Stone*, March 15, 1969, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/bob-dylan-finishes-new-lp-records-with-johnny-cash-19690315.

[655] "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy After Dark*, disc 2, episode 1.

[656] Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," 127.

episode, Ronstadt performs a duet of Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child" with no less of a legend than Billy Eckstine. After the duet, Hefner bestows jazz and Playboy credentials upon Ronstadt by proclaiming, "Billie would have loved that."[657] Ronstadt's duet with Eckstine illustrates that, even while showcasing more widely popular forms of music, Playboy was unwavering in its commitment to providing space for jazz and utilized its various media platforms to educate younger audience members about America's musical history.

While Playboy's stance toward non-jazz popular musics was often contradictory, it was also protective, a means of maintaining one's identity amidst a culture marked by rapid changes not only in taste, but also in racial, gender, and political relations. However, these cultural shifts meant that Playboy's stance toward jazz was also contradictory. Repeatedly, Playboy presented jazz as both a savior and in need itself of salvation. The repeated assertion that jazz and its musicians did not receive the respect they deserved are a case in point. Feather's reviews of the year in jazz, which accompanied the Playboy Jazz Poll results from 1958-1962, were generally optimistic, citing noteworthy performances on television, a growing jazz festival season, increasing record sales, a proliferation of U.S.-based musicians undertaking international tours, the spread of coffeehouses and the "jazz-and-poetry movement," a renewed interest in big bands, the creation of all-jazz FM stations, increasing academic interest in the music, and "the trend toward a jazz-classical merger."[658] Nevertheless, hints at the changes to come, such as the closure of prominent night clubs catering to jazz audiences and musicians' increasing attention to political matters involving race relations, appear beginning with Feather's 1961 Playboy Jazz

[657] "Playboy After Dark," *Playboy After Dark*, disc 2, episode 1.

[658] Feather, "The 1958 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1958, 36, 76; Feather, "The 1959 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1959, 49, 52, 54; Feather, "The 1961 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1961, 84, 129; and Feather, "The 1962 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1962, 129, 131.

Poll report. Even though well-known night clubs were closing, leaving "precious few spots outside New York City where a big-name, big-money group could get a gig," new outlets for jazz performance included the domestic-cum-night club space of *Playboy's Penthouse* and the opening of the Playboy Club in Chicago, both of which offered "intimate jazz in appropriate surroundings." In fact, Feather declared that by the end of 1959, *Playboy's Penthouse* was "the only important regular TV outlet for jazz."[659] *Playboy* also utilized these articles to remind readers of its other contributions to the promotion of jazz, such as the release of three *All-Star Jazz* LP collections featuring winners of the readers' poll and the production of the first Playboy Jazz Festival.[660]

In 1963, Hentoff took over as *Playboy*'s resident jazz critic, and his summaries of the state of jazz, and later, popular music more generally, were marked by greater attention to the relationship between music and politics and frank assessments of the disparities between the esteem and opportunities accorded to jazz musicians. For example, at the beginning of his 1963 article, Hentoff asserted, "Jazz in 1962 continued to accumulate prestige—especially abroad—

[659] Feather, "The 1958 Playboy All-Stars," 76; Feather, "The 1959 Playboy All-Stars," 54; Feather, "The 1960 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1960, 32, 38; and "The 1961 Playboy All-Stars," 84, 129.

[660] Although Playboy's forays into the recording industry would remain fairly limited until the formation of the Playboy Records-Music division in mid-1971, the three All-Star jazz releases must be recognized for the unprecedented intra-industry cooperation they took to release. In order to compile the 21 tracks that comprise the first All-Star jazz release, Playboy had to negotiate with the following record companies: Columbia, Contemporary, MacGregor, Pacific Jazz, RCA Victor, Storyville, and Verve. In the 1950s, Playboy also released a single of Cy Coleman's "Playboy's Theme," and in 1965, Hefner produced *Playboy Presents Johnny Janis Once in a Blue Moon*, an album of romantic ballads by a Chicago jazz vocalist and Playboy Club performer. Farmer and Friedwald, *Playboy Swings*, 61-62; Johnny Janis, *Playboy Presents…Once in a Blue Moon*, Monument MLP 8036, 1965, LP; "On the Scene: Johnny Janis," *Playboy*, December 1965, 218; *The Playboy Jazz All Stars*, Playboy Records PB #1957, 1957, LP.

but the dues at home became stiffer for many musicians who would have preferred to alchemize plaudits into cash."[661] In other words, recognition of the cultural import of jazz meant little if it did not also result in a livelihood for the musicians. In the early 1960s, reportage on the night club scene repeatedly mentioned that the size of the audience for live jazz was decreasing, and night club owners' responses to this diminishing audience in many ways worsened the situation for the owners and musicians alike. Night club owners tended to respond to the decreased audience in two ways: 1) by booking bands that were already well-known or 2) by decreasing the number of days per week that they offered live jazz. Both of these options had the effect of limiting the number of outlets where newer musicians could gain a following, reducing opportunities for both performance and listening. A few musicians—Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Gerry Mulligan, for instance—were able to take their pick of night club dates, but in general, Hentoff's annual reports described a scene in which both older and younger jazz musicians had difficulty securing decent night club gigs and the most significant employment opportunities for U.S.-based jazz musicians were opening up overseas.[662]

Like Feather before him, Hentoff lauded the Playboy Clubs as "a bright exception" in the night club scene, providing an increasingly rare space "for jazzmen on the way up to find night-club employment."[663] In spite of the positivity of Hentoff's statement, it amounts to little more than a passing mention within the article as a whole; however, the Playboy Club circuit is deserving of greater attention for the number of opportunities it provided for musicians and

[661] Hentoff, "The 1963 Playboy All-Stars," 81.

[662] Hentoff, "The 1963 Playboy All-Stars," 139; Hentoff, "The 1964 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1964, 90, 120; Hentoff, "The 1965 Playboy All-Stars," *Playboy*, February 1965, 82, 86.

[663] Hentoff, "The 1964 Playboy All-Stars," 120.

comedians. In March 1961, *Variety* predicted that the Playboy Club circuit could become "the biggest vaude circuit since the Keith-Orpheum and Loew palmiest days." This prediction was based on extrapolating the number of acts booked by the Chicago Club—"seven vaude acts at a time, plus two musical units"—to the proposed opening of an additional eight clubs across the United States.[664] Between 1960 and 1984, Playboy Clubs International would own or franchise a total of 33 Clubs plus 8 resort Club-Hotels.[665] Each of the Playboy Clubs had a minimum of two rooms providing live entertainment and often booked more than one act per room. According to Arlyne Rothberg, former entertainment director for Playboy Clubs International, it quickly became overwhelming to audition acts for individual Clubs, and most of the Clubs' rooms—the resorts were exceptions—simply did not have the capacity to accommodate big name talent. Farmer and Friedwald describe the Playboy rooms as "more in the spirit of the Village Vanguard or the Blue Angel [than the Copacabana] and priced within the range of the average Joe"—or at least, the average Playboy Club member.[666] Because the Playboy Clubs were members-only and the entertainment was not the only draw, they had little to lose by booking local and/or up-and-coming talent. While some Clubs, such as the one in New Orleans, served as testing grounds for talent, generally those bands that passed an audition and did well in their initial Playboy Club booking were sent around the circuit; each Club's acts rotated on a bi-weekly basis. Even though big name performers were rare on Playboy Club stages, they were common in the audience, and celebrity sightings, entertainment industry related parties, and fundraising activities were reported on in *VIP*, the quarterly publication sent exclusively to Playboy Club

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[664] "Now It's the Playboy Time," 63.

[665] Scott, *Bunny Years*, 277.

[666] Farmer and Friedwald, *Playboy Swings*, 254.

members.[667] Through such features, Playboy could send the message to its members that while the Clubs were usually not where the stars went to work, they were often the places where the stars went to play—a claim that added to, rather than detracted from, the purported exclusivity of the Clubs. While jazz never received significant appreciation on primetime television and the night club scene diminished throughout the 1960s, Playboy brought some salvation to the jazz scene by remaining dedicated to utilizing its media empire to provide access to these spaces for jazz musicians even as the annual readers' poll reports came to be dominated by discussions of rock.

Jazz and Social Consciousness

While traditional spaces for music performances diminished for jazz musicians throughout the 1960s, opportunities in education multiplied, including the college concert circuit, a proliferation of jazz programs in universities, and programs and initiatives like the HARYOU Act (Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited), which enlisted "jazz musicians as staff members to reach the 'alienated' young and spur them to express themselves through music."[668] These

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[667] Farmer and Friedwald note that Tony Bennett was a rare exception, playing the Playboy Club circuit after a decade as a chart topper. The entertainment calendars of *VIP* indicate that talents such as, jazz singer Teddi King and comedian Jackie Gayle, who appeared on *Playboy's Penthouse* and *Playboy After Dark*, respectively, also toured the Playboy Club circuit. The Lake Geneva Club-Hotel in Wisconsin tended to book the biggest stars, including Sid Caesar, Vic Damone, Peggy Lee, Liza Minnelli, and Billy Eckstine (most of whom also performed on *Playboy After Dark*). The New York Playboy Club, due to its location and Kai Winding's position as musical director, was also able to draw in better-known jazz performers. However, for a time, Winding was not allowed to perform himself because the club did not have a cabaret license and therefore, could not hire horn players, drummers, or vocalists. Farmer and Friedwald, *Playboy Swings*, 136-137, 164-165, 191-193, 254; "Playboy Club Calendar," *VIP*, Fall 1968, 7; "Playboy Club Calendar," *VIP*, Fall 1972, 17; "Playboy Club Calendar," *VIP*, July 1965, 1, 30; "Playboy Club Calendar," *VIP*, March 1965, 1; "Playboy Club Calendar," *VIP*, Spring 1969, 7; "Playboy Club Calendar," *VIP*, Summer 1968, 7.

changes were due, in part, to the acceptance of jazz as an art form by the cultural establishment; however, more importantly, theses changes were also connected to the African American civil rights movement and the increasing identification of jazz with black culture. Robert K. McMichael argues "that jazz music historically has provided sites of integrationist subcultures in which racial boundaries exist but at moments do not reproduce the same power relations as in mainstream society."[669] As Gendron points out, the mostly white jazz journals were well aware of jazz's progressive racial politics and by the mid-1940s, took pains to denounce "Jim Crow practices in nightclubs, record companies, and the rest of society" and took great pleasure in announcing that their readers' had voted for an integrated all-star band in their annual jazz polls.[670]

However, Hefner ended his introduction to *Playboy*'s December 1953 inaugural issue with the following claims: "Affairs of the state will be out of our province. We don't expect to solve any world problems or prove any great moral truths. If we are able to give the American male a few extra laughs and a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age, we'll feel we've justified our existence."[671] Seeing a wide gap in the market for magazines aimed at "the city-bred male," Hefner's initial distancing of *Playboy* from politics came less from a genuine disinterest in politics than from a desire to distinguish his magazine from *Esquire*, which he saw

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[668] Hentoff, "Jazz '66," 86; Hentoff, "Jazz '67," 132; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '69," 128; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '70," 178; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '71," 158; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '72," 162; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '73," 143, 146; Hentoff, "The 1963 Playboy All-Stars," 140; Hentoff, "The 1964 Playboy All-Stars," 120; Hentoff, "The 1965 Playboy All-Stars," 96, 145

[669] McMichael, "'We Insist,'" 381.

[670] Gendron, *Between Montmartre*, 137.

[671] "Volume I, Number I," 3.

as *Playboy*'s main competitor for a readership comprised of affluent, white men. While *Esquire* touted itself as "the magazine for men," Hefner adopted the tagline, "entertainment for men," for *Playboy*, pointing out in his introduction to the first issue that entertainment had been all but pushed from the pages of *Esquire*. While the magazine avoided direct editorializing on social and political matters until Hefner attempted to define "The Playboy Philosophy" in an exhausting 25 articles on the subject published between December 1962 and May 1966, discussions of world problems and moral truths nevertheless worked their way into the magazine's content prior to *Playboy*'s more self-consciously political turn marked by the publication of the "The Playboy Philosophy."

Crucially, it was through popular music fandom that *Playboy* first addressed its audiences as socially conscious citizens, linking its ideal of sophisticated, white masculinity to popular music and progressive politics. Three years before *Playboy* made such connections in print, it made them through promoting musical performances to live and television audiences. In August 1959, Playboy produced the first Playboy Jazz Festival. Held over 3 days in Chicago Stadium, the first night of performances were designated as a benefit for the Urban League of Chicago, an interracial organization dedicated to increasing access to education, economic opportunities, and housing for the city's black residents. The benefit evening included performances by the Count Basie Band, Dizzy Gillespie Quintet, Dave Brubeck Quartet, and Miles Davis Sextet, among others, and all proceeds were donated to the Urban League.[672]

Two months later, in October 1959, *Playboy's Penthouse*, the first of two Hefner-hosted

[672] The benefit evening was the highest grossest evening of the jazz festival "with 19,010 [festival goers] paying $101, 476 in admissions," and approximately $60,000 of this was donated to the Urban League. Overall, the first Playboy Jazz Festival grossed $245,680. In 2016 dollars, the festival grossed over $2 million with the Urban League's take amounting to approximately $488,000. "Jazz Festival Program," *The 1959 Playboy Jazz Festival Yearbook*, August 1959, 37: "Playboys Jubilant: 245G Bash Gross Earmarks Profit Edge," *Billboard*, August 17, 1959, 4

television "parties" premiered with extensive musical variety content. Because it was a syndicated program that mixed black and white guests and performers on a studio set designed to give the program the feeling of an intimate party in Hefner's penthouse apartment, many television stations in the South refused to air it. When the series was revived almost a decade later as *Playboy After Dark*, the integration of guests and performers still proved too progressive and controversial for many television station managers, prompting *Jet* magazine to publish a brief write up commending Hefner for featuring "show business greats and other friends of all races and colors" and resisting pressures to limit interracial dancing on the series.[673]

Returning to the magazine itself, Dave Brubeck and Benny Goodman penned perhaps the two most significant articles to appear in *Playboy* in the 1950s in which social and political issues were connected to jazz. In 1955, over half a year before the U.S. State Department officially sanctioned such discourses by sending Dizzy Gillespie and his band on a goodwill tour of Southern Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia, Brubeck reinforced among *Playboy* readers the then-common notion that jazz was a "distinctively American music" and the possibility that jazz was "the only truly American art form," due in no small part to the fact that "it certainly represents freedom, the right to be different, the right to be an individual."[674] Echoing Brubeck's characterization of jazz as an essentially democratic art form, Goodman, like Hefner, discussed jazz as not only a cultural form that united the races, but as one that created a space in which race seemingly no longer mattered. Goodman explained, "Many years before the Major League baseball teams used Negro players, Negro and white musicians were playing

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[673] "Hefner Resists Pressure to Limit Mixed Dancing," *Jet*, January 2, 1969, 61.

[674] Dave Brubeck, "The New Jazz Audience," *Playboy*, August 1955, 14.

together all over the country."[675] As becomes clear through the later "The Playboy Philosophy," similar notions drove the magazine's editorial philosophy from the outset, a similarity that indicates the reasons behind the embrace of jazz as the music of the Playboy lifestyle were far more complex than the White Negro hipsterism of Norman Mailer. While *Playboy* was certainly invested in the cultural contributions of black musicians, writers, and other entertainers, its articles and interviews consistently worked towards presenting these celebrities as human beings in their totality.

Prior to 1962, several biographical and historical pieces about musicians published in Playboy mentioned encounters with racism, such as Miles Davis being beaten by the police outside of Birdland in August 1959.[676] However, the first *Playboy* article to explicitly tackle racial relations in the United States was written by Hentoff for the July 1962 issue. Given Hentoff's status as a respected jazz critic and the fact that he was poised to take over Feather's position as *Playboy*'s chief music critic, it is perhaps unsurprising that he began his analysis with an anecdote about Dizzy Gillespie, arguing that "Dizzy's irrepressible race pride does partly symbolize the accelerating change in American Negroes' attitudes toward whites—including white liberals—and toward themselves."[677] Much of Hentoff's analysis foreshadows conversations about black militancy, the effectiveness of demonstrations, the threat of race riots, the place of white people in the movement, the intersections of racism and class, and the relative merits of separatism versus desegregation that will unfold in the magazine over the remainder of the decade.

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[675] Benny Goodman, "Goodman à la King," *Playboy*, April 1956, 61.

[676] Stanley Goldstein, "Miles," *Playboy*, August 1960, 39.

[677] Nat Hentoff, "Through the Racial Looking Glass," 65.

In the 1960s, *Playboy* used popular music as a testing ground for two new features, "The Playboy Panel" and "The Playboy Interview." The first "Playboy Interview," published in the September 1962 issue was culled from conversations that then-freelance writer Alex Haley had over the course of two days spent with Miles Davis at Davis' home in New York. This interview, which I will return to, can easily be considered the magazine's second feature to directly address civil rights and race relations in an in-depth manner. Haley would go on to conduct a number of other important "Playboy Interviews" which focused on the civil rights movement, including those with Malcolm X (December 1963); Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 1965); and Sammy Davis, Jr. (December 1966). [678]

In *Freedom Sounds*, Ingrid Monson states:

> From the early 1950s to the mid-1960s a general shift took place from a color-blind ideology on race within the jazz community to the assertion of a black-identified consciousness on the part of many African American musicians and their supporters. This discursive change closely parallels comparable developments in the civil rights movement, black nationalism, and black power.[679]

She goes on to propose "a framework for moving beyond the familiar standoff between blackness and colorblindness" by focusing on the ways in which jazz musicians drew on various aesthetic streams "to produce an alternative aesthetics of modernism."[680] Providing a space for honest discussion of the discourses surrounding race and popular music that Monson addresses, *Playboy* offers a productive yet underexamined site for understanding the relationship between popular music and the civil rights movement.

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[678] "Playbill," November 1960, 3; "Playboy Interview: Malcolm X"; "Playboy Interview: Martin Luther King Jr.," *Playboy*, January 1965; "Playboy Interview: Miles Davis," *Playboy*, September 1962; "Playboy Interview: Sammy Davis Jr.," *Playboy*, December 1966; "The Playboy Panel: Narcotics and the Jazz Musician," *Playboy*, November 1960.

[679] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 12.

[680] Ibid., 71.

As I have suggested, Haley's September 1962 interview with Miles Davis can be considered the second in-depth exploration of race relations to appear in *Playboy*. This emphasis was due, in part, to Haley's questions, but was arguably driven primarily by Davis's own desire to continue discussing the topic despite his claim that he hated to talk about what he thought of the so-called "mess." Haley began the interview by asking Davis about his reputation for having a bad temper and being rude to his audiences. He initially responded by feigning ignorance about why people would care so much about someone as unimportant as a trumpet player. Then, he argued that the problem was precisely that he was *only* a trumpet player, that all he did was play his horn without trying to be an entertainer. While he claimed that most of what was said about him was lies, he admitted that he did not announce numbers, had a tendency to leave the stage during performances, and occasionally did not feel like talking to fans between sets. He defended these actions either by reiterating that he was not an entertainer or by explaining the intense concentration that his work as a serious musician demanded.

As the interview progresses, however, it becomes clear that the insistence on concentration and refusal to entertain with anything other than his horn playing stemmed from early experiences with and strongly held beliefs about racism. When Haley asked if Davis felt that his race contributed to the complaints about him, Davis responded:

> I know damn well a lot of it is race. White people have certain things they expect from Negro musicians…It goes clear back to the slavery days. That was when Uncle Tomming got started because white people demanded it. Every little black child grew up seeing that getting along with white people meant grinning and acting clowns. It helped white people to feel easy about what they had done, and were doing, to Negroes, and that's carried right on over to now. You bring it down to musicians, they want you to not only play your instrument, but to entertain them, too, with grinning and dancing.[681]

A bit later in the interview, he recalled that he was the best trumpet player in his high school

[681] "Playboy Interview: Miles Davis," 58.

music class, but the first prize in contests always went to white boys. He explained, "It made me so mad I made up my mind to outdo anybody white on my horn. If I hadn't met that prejudice, I probably wouldn't have had as much drive in my work."[682] Along with Davis' other discussions of prejudice and the lack of representations of black people on television and in the movies, his answers quoted above framed his much-maligned public persona in terms of resistance rather than rudeness, and in the process, he called the white *Playboy* reader's attention to the subtle ways in which prejudice persisted in shaping white audience members' expectations of black performers.

The tensions that had developed within the various facets of the civil rights movement by 1966 were apparent in Haley's Playboy interview that year with Sammy Davis, Jr. While both Miles and Sammy explained that experiences with racism fundamentally shaped them as performers, Sammy dealt with these experiences by committing himself more fully to the role of entertainer. Described in the interview as a "singer, dancer, comedian, musician, mimic, actor and best-selling author," Sammy, unlike Miles, could neither shrug off his role as entertainer nor his predominantly white audiences.[683] Haley all but accused Sammy of Uncle Tomism when he asked whether race consciousness informed what he called Sammy's compulsion to win the approval of white audiences. Like Miles, Sammy regarded his experiences with racism as a teenager as instrumental in shaping him as a performer. He explained that his first encounters with white men who hated him without even knowing him came during his eight-month stint in the Army Special Services when he was 18. In those eight months, he endured torture and savage beatings at the hands of white GIs, which left him with a twice-broken nose and the

[682] "Playboy Interview: Miles Davis," 60.

[683] "Playboy Interview: Sammy Davis, Jr.," 99.

conviction that “I had to become a great enough entertainer that the hatred of prejudiced people couldn’t touch me anymore.”[684] While Miles Davis felt that giving in to the demands of a white audience to be entertained would render him something akin to a race traitor, Sammy expressed the feeling that entertaining provided a way to reach prejudiced audience members; that is, in order to feel entertained by Sammy, a prejudiced audience member would first have to grant him recognition as a fellow human being, even if that recognition only lasted while Sammy was onstage.

Throughout the rest of the interview, Haley pushed Sammy on his commitment to civil rights, resulting in responses that illustrate the ways in which varying levels of militancy could exist within the heart and mind of a single man. At one point in the interview, Sammy argued “that the Negro public’s abiding faith in Dr. King’s unflinching commitment to nonviolence…is just about the only thing that’s kept the lid from blowing off the racial pressure cooker.” Though he expressed opposition to any group that espoused violence toward “Whitey” in general, he did argue that there were times when black people would be justified in taking the law into their own hands. Sammy explained that vigilante justice was acceptable “just as long as the law permits whites to kill Negroes, or ‘white Negro’ civil rights workers, and get away with it.” He continued, “I’m for any kind of protest—including retaliating violence against known killers who get off—as long as Negroes are denied the full rights that any other American enjoys.” Sammy echoed the observations of both Malcolm X and James Baldwin when he predicted “riots that would make Watts look like a Sunday-school picnic—unless we get to work fixing what *causes* them.” At the most general level, the riots can be understood to stem from black Americans’ endurance of 300 years of violence at the hands of white people. Sammy explained,

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[684] “Playboy Interview: Sammy Davis, Jr.,” 102.

"Rioters are people who have no stake in their country, no stake even in their city, no stake in their homes, no stake even in their own survival. How much worse could death be than what they have to live with—and for? They feel they have nothing to lose—and they're probably right."[685]

As James Baldwin proclaimed in his January 1964 *Playboy* article on "The Uses of the Blues," "there is nothing more dangerous in any republic, any state, any country, any time than men who have nothing to lose."[686] Sammy's interview also registered a growing feeling of race pride among black Americans. This revolutionary feeling of dignity was a core component of the "mood ebony" that James Farmer described in a February 1966 article for *Playboy*. Farmer explained:

> This new dignity has many manifestations, not the least significant of which is a great and burgeoning sense of individual worth, released, ironically, through a mass movement. In a way, it is a rediscovery of the individual in American society. The average American feels submerged, powerless, a cog in a giant machine. But in his revolution the individual Negro has found a new meaning for himself.[687]

In this light, the 1966 interview with Sammy, worked to provide readers with a condensed version of the discourses espoused elsewhere in *Playboy* by civil rights leaders, ranging from Malcolm X to Dr. King and from James Baldwin to Eldridge Cleaver. Moreover, Sammy's was an interview with a mainstream entertainer, in a magazine subtitled "Entertainment for Men," that the average reader would probably not expect to contain such serious and sustained attention to the state of contemporary race relations.

In February 1964, *Playboy* published "The Playboy Panel: Jazz—Today and Tomorrow,"

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[685] "Playboy Interview: Sammy Davis, Jr.," 102, 110, 112-113.

[686] Baldwin, "The Uses of the Blues," *Playboy*, January 1964, 132.

[687] James Farmer, "Mood Ebony," *Playboy*, February 1966, 108.

which directly addressed and debated whether jazz should be approached with colorblindness or a black-identified consciousness. The panel also addressed the dwindling number of work opportunities and the government's promotion of jazz ambassadors overseas. Stan Kenton discussed how the civil rights movement had the unintended effect of making jazz more segregated, arguing that the government's demands for integration led to the closure of most of the places where black and white musicians had already been coming together to play. George Russell and Charles Mingus pointed out the hypocrisy of the State Department's program, which attempted to build foreign relations through cultural exchange even while ignoring its own jazz ambassadors at home. Charles Mingus suggested more than once that the government should be employing jazz musicians at home. For instance, he stated, "I'd like some Governmental agency to let me take my band out in the streets during the summer so that I could play in the parks or on the backs of trucks for kids, old people, anyone. In delinquent neighborhoods in the North. All through the South. Anywhere. I'd like to see the Government pay me and other bands who'd like to play for the people."[688] Mingus was reiterating a sentiment first expressed in Miles Davis's 1962 interview with the magazine. Discussing Louis Armstrong, Davis stated, "He does a good job overseas with his personality. But they ought to send him down South for goodwill. They need goodwill worse in Georgia and Alabama and Mississippi than they do in Europe."[689]

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[688] The panel included critic Ralph J. Gleason and musicians Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, Dave Brubeck, John "Dizzy" Gillespie, Stan Kenton, Charles Mingus, Gerry Mulligan, George Russell, and Gunther Schuller. For a thorough historical analysis of the connections between the State Department-sponsored jazz tours and the role of race and jazz in illuminating the American experience during the Cold War, see Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). "The Playboy Panel: Jazz—Today and Tomorrow," 29-30, 34, 38, 142.

[689] While Davis makes a good point, Armstrong's integrated band prevented him from playing in many places in the South, including his own hometown of New Orleans. In 1965,

Kenton's statement about the demise of the black-and-tan clubs aside, underlying these calls for jazz ambassadorship in the United States was a faith that jazz had the power to unite the nation. Beginning in 1964, Hentoff's annual reports on the state of jazz regularly addressed the connections between jazz and the civil rights movement, reporting on benefits performed by musicians on behalf of civil rights organizations as well as on the formation of community programs and institutions that utilized jazz to both honor the contributions of black people to American culture and to foster opportunities for youth to participate in communal action within their own neighborhoods. However, as the 1960s progressed and rock became the dominant music of the white middle class, Hentoff's reporting made clear that popular music more generally, rather than jazz in particular, held unifying potential. In addition to being a reflection of changing musical tastes, this shift was also due to Hentoff's contention that "jazz…was in a newly transitional state throughout 1969" and his subsequent prediction that the future of jazz would be black. He stated:

> But the future—as jazz took root in black-studies courses and community centers—was hopeful, because the unstemmable tide of black cultural consciousness was likely to produce new, long-term audiences for jazz. The base would be black, but, as always before in the history of the music, there would also be a corollary nucleus of white players and listeners. And eventually, with the larger young white audience now being raised on rock and blues, there may yet be a more substantial coming together of the audiences and musicians than has ever existed.[690]

Just as the blending and blurring of genre boundaries meant that popular music makers and listeners in the late 1960s were "leaping free of categories," Hentoff reminded readers that, in a time of "social and political upheaval," it seemed that music was one of the rare spaces in which

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Armstrong made his first appearance in New Orleans in over a decade. Because of stated laws that banned mixed performances, Armstrong's integrated band could not perform in his hometown, and he refused to comply with the law by playing with an all-black combo instead. Hentoff, "Jazz '66," 80; "Playboy Interview: Miles Davis," 66.

[690] Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '70," 178.

"direct, open communication [was] possible—transcending race and class and politics."[691] Therefore, while the diminishing audience for jazz was disappointing, it should not be seen as disheartening. After all, as Hentoff reminded *Playboy* readers, the most important link between jazz and rock were both forms' orientations toward liberation of both mind and body.[692] Since the drive for individual freedom was a cornerstone of the Playboy philosophy, the reminder of this shared purpose helped ease the transition to the new musical axis upon which both youth and masculinity would come to be defined in the wider dominant culture.

Playboy's coverage of civil rights and popular music between 1953 and 1972 reveals that while civil rights could be discussed without reference to popular music, it was much more difficult to have in-depth conversations with or about black musicians without reference to civil rights. This was due, in part, to several complementary characterizations of the social role of popular music that circulated in *Playboy* during the mid-twentieth century. These included: 1) the idea expressed by Brubeck that jazz represented freedom and the right to be an individual; 2) the idea expressed by Goodman and Hefner that jazz operated as a social force uniting both black and white musicians and audience members; 3) Dr. King's assertion that "In a sense, songs are the *soul* of a movement;" 4) James Baldwin's assertion that "Artists are the only people in a society who can tell that society the truth about itself;" and 5) the notion expressed to varying degrees by Brubeck and Baldwin that one of the important functions of jazz and the blues was to express repressed emotions and provide a means of respite from the everyday encounters in which someone "seems to decide to prove he's white and you're black."[693] Furthermore,

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[691] Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '68," 137; Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '69," 120.

[692] Hentoff, "Jazz & Pop '68," 139.

Playboy's conversations about race with prominent musicians demonstrate that the discourses of blackness in jazz and the discourses of blackness in the civil rights movement were not independent discourses that simply paralleled one another. Rather, these discourses came out of the shared experience of being black in the United States. Finally, while discourses of music and race also circulated through other media, *Playboy* was a key means through which such discourses reached a mass readership—*Playboy*'s total readership was approximately 14 million in 1969.[694] Crucially, the majority of these readers were educated, affluent, white men—in other words, the exact demographic many civil rights leaders called upon during the 1960s to work on dismantling the structures of white supremacy from within.

Conclusion

Brennan argues that "music journalism is the first draft of music history," constructing "the language and concepts used to discuss popular music in everyday life" and providing historians with "a sense of how musical and cultural events were covered in print media as they were unfolding."[695] I agree that popular music journalism can be an important archival source as well as an object of study in its own right for exactly the reasons Brennan outlines. At the same time, I contend, and believe this chapter demonstrates, that the time has come for us to reconsider what we mean by the term "popular music journalism." For too long, music journalism has been taken as identical with the specialist music press, a semantic move that

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[693] Baldwin, "The Uses of the Blues," 131; Baldwin, "Words of a Native Son," *Playboy*, December 1964, 168; Brubeck, "New Jazz Audience," 9, 14; Dixon, "Conversation with Hugh Hefner"; Goodman, "Goodman à la King," 61; "Playboy Interview: Martin Luther King," 67.

[694] This statistic includes subscribers as well as secondary readers. Daniel Starch & Staff, Inc. *Demographics 1969* (Mamaroneck, NY: Daniel Starch & Staff, Inc., 1969), 24-25.

[695] Brennan, "Down Beats and Rolling Stones: An Historical Comparison," 19.

privileges "music" over the "popular." While music-focused magazines are a logical source for examining the circulation of popular music discourse, we are circumscribing "the first draft of music history" if we do not move beyond those sources traditionally thought of as the "music press." In his 1978 examination of Playboy's influence on culture, Thomas Weyr claimed that *Playboy* had "the flavor of a music magazine," citing criticism by Nat Hentoff and "innovative coverage of sound technology," but delved no further into his own claim than that.[696] This chapter has shown that, far from merely being music-flavored, *Playboy* deserves to be taken seriously as part of the popular music press.

Perhaps more than any other topic covered in the magazine, popular music served as a way of making the political personal by linking jazz to the readers' own conceptions of masculinity and sophistication while also serving as a way to make national concerns, such as African American civil rights, relatable to an affective community whose rejection of dominant culture was made possible through the privilege accorded them by their affluence and the color of their skin. While *Playboy*'s forays into racial politics and non-jazz popular music were not always met with adulation, the articles that brought politics and popular music together provided concrete insight into changing political and cultural relations. One could dismiss the platforms of a wide spectrum of civil rights leaders, but it was harder to dismiss the ways in which respected musicians' personal experiences with racism humanized the movement. For instance, in a March 1970 interview, Ray Charles explained:

> I'm a lot better equipped to handle things than a lot of blind people I know; I do what I want and I go where I want. But because I'm a black man, whatever affects my people affects me. This means that the greatest handicap I've had—and still have—is my color. Until every man in America can get any job he's qualified for or any house he's got the

[696] Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 65.

money to buy, regardless of his color, I'll be handicapped.[697]

As *Playboy* made clear through both its editorial content and responses to readers' letters, anyone who could not see that "it will be a better world when everybody has a fair and equal opportunity in it" would do well to "try joining the human race."[698] What *Playboy* offers us as a source of jazz and rock discourse, that is neither fully captured nor as widely disseminated by what has been traditionally considered the music press, is an understanding of how, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, so-called "crises in masculinity" (which can never be separated from race, class, sexuality, and other social locations) are played out in terms of crises of musicality.

[697] "Playboy Interview: Ray Charles," *Playboy*, March 1970, 80.

[698] "Dear Playboy," *Playboy*, January 1963, 18.

CONCLUSION

Everything New Is Old Again

Some magazines don't die, they just fade away.
—A. C. Spectorsky, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers," 1969.[699]

While Playboy remains one of the most widely recognized brands throughout the world, the magazine upon which it was founded has been fading since its peak in November 1972. In 2015, the magazine's circulation rate was 820,000, bringing the magazine close to (but still under) its circulation rate of 1958.[700] *Playboy* is a loss leader for the organization, profitable only if its 23 licensed global editions are included in the calculations; the U.S. version of the magazine, though more profitable than it was in 2009, currently loses $3 million annually. Despite these losses, *Playboy* is still considered one of the organization's most valuable assets. As CEO Scott Flanders explained to *The New York Times*, "It's our Fifth Avenue storefront."[701] It might be a sinking flagship, but it, nevertheless, remains the company's flagship and Hugh Hefner, at almost 90, continues to work on the magazine on a daily basis, choosing each month's

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[699] Speech, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers," 1969, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection.

[700] Association of National Advertisers, *Magazine Circulation*, 67; Eric Chemi, "Playboy Magazine, By the Numbers," *CNBC.com*, December 11, 2015, http://www.cnbc.com/2015/12/11/playboy-magazine-by-the-numbers.html.

[701] Ravi Somaiya, "Nudes Are Old News at Playboy," *The New York Times*, Oct. 12, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/13/business/media/nudes-are-old-news-at-playboy.html?_r=2.

Playmate and approving every cover.[702] What the magazine and the Playboy brand mean has changed over time, and recent press coverage of *Playboy*'s much-anticipated re-design betrays the fact that the company's image of itself differs from the image that exists in the wider popular imagination. By examining this discrepancy and several major transitions in the organization's history, I will demonstrate both how it came to pass that so many people who look at *Playboy* cannot see the forest for the tease and why Playboy's image of itself in its first two decades still matters.

Going Public, Going Pubic

In the early 1970s, three major events shifted the meaning of Playboy; i.e., the decision to engage *Penthouse* in what has come to be known as the Pubic Wars, its transition from a privately held company to one that was publicly traded, and a national economic crisis. While *Playboy* had a rash of imitators in the 1950s and 1960s, none of them were sophisticated or successful enough for Playboy to consider them competition. This changed when *Penthouse*, an upscale *Playboy* imitator launched in the U.K. by Bob Guccione, came to the U.S. in 1969. *Playboy* has always maintained that whatever it is, it is not pornography, and given the affluence of its readership and the quality of its writers, at least through the 1960s, this is not an unreasonable position to take. However, as the 1970s wore on, *Playboy* could no longer distinguish itself from the other girlie magazines.

By mimicking the layout of *Playboy* and directly attacking its predecessor in its marketing campaigns, *Penthouse* questioned the continued relevance of the Playboy lifestyle. Of the rivalry between the magazines, Steven Watts says of *Penthouse*, "They made a shocking

[702] Sandro Monetti, "Turning Page," *Los Angeles Business Journal*, June 8, 2015, 58.

argument: *Playboy* had fallen behind the times in terms of sexual liberation."[703] While the underlying message was that *Playboy* was out of touch with the times, sexual explicitness was the visual representation of *Penthouse*'s threat to *Playboy*. *Penthouse* challenged *Playboy* first to show pubic hair and then to publish full-frontal nudity.

For a magazine that, as Alan Nadel points out, had partially built its reputation on taking the cheapness out of sex, the decision to engage in the Pubic Wars would prove detrimental to its image.[704] It was the distancing of its Playmates from cheapness that allowed *Playboy* to make the argument that it was not pornographic. However, once the magazine had engaged with the likes of *Penthouse*, it could no longer maintain this claim, and *Playboy*'s assertions of sophistication were increasingly overshadowed by the growing "cheapness" or "trampiness" of the centerfold images. Once the line was crossed into depictions of trampiness, the magazine lost both its dominant and subcultural credibility and was forced into the marginal position occupied by pornography. In an attempt to rescue *Playboy*'s image and win back part of the audience share that had been siphoned off by *Penthouse*, the company purchased *Lui*, a French *Playboy* imitator, in order to compete with *Penthouse*'s more "'international' sexual flavor." *Lui*, which Playboy renamed *Oui*, succeeded in drawing audiences, but unfortunately, it did so at the expense of *Playboy* rather than *Penthouse*. Faced with competition from the even more explicit *Hustler* and its own publication, *Oui*, by the mid-1970s, Playboy decided to compete directly with these more explicit men's publications rather than continuing to compete as an upscale lifestyle magazine. Susan Gunelius argues that Playboy's decision to make the

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[703] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 300.

[704] For more about Nadel's argument about *Playboy* taking the cheapness out of sex, see chapter 3 and Nadel, *Containment Culture*.

magazine's images more explicit had the effect of clouding the brand promise and contradicting its brand image.[705]

The pressure to compete with *Penthouse*, made more salient by the extra scrutiny each business decision received as a publicly traded corporation, only added to *Playboy*'s conflicted brand image in the 1970s. Both Hefner and Spectorsky expressed reservations about the decision to publish more explicit photographs, but *Penthouse*'s circulation steadily rose while *Playboy*'s steadily dropped. Although Spectorsky had died before *Playboy* had fully engaged in the Pubic Wars, his opinion of the matter came through in a 1971 speech on publishing in a permissive society that he gave to the International Federation of the Periodical Press. He stated:

> I suggest that it is absurd to think of publishing in a permissive society solely in terms of, for example, how many four letter words you permit per issue; whether or not to depict the act of love, as it is euphemistically called; whether to publish full-front nudes; to what degree one should adopt the vocabulary of the more freaked-out segment of the audience, as one dimly perceives it from the editorial ivory tower. These are absurdities if given the kind of beady-eyed and calculatingly cynical attention that suggests they are magical stepping stones to commercial success in publishing for an audience within our permissive society.[706]

Had Spectorsky lived, it appears likely from this assertion that he would have attempted to fight the idea that being more explicit would make the magazine more competitive.

After Spectorsky's death, Articles Editor Arthur Kretchmer was promoted to Executive Editor, and it was under his lead that the Pubic Wars quickly got out of hand for *Playboy*. According to Thomas Weyr, two issues—those published in October and November 1975—received so much backlash from advertisers that Hefner called off *Playboy*'s competition with the skin mags, imploring his staff that they needed to "stress service and the availability of alternate life-styles" instead. In order to satisfy investors and regain market share, *Playboy*

[705] Gunelius, *Building Brand Value*, 79-80; Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 302; Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 289-290.

[706] Speech, "Publishing in a Permissive Society," May 6, 1971, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection.

needed to show that it could compete with its raunchier imitators, but answering to these stockholders also meant that the decision of how raunchy to go was not entirely up to the editors, who had been reluctant about the move to begin with. As Weyr points out, however, although *Playboy* toned down its covers to an extent, its retreat from the Pubic Wars was negligible.[707]

Only four years after going public, *Playboy* would face other barriers to getting back to its roots. As Weyr argues, the magazine that Kretchmer inherited from Spectorsky had an identity crisis.[708] As the recession wore on and unemployment increased, Playboy tried to reposition itself as selling fantasy, which, the editors reasoned, was much needed during hard times. However, as Weyr points out and as I have argued, the key to the success of the Playboy lifestyle was that it had always been, at least in some measure, attainable. As Playboy struggled to deal with the new economic reality, the quality of writing in the magazine suffered.[709] This coupled with more explicit nudity solidified in the popular imagination the idea that reading it for the articles really was a joke.

The Medium and the Message

Just as *Playboy* magazine maintains its importance to the organization as a legacy brand, Hefner and Playboy have been working since the late 2000s to both save the company and secure their legacies. In 2011, investment firm Rizvi Traverse Management backed Hefner in his bid to

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[707] The October 1975 issue featured two women embracing on the cover and a coverline promising a pictorial entitled "Sappho." The November 1975 issue featured a woman sitting in a movie theater with her shirt open to reveal her breasts and her skirt hiked up to her waist. In one hand, she held a container of popcorn, but her other hand was slipped inside her panties. Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 290-293.

[708] Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 286-287.

[709] Playboy's image as one that emphasized sex rather than lifestyle would only be solidified as Playboy moved into the cable television and home video markets in the 1980s and 1990s. Gunelius, *Building Brand Value*, 118, 137; Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 296-297.

take the company private once again, and CEO Scott Flanders announced plans to reposition the company as "a monetizer of a lifestyle image" and a brand management company focused on licensing that image.[710] Since going private, the company has taken several major steps—not all of them successful—to revitalize its corporate and cultural images. Reactions to these changes reveal how entrenched people's perceptions about the magazine and the lifestyle it represents really are. Even before taking the company private, Playboy had begun an attempt to recapture the allure that its brand held in the 1960s, making a licensing deal to open a Playboy Club in Las Vegas in 2006 (closed as of 2012). Other international Playboy Clubs followed in places such as Cancun and Macau (both are now defunct); the London Club and Casino, which remains open, was opened in 2011 less than half a mile from the location of the original London Playboy Club and Casino in the district of Mayfair.[711]

In 2011, Playboy was also the subject of a short-lived crime drama, *The Playboy Club*, which aired on NBC for three episodes before becoming the first cancellation of the television season. The series was set in the Chicago Playboy Club in 1961 and romanticized the era, attempting to send the message that the Bunnies were empowered and upholding Hefner's legacy as a leader of the sexual revolution.[712] Although the show itself was fairly mediocre, especially

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[710] "Bunny Hop; Playboy," *The Economist*, January 15, 2011, 68; Monetti, "Turning Page," 1.

[711] Simon Bowers, "Playboy Bunnies Return to Mayfair After 30-Year Absence," *The Guardian*, Oct. 20, 2010; Robert Channick, "Playboy's Fate in Hugh Hefner's Hands," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 10, 2010; Steve Green, "Palms Says Playboy Club to Close, Ending Partnership," *Las Vegas Sun*, March 15, 2012, http://lasvegassun.com/news/2012/mar/15/palms-says-playboy-club-close/.

[712] Gail Dines, "Yes, the Playboy Club IS That Bad," *Ms.*, September 20, 2011, http://msmagazine.com/blog/2011/09/20/yes-playboy-club-is-that-bad/; Sofia M. Fernandez, "'Playboy Club': Gloria Steinem Advocates Boycott of NBC Series," *The Hollywood Reporter*,

when compared to *Mad Men*'s more complex representations of gender relations in the 1960s, the organization's reputation also played a role in the series' demise. As Michael Schneider of *TV Guide* explains it, "Viewers intrigued by the Playboy name were disappointed by the lack of titillation. Viewers who might be interested in the show's mainstream stories were turned off by the word 'Playboy.' Net result? No viewers."[713] The series' advertisers also felt pressure from calls for boycotts from religious groups, such as the anti-pornography crusaders Morality in Media (now the National Center on Sexual Exploitation), and feminist activists like Gloria Steinem. The fact that many of these calls came before the series aired speaks to Playboy's ongoing image problems.

In late 2015, Playboy undertook a redesign of the magazine, announcing on October 12, 2015, that it would no longer contain full-frontal nudity. The response to this news was mixed with some people recognizing that there had been a time when *Playboy* was known for more than nudity and others wondering what the magazine would have left to offer. The idea that a pornographic magazine would do away with nudity was difficult for some commentators to understand, and their use of the descriptor "pornographic" to describe the magazine is an indicator of just how much of an image overhaul *Playboy* is attempting and demonstrate that many still cannot see the forest for the tease.[714] The March 2016 issue, which hit newsstands and subscribers' mailboxes in February, was the first issue to be printed after the magazine's overhaul. In a letter to subscribers that accompanied the issue, CEO Scott Flanders explained,

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August 9, 2011, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/playboy-club-gloria-steinem-advocates-220996.

[713] Michael Schneider, "The Playboy Club: What Went Wrong," *TV Guide*, October 10, 2011, http://www.tvguide.com/news/playboy-club-wrong-1038579/.

[714] Somaiya, "Nudes Are Old News."

"Our editorial team has spent the past six months redesigning *Playboy* from top to bottom. Their guiding light for this effort was the intellectual and literary powerhouse *Playboy* years of the 60s." Reassuring subscribers, he went on to state, "*Playboy* will still champion long-form journalism, fiction, art and of course, the world's most beautiful women. It's a brand-new *Playboy* for a new generation of readers."[715]

As Flanders's letter promised, the redesigned *Playboy* does have an entirely new visual aesthetic. While the magazine still contains nudity, it is of the more demure variety that was originally used to produce the Playmate image of the girl next door. The images feel more candid and less staged, and the centerfold photograph of Dree Hemingway, Ernest Hemingway's great-granddaughter, shows less skin than *Playboy* did in its earliest days. In addition to toning down the nudity to a point even more conservative than when the magazine first started, the layout is less cluttered, reinforcing Flanders's claim that the magazine is still a champion of long-form journalism even if the articles are nowhere near as long as they were throughout the 1960s. Changes to the size of the magazine, the paper on which it is printed, and the matte finish of the cover, make it look and feel more sophisticated than its glossy predecessor.

The redesign softens the image of *Playboy* in other ways, too. Most notably, the tagline, "Entertainment for Men," no longer appears on the cover, and the contents hint that *Playboy* may be courting a wider target market, perhaps going after the market of women aged 18-34 that the company won over with its reality show *The Girls Next Door*.[716] Unlike the "intellectual and literary powerhouse" of the 1960s that served as the inspiration for this redesign, the current

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[715] Scott Flanders, letter to *Playboy* subscribers, February 2016.

[716] Charles McGrath, "The Creation of an American Icon," *International Herald Tribune*, Feb. 7, 2011.

magazine welcomes contributions from women (that are not merely on one side of the camera or other) and appears to have softened its stance toward feminists. Many journalists have commented on the issue's inclusion of an article celebrating the I.U.D. written by Erin Gloria Ryan, former managing editor of the blog *Jezebel*; however, *Playboy* has always been an outspoken proponent of access to birth control.[717] The difference with Ryan's story is that they are presenting a woman's perspective on the matter. The Playboy Interview for the month is with outspoken, out lesbian, feminist, leftist, political commentator Rachel Maddow. Abbi Jacobson and Ilana Glazer, the feminist comedians behind the Comedy Central series *Broad City*, are the subjects of a regular feature called 20Q, which is basically a shorter form of the Playboy Interview. *Playboy* has even turned over the magazine's long-standing advice column, The Playboy Advisor, to Rachel Rabbit White, a 20-something blogger who writes about sex and gender.

Despite these changes, *Playboy* still insists that its target audience is the city-bred male. With *Penthouse* no longer a threat, *Playboy* is positioning itself as a competitor to *Vice*. Flanders told *The New York Times*, "'The difference between us and *Vice* is that we're going after the guy with a job.'"[718] At other times, however, Flanders has stated that the magazine is positioning itself to compete with upscale publications, such as *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*, rather than men's magazines, such as *GQ* or *Maxim*.[719] Whatever the case, Playboy is still positioning itself

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[717] See, for example, Drew Harwell, "How Women's Voices Are Shifting Playboy from Topless to Thoughtful," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 2016.

[718] Somaiya, "Nudes Are Old News."

[719] Tom Kludt, "Playboy Enters Non-Nude Era: Sexy But 'Safe for Work,'" *CNN Money*, February 4, 2016, http://money.cnn.com/2016/02/04/media/playboy-first-non-nude-issue/; Neil Powell, "The Real Reason Playboy Is Getting Rid of Nude Pics," *Fortune*, October 17, 2015, http://fortune.com/2015/10/17/playboy-stops-nude-photos/.

as offering guidance to young, upwardly mobile men; however, this lack of competitive focus may speak to the magazine's ongoing identity issues. Since only one issue of the revamped *Playboy* has been published so far, it is impossible to judge what role women's voices will play in relation to the magazine's brand identity. Their inclusion might be a genuine attempt to court female millennials, but it may also be a case of overcorrection. That is, *Playboy* may also be embracing this array of feminine and feminist voices as a way of distancing itself even further from its sexually explicit past and proving that its concerns run deeper than sex. In an article claiming to offer a case study on modern sexuality, Bret Easton Ellis distances *Playboy* from sex by making claims to beauty. He states, "And even without nudity each month, we continue to conform to one aspect of it that will never go away: Fashions change, as does the way we access images of nudity and sex, but beauty, no matter in what form or on what screen, will always be idealized."[720]

Such idealistic reasoning overshadows the real market pressures driving *Playboy*'s decision to revamp its image. As several commentators have pointed out, *Playboy*'s redesign is really just another step in the company's digital media and licensing strategies. Although Playboy and others have a tendency to frame the organization as a victim of the sexual permissiveness it helped usher in, Playboy's new brand strategy indicates that its problems are as much about the medium as they are about the message. In 2014, Playboy revamped its website by taking out the nude content and making it safe for workplace browsing. This change quadrupled the number of unique visitors to the site each month and drastically lowered the age of the average online reader from 47 to a more desirable 30. The revamp of the website was driven by the no nudity policies of social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

[720] Bret Easton Ellis, "Modern Sexuality: A Case Study," *Playboy*, March 2016, 101.

With Facebook directing more traffic to websites than Google, it was crucial for the company's survival that their online content become shareable across social media.[721] The magazine's redesign is an attempt to bring the magazine in line with the organization's new media content and image.

As several commentators have pointed out, the content of the March 2016 issue is partially a paean to social media.[722] The cover of the issue features Sarah McDaniel, a model who is known for being a Snapchat sensation. The cover photo, which was taken by Theo Wenner, was staged to look like a selfie with one of McDaniel's arms outstretched as if she were holding her phone. Her gaze, however, falls squarely on the reader, and the only text besides the magazine's title to appear on the cover is a caption reading "heyyy ;)" giving the impression that McDaniel has just sent a sexy, intimate Snap to the reader. Inside the magazine, a photo spread of McDaniel also shot by Wenner is intended "to capture the beautiful rawness of a 21st-century digitally connected, unfiltered woman who is making it all happen without letting anything go."[723] Apparently, the move to tone down the nudity did nothing to tone down the expectations *Playboy* encourages of women.

The nudes that remain in the magazine are being utilized in the same way they were prior to the magazine's engagement in the Pubic Wars; i.e., they are being used to reinforce Playboy's taste culture. Admittedly, this early into the redesign, it is still difficult to discern just what

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[721] Powell, "The Real Reason"; Mel Robbins, "Why Is Playboy Giving Up Nudity?" *CNN*, October 16, 2015, http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/13/opinions/robbins-playboy-no-more-nudity/; Somaiya, "Nudes Are Old News."

[722] See, for example, David Segal, "A Tamer Playboy Puts on (Some) Clothes," *The New York Times*, Feb. 4, 2016; and Harwell, "How Women's Voices."

[723] "Playbill," March 2016, 6; "Who Is Sarah McDaniel and Why Are We Obsessed with Her?" *Playboy*, March 2016, 66.

constitutes that taste culture, but there are signs that point to it not being dissimilar from the taste culture that was established in the mid-twentieth century. The decision to have "the first"—although many of Playboy's pre-full frontal nudity centerfolds were not technically nude either—non-nude centerfold be a relative of Ernest Hemingway connects the magazine's literary heritage to a version of sexuality that seems rather innocuous by today's standards. Additionally, a pictorial spread on the selfies of feminist photographer Myla Delbasio harkens back to articles celebrating the art of photographing the Playmate of the Month, and in several of the photos, she is lounging on furniture reminiscent of that which occupied *Playboy*'s features on bachelor pads and interior design in the 1960s. Linking this new, "empowered" version of the Playmate—controlling and sometimes directly confronting the male gaze by turning the camera on herself—to the design aesthetic on which the Playboy Empire was built, *Playboy* maintains the connections between heterosexuality and the Playboy lifestyle despite using less explicit photographs to do so. One of her photographs even features her curled up in a butterfly chair—that symbol of modernity that had been so central to conveying the sophisticated tastes of the Playboy man throughout the 1950s and 1960s (see fig. 40).

Figure 40. Selfie in a butterfly chair by Myla Dalbesio.
Source: "Myla Dalbesio on How to Photograph a Woman," *Playboy*, March 2016, 113.

Concluding Remarks

Of the early magazine, Ravi Somaiya argues, “Even those who disliked it cared enough to pay attention.”[724] Playboy’s recent changes and their treatment in the press tell us two important things about what Playboy means today. First, they tell us that for decades, most of us have not cared enough to pay attention. Secondly, they tell us that whatever space Playboy has occupied in the popular imagination for the last four and a half decades, it has mostly been regarded as an artifact. In the heady days of the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Playboy* led the men’s magazine field, and Spectorsky traveled the world delivering speeches to fellow publishers about the importance of maintaining one’s status as a leader. He opined, “A good publisher is an innovator, not a curator. A successful magazine must be a process, not an artifact. It must constantly evolve, not just to keep pace, but to retain leadership. The history of publishing is strewn with the remains of embalmed publications that knew they had a good thing going, and kept it going while the world went by.”[725] The business decisions that Playboy made in the 1970s coupled with an economic climate that made the Playboy lifestyle increasingly inaccessible for the middle class helped cement Playboy’s reputation as an overly sexualized and out of touch artifact. Since then, Playboy has been a follower rather than a leader.

The company’s recent business decisions are far from innovative and reflect an organization caught between the need to move forward and the desire to preserve its legacy. Although arrogant at the time, Spectorsky’s speeches now seem prescient. In 1969, he warned other publishers, “And tinkering, or surface retouching, will not reverse the flow of traffic towards

[724] Somaiya, “Nudes Are Old News.”

[725] Speech, “The Future of Media and the Taste Makers,” 1969, The Auguste Comte Spectorsky Collection.

Disaster City. In point of fact, these acts of desperation too often make a magazine look like its own retouched passport photo—and as everyone knows, when you look like your passport photo, you aren't fit to travel."[726] Of course, at the time that Spectorsky wrote this speech, the rest of the organization's interests took a back seat to *Playboy* magazine. Today, *Playboy* magazine's value to the company is mostly symbolic.

While in the U.S. that symbol largely lacks the cultural cachet it once enjoyed, Playboy products are now licensed and sold in 180 countries, and the company has a powerful draw in Eastern Europe and Asia.[727] Half of Playboy's revenues currently come from licensing, with China alone providing 40% of the company's revenues.[728] While *Playboy* magazine is banned in China, the company's products garnered $500 million in retail sales in 2014.[729] In June 2015, Playboy announced a 10-year licensing partnership with Chinese firm Handong United, which will increase the total number of outlets for Playboy merchandise in China to 3,500. Through partnerships with luxury brands like Marc Jacobs and department store chain Lane Crawford, Playboy is attempting to increase the prestige of its brand in China even further.[730]

Playboy's success in these emerging markets can help us understand its initial success in the U.S. As Flanders explained to the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, "To get so much net royalty revenue from a country where we make zero media revenues speaks to the aspirational

[726] Speech, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers," 1969, The August Comte Spectorsky Collection.

[727] McGrath, "Creation of an American Icon"; Samoiya, "Nudes Are Old News."

[728] Chemi, "Playboy Magazine."

[729] Monetti, "Turning Page."

[730] Sophia Yan, "Playboy Is Betting on China Expansion," *CNN Money*, May 6, 2015, http://money.cnn.com/2015/05/06/media/playboy-china/.

lifestyle Hef has created. We were well-timed for the rise of the middle class in China, where the consumer feels that when they can afford Playboy-branded merchandise, they have truly arrived in the middle class."[731] Comparing Playboy's emergence in China with its emergence in the U.S., it is evident that Playboy resonates with consumers at times when affluence is new, when people are negotiating what it means to be middle class. Playboy's success in China also speaks to the power of the brand to build affective ties, to orient its audiences to happy objects. As a legacy brand and an American one at that, Playboy has already been labeled good in China, and one would not have to encounter the magazine so tied to the good life of mid-century middle class white men in the U.S. in order to encounter the brand as a happy object. The power of happy objects lies in the idea that their meaning can be transmitted without experiencing what gave the objects their meaning in the first place.

Playboy's successes and failures reveal that even if it no longer strictly offers entertainment for men, the brand is still capable of shaping affective communities with a version of happiness geared toward a rising middle class. There are a number of reasons why Playboy's happy objects may no longer resonate with American audiences. Due to business decisions and economic and gender relations that Playboy failed to adjust to quickly enough, *Playboy*, as evidenced by still declining circulation numbers, was experienced as pleasurable by fewer and fewer people. This orientation of disaffection toward the magazine may also extend to an orientation of disaffection toward its happy objects. The U.S. is currently experiencing an era of extreme political polarization, yet the one thing presidential hopefuls on both sides of the aisle can agree upon is that the middle class is in need of saving. Under a perceived threat of downward mobility, guidance on sophisticated consumption is a tough sell.

[731] Monetti, "Turning Page."

Furthermore, it is difficult to find aspiration in an artifact. The recent changes to *Playboy* were made based on extensive focus group research conducted with millennials, and if Playboy wishes to build affective ties with this demographic, it would be wise to heed Spectorsky's advice to cultivate its audience rather than "cynically milk it for all it's worth and exhaust it as a miner does a vein of ore."[732] The greatest lesson that Playboy's boom years can provide to the company today is to make the lifestyle attainable. As former editor Kretchmer explained:

> We try to show things that are attainable but special—possible but special. Part of our package is to say that there are things that are qualitatively better, that are desirable, that there is a world of objects and toys out there. We don't tell the guy how to get these things, but say, 'Hey, these are things that are nice to have, that are fun to have, or, sometimes, that it's not nice to have.'[733]

Considering how to make the Playboy lifestyle resonate with a millennial audience draws into relief those factors that unite the youth market of the 1950s and 1960s with that of today, and what becomes clear is that in Playboy's attempts to define masculinity outside the prevailing domestic ideal, it was advocating a period of emerging adulthood; i.e., a period of play, of trying new things, of testing experiences, and indulging one's desires before settling down to the commitments of full-blown adulthood. The relationship of Playboy to the conceptualization of emerging adulthood is an area that falls outside of the scope of this project, but it is a topic that would yield fruitful future research and demonstrate the continued relevance of mid-twentieth century Playboy to twenty-first century culture and social relations.

As the recent spate of scholarly and popular press publications dedicated to the corporate and cultural history of Playboy indicate, Playboy in the mid-twentieth century is a phenomenon that continues to provoke contemporary commentators into grappling with the set of discursive

[732] Speech, "The Future of Media and the Taste Makers," 1969, The August Comte Spectorsky Collection.

[733] Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise*, 56.

rules for understanding masculinity that it promoted. While this project has addressed many of the arguments concerning Playboy that have been put forth about the organization since the late twentieth century, it has also synthesized them with existing arguments about mass culture, popular music, gender, and home entertainment technologies. In the process, I have also aimed to shift and broaden the focus of some of these arguments while contributing original analysis, particularly in the areas of popular music, home entertainment technologies, and domestic space.

While the magazine is the primary medium through which Playboy engaged with and disseminated discourse surrounding gender, racial, and sexual politics (not to mention issues of class and taste), this project has also examined Playboy as a multimedia empire by looking at the ways in which music, television, and print media worked together to reinforce the Playboy philosophy. By positioning Playboy as a subdominant culture, this project has aimed to broaden our understanding of postwar masculinities by extending a concept familiar within popular music studies to help reframe our understanding of the relationships between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities. Extending the work of Barbara Ehrenreich, I have demonstrated the key roles that domestic space, home entertainment technologies, and popular music have historically played in situating Playboy masculinity in relation to other masculinities, femininity, mass culture, consumption, and leisure competence. Playboy's coverage of television was a key means through which *Playboy* intervened in debates over mass culture and elevated its own status by upholding the notion of "mass culture as woman." Based on a comparative analysis that has highlighted the similarities between many Playboy Pads and the suburban family homes depicted in women's and home magazines, I have argued that the greater difference between these domestic spaces is not their geographic locations, but is instead the Playboy man's ability to control and manipulate those spaces that are deemed public and private or for work or leisure

in ways that were less desirable in a home configured with the needs of a family in mind. In addition to this comparative analysis, I have also explored the ways that space and musical taste interact on the series *Playboy After Dark*.

In addition to the lack of attention to Playboy as a multimedia empire, race and music are two important facets of the Playboy lifestyle that have received little scholarly attention. This project has begun to fill in these gaps by examining the relationship between music and civil rights in the magazine as well as examining the role of music and sound technologies in shaping Playboy's masculinity. Hi-fi consumption was an accessible way for men to gain mobility both into and within the Playboy lifestyle, and technical mastery of hi-fi was a key means through which Playboy promoted its lifestyle as always at least partially attainable while also remaining aspirational. Furthermore, music has not only been largely left out of the history of Playboy, Playboy has also been left out of the history of popular music, and I have reframed our understanding of these histories by positioning *Playboy* as an influential yet largely overlooked part of the popular music press.

In this initial examination, which I will expand in future research, I have argued that popular music plays a crucial role in Playboy's address of its audiences as socially conscious citizens. My future research will also expand upon the relationships between race and musical taste in the magazine as well as on both variety series. Additionally, I plan to broaden my work on Playboy's treatment of hi-fi by adding an analysis of the magazine's promotion of audiotape as the technologies related to it were being developed and commercialized. Finally, Playboy's record label, contributions to music criticism, and the entertainment circuit provided by the chain of Playboy Clubs and Club-Hotels remain important sites wherein discourses and practices of gender circulate and where the relationship between cultural and gender hegemonies may be

revealed.

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