Collecting Husbands: Fan Discourse of Mr. Love: Queen's Choice

Jasmine K. Holthaus, University of Kansas

Introduction

How do consumers of media become fans, and what do they do as fans? Fan attachments engage people to build lasting friendships with others and create attachments to fictional characters. Discussions of fan attachments like these have found a place in academics, especially with scholars from diverse fields such as Henry Jenkins and Rita Felski. These two scholars have created the space for analyzing fandoms in an academic setting, including how and why humans are attracted to media. Their theories surrounding fan cultures and interpersonal attachment applies to a specific mobile game, *Love & Producer*, released in China in 2017, which was later translated to English and released globally as *Mr. Love: Queen's Choice (Mr. Love)* in 2019. *Mr. Love* is a mobile otome gacha game that has hooked millions of players across the globe, the majority of which identify as female.

Otome games are generally catered toward young, heterosexual, female audiences; these games feature one female protagonist and multiple male love interests that players can choose between. Gacha games are popular on mobile platforms, and they feature a type of "gambling" aspect to them. By gambling, gacha games have in-game currency that players can use to purchase in-game content; in *Mr. Love's* case, the in-game content achieved through the gacha element are images and stories of the love interests, often called husbands in the community. Combining these two genres, otome and gacha, *Mr. Love* has produced multiple online fan communities ranging across different social media platforms, including Reddit, Facebook, Twitter, and Discord. These communities actively discuss *Mr. Love*'s gameplay mechanics, characters, and story while also building a community of shared interests.

The fan discourse surrounding the game and its components indicate that many female gamers are not only consuming this media but have become highly engaged with *Mr. Love*. One of these phenomena is the lasting relationships built between community members, as seen in a small, Discord community dedicated to the game, titled "r/MrLove". This Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research will evaluate the community of players as well as how fans are performing--or challenging--gender expectations by applying theories from previously mentioned scholar Henry Jenkins and fan culture scholar Matt Hills. Additional literary scholars' works, such as José Esteban Muñoz and Gillian Silverman, will also be applied to understand the discourse along gender lines and building relationships within these communities. The

goal of this research is to determine what fan culture can teach academics about online communities, especially in female-dominated spaces. Specifically, the research intends to expand, or complicate, what is generally seen as feminine discourse. The guiding questions include: How are fans performing, or challenging, gender expectations and language in this discourse community surrounding *Mr. Love: Queen's Choice*? Do the fans complicate or revise the gender norms? What does fan culture teach society about online communities, especially in female-dominated spaces? Taking these questions into consideration through this research, "r/MrLove" tends to both perform and challenge gender expectations and language practices while building a supportive fan community on this digital platform. The primary findings include an attachment to the characters, building relationships with the community members, and sharing emotional reactions over the game.

Important Platforms and Terms

Discord is an application designed for voice and text chat, as well as building communities and servers for specific fandoms. On Discord, users can create different servers; within these servers are subsections called "channels," which help organize conversation and discussion topics. Discord also allows users to interact with reactions, often in the form of customized emojis and moving gifs. These reactions help users quickly agree or disagree with what one is saying, helping users show

emotion in other ways that are not just pure text. "r/MrLove" is a smaller fan community with only sixty-three users. Of these sixty-three, only about fifteen users actively communicate with one another. According to the demographic data on the server, three users identify as male, fifty-six identify as female, and four identify as nonbinary. The fifteen active users all identify as female.

In "r/MrLove," there are terms that are commonly used when discussing the story and characters. The term "stan" is often used, which has been transformed by fandoms to mean "super fan." In "r/MrLove," the users often state they "stan" a specific character, which means that character is their favorite. Another term similar to "stan" is "simp." "Simp" generally means someone who is overly affectionate or submissive to someone they desire and has a history of usage toward males "white-knighting" females. Fandoms have transformed the language to mean that a user, regardless of gender, really loves a character and has basically fallen in love with them. Using the word "Simp" or "Simping" reflects Felski's note on attachment: "To say we are attached to works of art is to say that we have feelings for them" (28). These feelings also translate to fictional characters, as they are seen as works of art. The community of "r/MrLove" has expressed a plethora of feelings toward the five love interests in the language they use, such as "I'm such a simp for this love interest!" Someone's "bias" is also thrown around a lot in fan communities. If someone states that a character is their "bias," then that means they favor that character above

all others. This doesn't necessarily mean they dislike the other characters, but they have a preference toward one. These are all terms that the users of "r/MrLove" say on a near-daily basis.

Mr.Love is a mobile otome gacha game, borrowing mechanics and tropes from these genres. Mobile games are playable on any type of smart phone or tablet device and are usually server-based games, meaning that they need internet connection to be able to access the game content. Mobile games often fall under the category of "free-to-play," meaning that the game itself can be played without spending any money but offer in-game purchases to obtain in-game resources. *Mr. Love* is no exception to this "free-to-play" system. This system connects to the gacha mechanics of "free-to-play" games such as *Mr. Love.* Generally, gacha mechanics resemble a lot like gambling; there are items players have a chance of getting by paying in-game currency but aren't always guaranteed a specific item. Gacha games have become widely popular in East Asian mobile gaming, and many have been localized, meaning they have been translated to English for an English-speaking audience.

In *Mr. Love*, the gacha mechanics are tied to different pieces of the game, the main one being The Wish Tree. In The Wish Tree, players spend in-game currency to "pull from the tree." Pulling from the tree gives players the chance to draw a karma, or card, featuring one of four love interests: Kiro, Lucien, Victor, or Gavin. The fifth love interest, Shaw's, karmas only remain tied to specific events, so he cannot be

obtained by the tree. The tree gives the user heart petals or heart flowers that, when enough is collected, can be redeemed for special karmas and items. This redeem factor helps the gacha mechanics of *Mr. Love* succeed; even if pulling on the tree doesn't guarantee a specific karma, once a player has pulled enough times, they can then redeem a karma of their choice instead of completely leaving it up to chance. Therefore, players are more likely to spend real money to reach this redeem counter than if it were pure chance, making it more viable for someone to collect their favorite love interest. In this sense, *Mr. Love's* gacha resembles Felski's description of attachment; how one becomes attached "to one's attachment," or rather "not just pleasure but one's assessment of such pleasure" (35). This is because the gacha and redeem reflects the satisfaction that players receive for earning their love interest's karma. The redeem factor makes the player *feel* as though they earned and received it on their own merit.

Finally, what makes *Mr. Love* seemingly popular with the majority of female players is that it is classified as an otome game. The term otome originates from Japan and means "young maiden." Otome is a genre that caters toward young girls (Andlauer 166). The conventions of this genre usually include a protagonist that is female (in a video game, the player plays this protagonist and often chooses different outcomes). This protagonist finds herself in a situation where she has multiple love interests, but in the end, she chooses only one. The power of otome video games

comes with the agency women players have. They can "choose" between different potential love interests with no risk. This choice reverses the role of genders here (in dominant culture, the men is usually seen as "unfaithful" or choosing between multiple love interests). This shift in power and gender roles is unique to media that falls under the otome genre (Andlauer 168-169). Just as well, the women playing otome can always go back and try dating different love interests. One issue, however, with this choice is that the choices are predetermined; meaning, in otome games, the love interest choices are always male, and sometimes they are not even the male character players may desire. On another note, the players do not have the choice to romance female characters, and non-binary characters are hardly – if they are – in traditional otome games. The players also have to choose a love interest to obtain the best endings; occasionally, in the event of choosing no love interest, the player will face a bad ending that pre-maturely ends the game, not gaining the full story. These are a few of the limitations of otome games; however, the shift in gender dynamics of otome is still a powerful move for women gamers.

What makes *Mr. Love* unique, however, is that in the main story, the protagonist interacts with all five love interests in one way or another. The player doesn't necessarily *choose* a love interest when continuing the main story, but experiences moments with each of them. The choice, then, lies within the gacha and collecting aspect of the game. For each love interest, there are side stories called dates that the player can read through. This is how they choose their favorite love interest. Players can choose to ignore dates of the love interests that they don't want to play through. If players' interest wavers, they can just start collecting their new interest's material and content and read their dates. The term that properly describes *Mr. Love,* then, is "Joseimuke," which is a broader genre of media that targets female-identifying audiences. However, because of the familiarity of the term otome, *Mr. Love* is categorized as such to draw in the female audience. Part of the appeal are the otome features that *Mr. Love* contains.

The previous aspects takes agency of otome to a new level. Part of the agency, then, ties into Jenkins' exploration of fan studies; why do women fans become addicted to these narratives? As Jenkins notes, part of it is "a release from domestic demands," but that isn't the whole reason; a good part of women fandoms is the agency and escapism to a story that they cannot have in their real lives (*Textual Poachers* 60). For example, in *Mr. Love,* the player has the choice on which love interest they want to spend more time with through side stories and dates. The player can explore more than one relationship at a time due to the game mechanics, something that players would not explore in real life. The game also includes voiced dialogue for the love interests, which adds into the immersion of going on dates with these men. These escapism aspects of *Mr. Love* also ties into Silverman's discussion of the power of media, although she specifically discusses books. It is through different narrative

technologies that one can "create imagined experiences of contact" (Silverman 5). As previously mentioned with the relationships, side stories, and dates, players can choose which stories they want to interact with, which makes the narrative less linear than other games. Some of these side stories include alternate realities within the game's world, which crosses genres that the players can experience, including fairy tale and horror settings. So, players don't necessarily have to stick to one genre to experience stories with their fictional husbands. These imagined experiences happen to be exploring multiple relationships with men that they otherwise wouldn't be involved with, especially since they can engage in these relationships risk-free.

Methods

For this discourse analysis, a recruitment information brief was posted on the Discord server to ask for participants (See Appendix A for Recruitment form). Of the fifteen active members, six agreed to their language being analyzed. These six are female-identifying fans ranging from ages 26-48. Once formal consent was obtained, the researcher looked at all the channels that discussed the game, including gameplay mechanics and story elements (See Appendix B for Information/Consent Form). The discourse between the six community members within these channels was then analyzed.

Although there are a variety of channels on the Discord server, the two heaviest channels were the "#general" and "#spoiler-discussion-eng" channels. The "#general" channel is a catch-all to discuss anything about the game. The channel "#spoilerdiscussion-eng" is a place to discuss the overall plot of the main story. However, these weren't the only two channels looked at; others included discussions about specific characters, seasonal events, and users' pulls from The Wish Tree.

Analysis

Once looking at the language in these separate channels, different topics and themes were coded. Throughout these channels, users often used emoji reactions for many of the conversations. Another aspect of language that was seen was the use of hedges. Hedging is often seen as feminine discourse, which, as defined by Gudrun Clemen, is "to avoid making a decisive statement," or rather, being intentionally vague (236). Hedging often becomes synonymous with noncommittal or fuzzy; meaning the intention of the phrasing isn't explicit or clear, but rather intentionally vague (Clemen 237). Feminine discourse, as noted by Thomson & Murachver tends to be more polite, less assertive, and less definitive – traits all seen within hedging. Examples of hedging include words such as "sort of", "kind of", "maybe", "seems", among other words that show less definitive responses (Thomson & Murachver 198). After coding, the researcher concluded that the community surrounding the game *Mr.Love* has created physical and material relationships between members through the

attachment to characters and sharing emotional reactions with one another. Through this safe community, the members have both challenged and performed gender expectations.

Performing Gender

Through the discourse analysis, the members often hedged their language, as well as showing emotion through affective language. Hedging occurred throughout the interactions with the members, including conversations about the value of spending money in *Mr.Love*. One conversation between Arctic Fox and Mimi included Arctic Fox hedging when she started conversation by stating that "The 12.99 pack is better than double gems, if anyone's wondering. Arctic Fox's "if anyone's wondering" is an example of hedging, adhering to gender norms. Another instance of gender performance was when Mimi again asked for advice on getting a karma of her husband, Kiro, and it all came down to what the cost-benefit was and if the karma would strengthen her in the game. Mimi asked if she should "spend 4k gems" on this limited karma when she only had "4.7k gems" at this time. Both Kathryn and Sophia followed up with advice that, ultimately, it wasn't worth it at that time to obtain this specific karma. Here, Mimi asked questions and showed doubt, which according to Thomson and Murachver, resembles feminine discourse; therefore, Mimi is performing her gender within gameplay discussions (195). In a similar vein, Kathryn's advice was surrounded with

hedges, such as phrases like "but that happens to me" and "I can't say I was especially moved," softening the assertion. Therefore, Kathryn is also performing her gender based on Thomson and Murachver's study over feminine digital discourse (195). Within the gameplay discussions, Mimi, Kathryn, Sophia, and Arctic Fox all used hedging, a feminine attribute, in their language.

Another way the six members performed their gender was showing and expressing emotions through affective language and emojis. According to Thomson and Murachver, women often show support and affective feelings in their digital communications (195). An example of the support and affective language shown in this "r/MrLove" was over story discussion. After a tragic event occurred in the story, Sophia, Kiki, and Kathryn began discussing and connecting emotionally together through this tragic event. They begin by connecting the event with sad songs and numerous crying emojis (😭) within the "#spoilerdiscussion-eng" channel. One comment by Sophia mentions that she might "ruin [her] carpet with the flood of [her] tears." The "flood of tears" comment ties into one of Felski's strands of identification, empathy. Sophia's bias, Lucien, suffered tragedy and according to Felski, Sophia, Kiki, and Kathryn are empathetic because "they are aware of others' feelings [and] also that they respond to these feelings in a compassionate manner," and that "empathy is tied to the acknowledgement of suffering: responding to the pain of others" (105). The crying emojis and reactions indicate how

they felt toward the plot and character, responding in an empathetic manner. This empathetic manner also shows that these three users are performing their gender, as "women are more likely" to express their emotions in digital communications (Thomson & Murachver 193). With the empathetic language and emojis, Sophia, Kiki, and Kathryn performed their gender within these story discussions.

Challenging Gender

Although some of the members performed their gender identities, there also occurred instances within this community in which they challenged their gender expectations. Assertive language also occurred in the discourse, including in discussions about the mechanics, probability, and gacha system of *Mr. Love*. Within "r/MrLove," there are heavy math discussions throughout because the users discuss probability rates and try to determine the best value for their purchases. As previously noted about gameplay mechanics when Arctic Fox hedged her statement, she immediately shows an assertion after the hedge: "4.99 one is better than *most* double gems." This 4.99 comment shows an assertion to argue the best deal, challenging the performance of feminine discourse. As Thomson and Murachver state, men are more likely to assert ideas, thus Arctic Fox complicates the gender performance (195). Arctic Fox once again challenges feminine discourse by stating "the 12.99 one is still better,"

asserting her ideas about the costs. Along this same conversation, Sophia was also more assertive when asked for advice by Mimi and Kathryn. Sophia responded to the question of buying both of the aforementioned packs with "I'd say no," asserting her own opinion and further complicating gender roles.

Another huge discussion that occurs that challenges gender expectations is how the six participants disidentify with their gender through objectification. Discussions of the five main love interests can appear as sexual and, in some ways, objectifying the male characters. However, part of the power in this community is that the users all support and, in a sense, empower this language. As women who have often been the brunt of sexual objectification, the power dynamic, in a sense, has been shifted. One example of this type of language is when Kiki states that Gavin has "gotta fine behind and he ain't afraid to show it." This is in comment to one of the official images posted showing Gavin's backside. Another instance is in reference to Gavin again, when Kiki states that "he is so delightfully awkward" and right after posts a reaction that has the caption: "making all the panties drop." These instances with Kiki show the ownership of sexuality in this community, even if it does come off as making objectifying comments toward the men in this game.

Another example of members disidentifying and objectifying is when Kathryn often uses what is called a "lip-bite" emoji, which shows a face biting the lower lip, a gesture associated with sexual

implications. Kathryn often uses this emoji in reference to her in-game husband, Shaw. She has also posted fan-art of Shaw, to which other members have commented on. One notable comment was from Sophia, when she called Shaw "a tease" based on the fan-art. While this type of objectification would be looked down on in physical spaces with real people, this community is a safe-space for women to be open about their sexualities, especially since the majority of which have had issues with being preyed upon by men in real life. The trick with these members is that while they have become attached to these fictional husbands, they know the balance between fiction and reality and how certain discourses are appropriate in "r/MrLove" that may not be acceptable in other spaces.

The ownership of sexuality is a way for users, especially Kiki and Kathryn, to show disidentification with the dominant culture. Instead of being the object of sexual desire, they have now shifted it into making it their own -- working "on and against dominant ideology" that everything is catered toward a hetero male gaze (Muñoz 11). By shifting the power dynamics, these women have begun to own their sexuality, and in this space, they are not afraid to show it. After all, "disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning," thus the way these women have recycled female sexuality (Muñoz 31). While this objectification in gaming communities often occurs from male to female, in "r/MrLove" it is the opposite, thus the women are not only challenging their gender performance, but

disidentifying against something that once oppressed them.

Building Community

One of the most prominent components of this discourse community is how all of the users have built lasting relationships that go beyond the game, whether that's through discussion or through the mutual appreciation of the game. The users in "r/MrLove" all show appreciation for the story, but at the same time analyze it and note a variety of holes in the overarching plot. As Sophia comments about the story and writing itself:

> I don't know if they know how they're spacing out their time. I just generally think of [*Mr. Love's*] timeline like a bunch of timelines that kind of all got mixed up together in a big messy ball. It's always pretty obvious who the love interest is supposed to be even if there's more than [one love interest] on the screen so whoever's the lead, that's the timeline we're in.

Here, Sophia is clearly showing confusion over the events that have unfolded, but at the same time, has accepted it as part of the story's charm. The mystery aspect of *Mr. Love* keeps the fans engaged and continuing to play; as Felski states, we "are drawn to stories that stimulate deep features of our social brains. Such stories teach us to mind-read, to make sense of other people, to hone our interpersonal intelligence" (85). Even

though there is some confusion with the overarching storytelling, the stimulation of the players' brains in figuring the plot out keeps them coming. Just as well, Sophia directly addressing her confusion to a community helps keep her reading through the game's story. Because Sophia has a community to discuss the story with, the desire to keep going becomes stronger. In relation to Sophia's situation, Jenkins says that "for most fans, meaning-production is not a solitary and private process but rather a social and public one" (*Textual Poachers* 75). Discussing the story helps the members make sense of the narrative, and it's through these discussions that help keep them engaged with the media. Not only that, but it is through these discussions of the story and characters that fostered the community in the first place, establishing relationships between real people through a fictional game.

Another way that the community discusses the story is to express their emotions of what is happening, more specifically to the characters. Although the overarching narrative sometimes causes confusion with the six participants, it's clear that they are attached to the characters and still want to see what happens. Through *Mr. Love*, the characters have impacted how the players interact with one another; the characters -- namely the love interests -- are the main draw of the game and has led to intricate discussions. Felski comments that "we connect *through* [characters] to other persons as well as to other things" (91). This Discord server is a prime example of these connections in action. When discussing the

characters in this Discord server, the language is teasing, but friendly to one another. Most of the characters that are discussed are the five main love interests of *Mr. Love*. Despite the differing opinions of who their favorite love interests are, the users are civil in discussing the characters themselves. For example, Kiki once posted a meme that said "You're kind of broken aren't you? That's exactly my type!" to the channel dedicated specifically to Lucien. Sophia, whose bias is Lucien, responded with "where did you find this photo of me?" She knew that this meme was all in good fun, and even reacted with a laugh emoji to Kiki's meme. Even though the meme was discussing issues with Lucien – being a 'broken' character – Sophia understood Kiki's intentions. The meme showed the fun side of this community, which also creates the trust these two members have with one another; they had enough trust and rapport with one another that Kiki could poke fun at Sophia's favorite character.

Another instance where character discussions grew into playful teasing was when Sophia posted another meme about Victor and Shaw. In this meme, it mentioned that Victor was most likely to have expensive and individual products for shampoo, conditioner, cologne, body wash, and others. Shaw, on the other hand, was most likely to use a "9 in 1" shampoo-conditioner-cologne-body wash-motor oil-etc. product. Sophia follows the meme with a statement that says, "Kathryn have you seen how Twitter is dragging your man today," to which Kathryn responds with, "nah, true man doesn't own more than one

product and smells like motor oil." This banter between Sophia and Kathryn shows the playfulness and teasing that the ladies of this community often give each other, even when their biases differ. The core of the previous banters forms from a community of trust, or rather the "sense of affiliation" that these users have in this "affect driven community and the social norms that ensure supportive and collaborative engagement" (Jenkins, "Art Happens" 86). Because of the affinity of the characters and game, and the already established sense of community between Kathryn, Sophia, and Kiki, the playful teasing is out of a sense of support and trust, which is what makes fan communities powerful.

There also appears to be a sense of connection to the characters through these users. As Felski states, identification describes "an affinity that is based on some sense of similarity" (81). One example of this identification of the characters was when Star posted a meme that showed the love interests' responses to the question: "What state do you live in?" Here, Star is identifying with fan-made content of the characters, showing how she is similar to them -- identifying with Kiro and Lucien being in constant anxiety and denial -- however, Star takes it further and says she is also Gavin. Even the meme itself is a form of identification, since the creators took content from the game to create the meme. The constant states were pulled from the characterization in the game, showing attachment to the characters themselves.

Discussion

While the majority tends to perform gender, it does appear that within discussions of gameplay mechanics, the users are more likely to be assertive when helping others with purchase decisions. Despite the gender dynamics of the community, however, the relationships built between the members provides that sense of community and comradery brought together by their attachment of *Mr. Love*. Throughout the analysis, gender is generally still being performed in most cases through hedging, asking questions, and emotional responses (Thomson & Murachver). Where the users complicate gender performance lies in discussions of gameplay mechanics where some users are more assertive in their discussions. Another area of challenging gender performance is the discussions that border objectification of the male love interests in *Mr. Love*. However, this is a shift in gender dynamics especially in a type of media that has a long history of men gatekeeping and objectifying women. Through this ownership, "disidentification negotiates strategies of resistance within the flux of discourse and power," meaning the shifting dynamics that the users of "r/MrLove" show are fluctuating between gender performance (Muñoz 19). While not completely disregarding female discourse or denying the dominant discourse, the users have taken part of the dominant male discourse and made it their own -- from the gameplay mechanic discussions to the objectification of the male characters, they

have owned their sexuality and feel safe expressing it so in this community.

As for the community and relationships built, those are the strongest parts about "r/MrLove." As Felski states, "attachments are not only psychological but involve many forms of joining, connecting, meeting" (5). Although the attachments start with the game, these forms that Felski notes are shown through the way these users communicate with one another in "r/MrLove." On a similar vein, Silverman agrees that these attachments can form into one of communion. Although she discusses communion about books, her "fantasy of communion" also applies to other types of media; it is because of the "intimate and exclusive nature of the imagined bond" that "r/MrLove" has formed to be supportive of one another (Silverman 2). Silverman states the bond is imagined but imagined here doesn't necessarily mean "not-real," because the bonds shown in this small community are very real, even if the users haven't met in-person. As Jenkins also states, fan communities can help foster support and help build communion ("Art Happens" 86). This small Discord server is also a place where these community members can engage in what Jenkins refers to as "the private and intimate discourse of 'gossip'" (*Textual Poachers* 84). It is through this "gossip" that these women fans are able to be open and honest about the game, characters, and story, without feeling shamed or embarrassed.

This fan community consumes this specific media and has found a home to share their love with one another. Within this home, the users have found comfort in expressing their own opinions on not just the game itself, but other happenings in their lives. Because of the love of the game, the users in "r/MrLove" have found like-minded individuals that they feel comfortable with, and this community has far exceeded the limits and boundaries of the game itself. It is because fan communities like this Discord server exist that *Mr. Love* also has a presence. Felski notes that "things exist only via relations;" therefore, creating networks surrounding the fandom help to keep it alive (23). These networks, then, are formed "because of the experience of sharing a common text," resulting in "a heightened connection" to other readers (Silverman 15). As Silverman also notes, engaging with media also "precipitates both the experience of shared consciousness […] and a bodily engagement with the [media's] materiality" (12). Silverman's discussion correlates to the affective ties that Sophia, Kiki, and Kathryn experienced through the story; even though the narrative is fiction, the bodily experiences and feelings are very real. Adding on to this, the community aspect of expressing their feelings over this game helps to foster the affective response to *Mr. Love's* story.

The community all engaged with *Mr. Love* individually before joining the Discord server. However, in one way or another, the users sought out others who also engaged with the game because they wanted to discuss the contents with people. This brought everyone together into this intimate community, and this love the users felt for the game transferred to a supportive and

fostering community, all stemming from the game. The community of "r/MrLove," then, helps keep the game and fandom alive and thriving.

Conclusion

Analyzing this small, but intimate, fan community has shed light on the power of media consumption. This Discord community is similar to that of a book club; coming together because of a mutual love for a piece of media, no matter the form of the media. However, this community is just one example of an affinity space for the overarching *Mr. Love* fandom. As mentioned earlier, the fandom of *Mr. Love* expands a variety of social media platforms. Although this research says how this specific group interacts with one another and the content of the game, that is only one group in a much bigger fandom. Future research to make more implications on *Mr. Love's* fandom as a whole would be required to make concrete claims. To obtain even more specific observations of how the fandom reacts to *Mr. Love,* interviews with the members could also help.

However, this small community of "r/MrLove" does exhibit attributes of fan culture that both Jenkins and Felski discuss. Just as well, this community includes the sense of comradery that occurs in communion as noted by Silverman. Within this community of "r/MrLove," the members are able to be true to themselves, which includes showing emotion through affective language. This space also allows women to not feel bound to gender norms,

making it possible for them to disidentify and be open about their sexual desires, something that is generally looked down on for women to be public about. This small community has created a safe space for these female-identifying members to explore and challenge their gender expectations, which is a powerful tool for women, especially in game/fan spaces. Through looking at this specific fan community, the researcher concludes that fan communities help bring others together because of a mutual love and continues to be a cultural phenomenon worthy of study.

It is important to note that not *all* fan communities, especially digital ones, are full of love and support. Being wary of how toxic fan environments can become due to gatekeeping is important within this field of study; however, just because some communities are toxic, doesn't mean that fan communities as a whole are dangerous. As Matt Hills theorized, all fan communities are a bigger piece of the fan world – a network of many differing and varying fan communities that exist. Therefore, just because one fan community exhibits certain qualities and rules does not mean *all* fan communities adhere to those qualities, thus tying into how varying fan platforms can be toxic but are not reflective of the community as a whole (Hills 868). In a similar vein, although this Discord server, "r/MrLove," is an intimate community that fosters support and love, it is not reflective of every fan community. However, by analyzing more of these intimate fan communities, scholars can determine what works in these spaces, while

still recognizing that fan communities are individual based on the participants.

Works Cited

Andlauer, Leticia. "Pursuing One's Own Prince: Love's Fantasy in Otome Game Contents and Fan Practice." *Mechademia*, vol. 11, no. 1, Fall 2018, pp. 166+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A589697810/AONE?u=ksstate_ukans&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=a6018da2.

Clemen, Gudrun. "The Concept of Hedging: Origins, Approaches and Definitions." *Hedging and Discourse: Approaches to the Analysis of a Pragmatic Phenomenon in Academic Texts,* Edited by Raija Markkanen and Hartmut Schröder, Walter de Gruyter, 1997, pp. 235-248.

Felski, Rita. *Hooked*: *Art and Attachment*. U of Chicago P, 2020.

Hills, Matt. "From Fan Culture/Community to the Fan World: Possible Pathways and Ways of Having Done Fandom." *Palabra Clave,* vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 856-883, 2017. DOI: 10.5294/pacla.2017.20.4.2.

Jenkins, Henry. "'Art Happens not in Isolation, But in Community': The Collective Literacies of Media Fandom." *Cultural Science Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, 10 Dec. 2019, pp. 78+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A608278653/AONE?u=ksstate_ukans&sid=bookmarkAONE&xid=1913da0b.

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture.* 20th Anniversary Ed., Routledge, 1992.

Muñoz, José Esteban. "Performing Disidentifications." *Disidentifications*, U of Minnesota P, 1999. pp. 1-34.

Silverman, Gillian. *Bodies and Books: Reading and the Fantasy of Communion in NineteenthCentury America.* U of Pennsylvania P, 2012. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ku/detail.action?docID=3441974.

Thomson, Rob, and Tamar Murachver. "Predicting Gender from Electronic Discourse." *The British Journal of Social Psychology* vol. 40, 2001, pp. 193-208. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466601164812