

The Media's Influence of Socially Constructed Masculinities on Young Men

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the HPSY414 - Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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Abstract

Gender is no longer seen as being rigid or binary, but rather seen as fluid, existing on a spectrum. This qualitative research study has argued that although there are mainly ideal hegemonic masculinities that are portrayed by varying media sources, other non-hegemonic and marginalised masculine identities are now being portrayed more in the media. These portrayals of masculinity through media sources could have a beneficial or detrimental influence on young men's masculinity. Young men would want to understand how and why different media sources influence one's perceptions and realisations of masculinity. Questions about one's understanding of masculinity and the media's portrayals of masculinity were asked in semi-structured interviews to investigate the research problem. These semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of what was shared by the participants and the opportunity to ask further relevant questions. The study's findings suggested that social media and advertisements were the most influential media sources that influenced young men's masculinity. Additionally, there are many portrayals of harmful and toxic masculinities in the media. Furthermore, that although there is an overwhelming amount of hegemonic masculinities portrayals, there are, however, there are more portrayals of non-hegemonic and marginalised masculinities in the media nowadays.

Introduction

The topic of gender, as portrayed through the media arguably causes significant debate not only in South Africa (SA) but globally. Research suggests that there are varying opinions on what it means to be a man, masculine and a father (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012). These differences in opinions come as a result of the multicultural, multilingual and multiracial nature of SA (Morrell et al., 2012). The term gender is arguably influenced by various factors in one's life including culture, demographics, life experiences and the social constructs portrayed by the media (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010). Additional, factors could include age, context, language, race and wealth (Addis et al., 2010). Due to these factors varying for every individual, it can be argued that one individual does not have the same life experiences as another individual but is still exposed to the media in one form or another (Addis et al., 2010). An argument can be made that masculinities are socially constructed through different aspects of society, specifically the media (Berger, Wallis, & Watson, 2012). One cannot claim that there is a fixed or essential masculine identity, as masculinities are now seen as fluid and are portrayed as such through the media (Sylvester & Hayes, 2010). However, hegemonic masculinities remain the dominant, ideal and validated form of masculinity within society (Addis et al., 2010). This results in other masculinities consequently being criticised and judged

(Addis et al., 2010). Thus, the alternatives to this hegemonic and socially constructed masculinity mean giving up power, becoming vulnerable and inferior (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). When one thinks about masculinity, several characteristics come to mind such as muscular physiques, wealth and power (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). As such, there are socially constructed roles that have been established for both men and women, where straying from these norms are considered socially deviant (Berger et al., 2012). Social deviance involves going against set norms or ideals of society (Berger et al., 2012). In SA, the typical social construction of masculinity dates back to colonialism and apartheid, which has continued into the post-apartheid era (Morrell et al., 2012). Many young people in SA have very few economic prospects due to the entrenched racialised inequality that persists in post-apartheid SA (Schoon, 2017). These individuals often face narratives that are rooted in racism, colonialism and apartheid, which generally result in an aggressive or violent manifestation of masculinity (Schoon, 2017). During the apartheid regime, power was generally shown through aggression, dominance and violence (Morrell et al., 2012). This power aspect of masculinity is still seen today, for example through gender-based violence, patriarchy and gangsterism (Morrell et al., 2012). For years South African masculinities have been influenced by many factors, including, gender-based issues, politics, socio-economic issues and largely by the social constructions of the media (Morrell et al., 2012). Examples of these include social media, gender-based violence, racism, crime and poverty (Morrell et al., 2012). Several factors influence the concept of being a man, being masculine and a father within SA (Morrell et al., 2012). It varies across contexts, from being a gangster to a wealthy businessman (Morrell et al., 2012). While the media has a prevailing influence on young men, aspects that cannot be overlooked include cultural traditions, racialised experiences and gangsterism (Morrell et al., 2012).

Contextualisation

This study took place in the context of post-apartheid SA, more specifically in the city of Cape Town, within the Western Cape Province. SA is truly diverse as it is a multicultural, multilingual and multiracial country (Ratele, 2014). Thus, SA provided a diverse and rich context in which the study took place. The elements that are important to consider is the evident racial, inequality and socio-economic issues that have plagued SA since apartheid, which has created a division within SA (Ratele, 2014). Other issues facing SA include gangsterism, gender-based violence and high crime rates (Morrell et al., 2012). It can be said that these issues have had some negative influence on the men within SA, in terms of how one's masculinity is shaped and realised (Morrell et al., 2012). Additionally, the media has played a role in the negative portrayals of masculinity (Morrell et al., 2012).

Rationale

This study has contributed to existing research on the topic of how the media's portrayals of socially constructed masculinities influence young men within SA. Furthermore, it has offered a discussion on socially constructed masculinity through the media within SA. It was essential to further discover and understand which other factors influence a young man's perceptions and realisation of masculinity. These issues included, for example, socio-economic issues portrayed through the media. Finally, it was crucial to comprehend the media's influence on masculinity, particularly in an ever-changing diverse SA. Much research has been conducted regarding the genetic influences on masculinity such as one's biology, but less on social factors such as the media, culture, language or race (Morrell, 2002). The argument can be made, that social factors play as much of a role in one's masculinity as genetics (Morrell, 2002). These social factors could determine what one believes is masculine and what it means to be masculine. In a multicultural, multilingual, multiracial and post-apartheid SA, a case can be made whereby there are many socially constructed masculinities and socio-economic factors at play, providing a diverse context for research. There have been many breakthroughs in research for many developing countries in recent years, including SA, which could hold the key to social development (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). In a democratised SA, research opportunities and funding are increasing substantially in the social sciences field (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

This study was relevant as the issues concerning gender and masculinities is an on-going discussion not only in SA but globally as well (Morrell et al., 2012; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Future research could go on to provide additional knowledge about men, masculinities and fatherhood (Morrell et al., 2012; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Many academics are invested in researching pressing and relevant topics such as gender, cultural and racial issues (Morrell et al., 2012; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Furthermore, to apply knowledge to situations and offer explanations for these societal issues (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This study was relevant in the context of SA given the issues regarding the intersecting identities of race, class and gender (Morrell et al., 2012; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Therefore, the social significance of this research was crucial as it has the potential to affect the perceptions of individuals within different contexts (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The knowledge generated by this research could be instrumental in indirectly impacting the lives of young South African men (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Individuals would be able to better understand and challenge the negative aspects of gender such as gender-based violence and toxic masculinities in SA (Morrell et al., 2012).

Problem Statement

This study went on to discuss young men's perceptions of masculinity and how it is influenced by the media's social constructs within SA. It is suggested that one would want to know what affects the development of one's masculinity, as it could influence the realisation of masculinity in adulthood and fatherhood. Poor portrayals and understandings of masculinity by the media could negatively impact one's masculinity through various means by perpetuating problematic or toxic masculinities such as patriarchy, gender inequality or gender-based violence (Morrell, 2002). Arguably, young men would want to understand how and why the media influences masculinity, hence, this research was crucial since the realisation and interpretation of masculinity is widely discussed not only within SA but globally as well (Morrell, 2002). This research can pave the way for future research into the larger field of gender studies. Current and existing literature fails to explain the extent of which or how exactly masculinity is shaped by different media sources, which could be explored further by future research. These media sources could include, for example, magazines, movies, social media and television.

Purpose Statement

This study aimed to explore and better understand how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped within SA through the media. Additionally, this study aimed to achieve an in-depth understanding of how terms such as hegemonic and socially constructed masculinity through media influence the perceptions on what it means to be masculine. Furthermore, this study aimed to discover which sources of media affect one's view of masculinity.

Research Question

The primary research question was, to what extent does socially constructed masculinity through media influence young men? Further research questions included, does hegemonic masculinity in the media negatively influence one's self-confidence? How and why do father figures have an integral influence on the masculinity of young men? How does the media's portrayal of masculinity influence what is considered masculine?

Objectives

To understand how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped within SA through different media sources. Additionally, to achieve an in-depth understanding of how terms such as hegemonic and socially constructed masculinity through media influence young men's perceptions on what it means to be masculine. Furthermore, was to discover which sources of media affect one's view on masculinity and what it means to be a father.

Literature Review

The media's influence of socially constructed masculinity on young men has been explored in this literature review. Additionally, the differing perspectives on what it means to be a man, masculine and a father was discussed. Moreover, the relevance of the Hegemonic Masculinity and Social learning theories were discussed. Finally, this literature review has attempted to show how one's masculinity is affected by varying sources of media.

Men and Social Constructions

Masculinity could be defined as the set of attributes, behaviours and roles often associated with men (Morrell et al., 2012). There are various expressions of ideal masculinities, which suggests plurality (Morrell et al., 2012). This means that there is more than one masculinity that is expressed through the media within society (Morrell et al., 2012). With each ideal serving as a normative standard by which other masculinities are compared to or measured by (Morrell et al., 2012). Much literature has found that there is no fixed or essential masculine identity, which follows the notions that masculinity is fluid (Morrell et al., 2012). The social pressures that men face daily to act masculine cannot be overlooked, with these social pressures being imposed through popular culture, media or sport to mention a few (Waling, 2020). Being a man has often been strongly associated with heterosexuality compared to anything else (Waling, 2020). However, it should be noted that these long-standing norms and ideals have been challenged in recent years through not only research but various educational institutions globally (Waling, 2020). Within society, masculinities are often positioned in opposition to femininities (Morrell et al., 2012). These masculinities are shaped by class, context, history, location, race and sexuality, thus leading to multiple facets of masculinities (Morrell et al., 2012). Although, the vital role that the media plays in the shaping of masculinity within society cannot simply be dismissed (Morrell et al., 2012). Due to the existing social constructs of masculinity, men attempt to achieve these ideals through various means (Morrell et al., 2012). There are different opinions of what it means to be a man within a diverse country such as SA, due to its multicultural, multilingual and multiracial nature (Morrell et al., 2012). Generally, being a man does not involve being in touch with one's feeling or emotions (Morrell et al., 2012). Research has shown that violence has been viewed as necessary in certain situations to assert or maintain one's social status and a sense of self as masculine when faced with threats to one's manhood or social status (Dagirmanjian et al., 2017). Seemingly, there is still gender bias when it comes to men in SA, despite the increasing activism and protests in favour of female empowerment and gender equality within the country (Ratele, 2014). There is still evident patriarchy within society, which can be seen economically, politically and socially,

including in one's household (Ratele, 2014). In addition to this, there is a history of gender bias and inequality not only within SA but globally (Sylvester & Hayes, 2010). This has resulted in men often reaping the benefits or rewards in society, whether it is money, power or both (Sylvester & Hayes, 2010). Findings in recent research suggest that there is gendered social learning, in which men and women learn about gender through social interaction, learning and reinforcement (Hearn, & Morgan, 2014). Much of this relates to the Social Learning Theory, for instance, how many young men learn masculine behaviours or habits from fatherly figures (Hearn & Morgan, 2014).

Hegemonic Masculinity Theory and Social Learning Theory

Hegemonic masculinities are the dominant or ideal forms of masculinity by which other masculinities are judged (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Established norms of male behaviour and activity are identified as hegemonic, in that it holds a dominant status in contexts or societies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Often hegemonic masculinity is related to power in that certain masculinities are validated, and while others are criticised or overlooked (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). There are various hegemonic masculine identities as a result of several influences including age, class, ethnicity, geographical location, race and sexuality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been fundamental in society's understanding of the role that men play compared to women and other men, whether it be at home, work or in society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is a concept used to broadly explain male power in combination with patriarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Patriarchy could be defined as a social system in which women are repressed, with men holding authority, control and privilege (Maconis, 2012). Patriarchy has been exhibited in economic, legal, political, religious and social domains (Maconis, 2012).

The concept has been used to illustrate the differentiation in power dynamics between men while showing that there are dominant groups and subordinate groups in society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Through hegemonic masculinity, the gendered and social hierarchies within society are uncovered (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). While considering maintaining hierarchies, linear thinking is opposed regarding dominant masculinities as controlling all other forms of marginal or alternative masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). All masculinities work together in a contention, informing the other and in turn contributing to the hierarchy while co-existing (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic displays of power reveal status and visibility within society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, maintaining and permitting a hierarchy within a society where dominant and strong

characteristics compare to the so-called real man, while so-called weaker regarded characteristics compare to a feminised or marginal man (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The Hegemonic Masculinity Theory, as proposed by Connell, was referred to throughout this study and form the basis of the research conducted (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This theory involves the subordination of women, establishes patriarchy and acknowledges the gender hierarchy that exists within society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The Hegemonic Masculinity Theory in a way legitimises male dominance within society, with women, non-hegemonic male figures and other gender identities being inferior (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Although the theory primarily imposes hegemonic masculinity's influence within society, it does, however, recognise that other multiple masculinities do exist within society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Morrell's research was also referred to throughout, specifically his work on hegemonic masculinity, gender roles and social constructs with the context of SA (Morrell, 2002). These researchers have emphasised the influence that social constructions through the media have on men.

The Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura grew out of cognitivism, and involves behaviour being observed and then learnt (Noe, 2010). Individuals learn by observing other individuals who are competent or rather act as models, much like how young men observe fatherly figures (Myers, 2009). This imitation or observational learning involves learning by simply watching other individuals (Kail, Cavanaugh, & Muller, 2019). The process of social learning involves attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivational processes (Noe, 2010). Young men can learn by paying attention to other male figures acting as a model of masculine behaviour, with the observed behaviours modelled needing to be retained by the observer (Myers, 2009). Retained knowledge must then be carried out through motor reproduction, therefore the so-called masculine behaviours need to be physically carried out (Noe, 2010). Lastly, the theory involves motivational processes, where the young men need to be motivated to learn (Noe, 2010). Social interactions play a crucial role in the learning process (Noe, 2010). The learner, learning and the social environment are all interconnected and interrelated (Noe, 2010). Continual learning and social interaction within a context can have a crucial influence on individuals (Noe, 2010).

Masculinity and the Media

The media arguably has had a crucial role in influencing the views on what it means to be masculine (Ratele, 2014). The internet, magazines, movies, social media and television are just some of the many sources of media that display this perception of socially constructed and so-called successful masculinity (Ratele, 2014). Many men's lifestyle magazines have been

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used by researchers to examine masculinity (Waling, 2017). These different media sources advertise this perfected masculine constructs or moulds to the consumer, in this case, men (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). Many men fall victim to this and spend money to achieve this ideal, whether it is lifestyle products or steroids for example (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). It is all aimed at perfecting the body, as it leads to success and power, which the media lead men to believe (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). This leads to the body becoming a source of confidence and security for men or in some cases a source of insecurity (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). It has been established that this has caused global social desirability and drive to achieve these masculine ideals (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). Those men who do not meet this ideal then feel insecure or less masculine and often fall prey to this vicious scheme of consumerism (Ratele, 2014). This has resulted in body dissatisfaction contributing to disordered eating, negative moods and psychological distress for many men (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). Socially constructed masculinities have created norms, and anything deviating from these norms is seen as socially deviant (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012).

The media arguably has significant influence when it comes to what is portrayed to society and how it is portrayed (Morrell et al., 2012). Within the media, there are common depictions of masculinity relating to power, wealth, strength, and youth all given esteemed status (Morrell et al., 2012). Many of these portrayed men are young, white, middle-class, physically well-built and sexually attractive, fitting the mould of the typical heteronormative male (Morrell et al., 2012). This heteronormative male mould tends to perpetuate certain characteristics such as dominance, leadership, strength and patriarchal beliefs or ideals (Morrell et al., 2012). The media perpetuates the view of hegemonic masculinity being the ideal or norm that all men should strive towards (Morrell et al., 2012). The body becomes something to be admired, consumed and observed while being a project to be worked on (Morrell et al., 2012). Media often depicts hegemonic images while other masculinities are deemed inferior (Morrell et al., 2012). Heterosexual content is depicted to validate focus towards the male body and thus ensuring the heterosexual gaze (Morrell et al., 2012). The male identity has been represented by both media and cultural consumption pressures through body image, desirability expectations and the fear of social judgement (Waling, 2017).

Research studies suggest that there are evident hegemonic ideas about masculinity within SA (Ratele, 2014). However, these ideas have been complicated by the marginality of South African society and the evidential socio-economic issues that plague the country, such as poverty and crime (Ratele, 2014). As previously mentioned, hegemonic masculinity is seen as the dominant masculinity within society (Morrell et al., 2012). Within hegemonic

masculinities, there are underlying oppressive attitudes and practices, thus it has been synonymous with problematic male attitudes and behaviour (Morrell et al., 2012). Several examples of these include violence, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviours, the abuse of women and children (Morrell et al., 2012). In the South African socio-political context, another aspect to consider is the notion of male superiority organised within racial and class lines, where both white and black hegemonic masculinity has developed as a result (Morrell et al., 2012). The white hegemonic masculinity was developed around power and wealth during the apartheid regime, which this still exists today (Morrell et al., 2012). Alternatively, with black hegemonic masculinity, which was developed generally around crime, gangsterism and violence (Morrell et al., 2012). Research has shown that violence amongst and perpetrated by young men in SA is on the rise (Soudien, 2011). It is crucial therefore to recognise the need to develop new resources for young men to find support and validation outside of the evident hegemonic portrayals and practices that exist (Soudien, 2011). Opportunities need to be created for young men to not fall victim of circumstances and have the chances to make different choices in life (Soudien, 2011). Hence, the media plays a vital role in how masculinity is portrayed (Soudien, 2011).

Fatherhood within the South African Context

Factors that are important to consider is the evidential inequality, racial and socio-economic issues that have plagued SA since the apartheid regime, with these issues creating a division within SA (Ratele, 2014). The concept of fatherhood in the South African context has been one that has ultimately been shaped by the socio-economic issues that plague the country (Morrell et al., 2012). Many of the older male siblings in SA that have taken up the fatherly role in the households due to absent fathers (Salami & Okeke, 2018). This absence of fathers influences the socio-educational development of children, particularly of young men (Salami & Okeke, 2018). Many older siblings, often the oldest male in the household would take care of the younger siblings and mother (Morrell et al., 2012). Often the eldest son would take up the responsibility of providing for the rest of the family (Morrell et al., 2012). Due to certain circumstances, these young men turn to dangerous ways to do this, like becoming involved in gangsterism and thus typically only have other gang members as male role models (Morrell et al., 2012). The social construct of masculinity that those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds observe is generally that of crime, drugs and violence (Morrell et al., 2012).

Alternatively, many fathers who are present in the home often convey patriarchal customs (Morrell et al., 2012). The father is stereotypically seen as the head of the household, who makes important decisions regarding the family, resulting in both the children and mother

being submissive or subordinate to him (Morrell et al., 2012). The father sets the expectations and rules for the children, specifically the boys, who grow up feeling the need to meet these expectations and if not, feel like failures as a result (Morrell et al., 2012). Due to the apartheid regime, many families faced challenges, of which was very high levels of residential separation, leaving children separated from fathers (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012). Thus, growing up, these children, particularly the men did not grow up with a fatherly figure, resulting in a possible distorted view of fatherhood and being a father (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012). Some households do have fathers present but some are not as engaged in the children's lives and do not take responsibility for raising the children (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012).

Many young boys idolise father figures and this influences how they carry out the role of a father later in life (Spjeldnaes, Moland, Harris, & Sam, 2011). Findings in recent research have indicated that there is a huge discrepancy between the experiences of being fathered and future aspirations for being a responsible father (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). A key aspect of a father's responsibility is guiding young men about personal issues relating to one's manhood (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). Differences in socio-economic circumstances do influence the transition from boyhood to manhood (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). This transition varies in different societies due to these differences (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). Arguably, the path into adulthood ultimately involves learning to take on responsibility in one way or another (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). Hence, this could be unrealistic as many individuals in SA lack the necessary resources, due to being disadvantaged (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). There is a lack of research about fatherhood and its influence on one's masculinity in SA, which has resulted in a knowledge gap about the involvement and role of fathers in the lives of children regarding the realisation of one's masculinity (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012). Thus, it is suggested that further research needs to be conducted on this (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012).

As shown in the above-mentioned regarding men and social constructions in literature, many research studies have acknowledged the role that society can play in terms of what or how men are viewed (Morrell et al., 2012). These views vary across contexts, cultures, and races (Morrell et al., 2012). This is typically seen in countries plagued with socio-economic issues such as SA (Morrell et al., 2012). Although the media filters through specific audio or visual portrayals of masculinity, these are interpreted differently by the poor compared to the wealthy (Morrell et al., 2012). As has been noted, how masculinity is portrayed through the media is one that often falls within set ideals (Morrell et al., 2012). Typically, the wealthy can achieve these ideals whereas the poor cannot, thus, it can be said that masculinity is realised differently across contexts (Morrell et al., 2012). Another aspect to consider is that the way

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these masculinities are portrayed through the media to these different contexts is key (Morrell et al., 2012). As young men see these portrayals, for example, if all young men see as masculine is being a gangster by the media, often this is later realised in later life (Morrell et al., 2012). As can be seen, these ideals in varying societies generally form part hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). As a result of this being portrayed through the media, these ideals are often pursued by men (Morrell et al., 2012). Literature highlights the detrimental effects that this can cause for young men who cannot achieve these ideals (Morrell et al., 2012). Resulting in harmful effects on these men, whether it is emotionally, mentally, socially or physically (Morrell et al., 2012). The influence of fathers on one's masculinity could be further researched, specifically in how it in combination with the media can affect young men's perceptions and realisation of masculinity within SA (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012).

Research Problem

As previously mentioned, this study discussed young men's perceptions of masculinity through sources of media. It is suggested that one would want to know what affects the development of one's masculinity, as it later influences the realisation of masculinity in adulthood. The literature discussed above highlights the pivotal roles that the media and fatherly figures play in the lives of young men. Additionally, it emphasises the influence that the media has on young men, however, further research is needed on this, especially in SA. Poor portrayals and understandings of masculinity by the media could negatively impact one's masculinity through various means such as perpetuating destructive or toxic masculinity (Morrell, 2002). Young men would want to understand how and why the media influences masculinity; hence, this research is crucial since the realisation and interpretation of masculinity is widely discussed not only within SA but globally too (Morrell, 2002). Existing literature fails to explain how exactly masculinity is shaped by different media sources, which could be explored further by future research (Morrell, 2002). This research aimed to pave the way for future research into the research topic.

Research Design and Methodology

The following discusses the research paradigm, research approach and design, population, sampling method, sample size and group, unit of analysis, recruitment and data collection methods, analysis technique, collection resources and procedures of this study.

Research Paradigm

Interpretivism, as a research paradigm, involves the meanings that individuals or communities assign to experiences, where intersubjective meanings are crucial to achieving understanding and meaning (Willis, 2007). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) define

interpretivism as the epistemological position that supports the necessity to understand differences between individuals in the role as social actors. Interpretivism has strong links to the beliefs and practices of individuals based on social norms within society (Curry, 2020). The reasons for applying interpretivism as the research paradigm was to understand and describe meaningful social action or experiences of individuals, in this case, young men (Maree, 2019). Additionally, in society when behaviours are established by social conventions, interpretation is needed and facts are not necessarily reality (Maree, 2019). Furthermore, there was no distinction made between the researcher and the subject matter in question (Maree, 2019). When interpretivism is concerned, truth is seen as relative, with the social context, conventions, norms and standards of an individual or community being crucial elements in assessing and understanding behaviour (Maree, 2019).

Interpretivism has many assumptions, including that life can only be understood from subjective experiences and that social life is distinctly socially constructed rather than objectively determined (Willis, 2007). Moreover, individuals construct meanings within society, with there being multiple rather than single explanations of behaviour and knowledge (Maree, 2019). Finally, the social world does not exist independently of knowledge when concerning interpretivism (Maree, 2019). Although interpretivism is a relatively well-known paradigm, its definition is not entirely precise nor universally agreed upon (Maree, 2019). Firstly, this study offered an analysis involving how young men react to external social forces such as the media (Maree, 2019). Secondly, different perspectives were offered concerning the reactions of the young men to various media sources and how these differ subjectively (Maree, 2019). Applying interpretivism as the paradigm was relevant as this study involved gaining in-depth insight and empathetic understanding regarding the perceptions and realisation of masculinity of young men through the media (Maree, 2019). This was achieved through semi-structured interviews with the participants (see Appendix E).

Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research design was employed given the objectives, whereby an understanding of underlying opinions and motivations concerning the research topic was revealed (Maxwell, 2012). Further insight was gained regarding existing ideas and issues concerning the topic of masculinity (Maxwell, 2012). The researcher worked inductively as broad generalisations were made from specific observations during the study (Maree, 2019). Additionally, conclusions were drawn by the researcher from the data collected (Maree, 2019). This study was exploratory, as explained by Saunders et al. (2009), this involved trying to discover and aiming to seek new insights into phenomena, asking questions, and to assess the

phenomena in a new light. The study was empirical as the researcher gathered primary research (Maree, 2019). The researcher made use of a cross-sectional design as the study took place at one point in time, thus being a snapshot of a given point in time, where there could be change at a societal level (Maree, 2019). Comparisons were made and notably, there were no cause-and-effect relationships (Maree, 2019). In terms of the epistemological position of the chosen paradigm interpretivism, the knowledge gained could supply young men with the tools needed to bring about change (Maree, 2019). Additionally, it helped discover the underlying meanings and create a deeper understanding of the research topic (Maree, 2019). In terms of the ontological position of the chosen paradigm interpretivism, reality changes over time and is governed by underlying structures (Maree, 2019). Furthermore, the combination of reality and social constructions are created by young men and the media (Maree, 2019).

Population

All young adult men, of any culture, language and race, all between the ages of 18 and 28, residing in Cape Town, in post-apartheid SA.

Sampling Method

The researcher made use of non-probability which resulted in the population not being accurately represented by the sample (Saunders et al., 2009). Hence, it is not known whether each element of the population was represented in the study's sample (Saunders et al., 2009). For this study, purposive sampling was used, with Saunders et al. (2009) defining purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling procedure in which the judgement of the researcher is used to select the participants that make up the sample. Some elements of both convenience and snowball non-probability sampling methods were used. Convenience sampling involved the participants being selected randomly on the basis that those participants were the easiest to access or acquire (Saunders et al., 2009). Snowball sampling involved subsequent participants being obtained from information provided by initial participants (Saunders et al., 2009).

Sample size

This study comprised of three young adult men between the ages of 18 and 28, residing in post-apartheid SA, more specifically in the city of Cape Town. The researcher was aware that this sample size was poor in terms of accurately representing the larger population, although it should be noted that qualitative studies are often conducted with fewer participants (Maree, 2019). However, in terms of financial resources, which there was a lack thereof for this study, the researcher decided to only have 3 participants for the study due to the costs involved. These costs included the data or Wifi needed for online interviews. The selection of participants was not exclusive to any race, thus ensuring a somewhat diverse sample.

Sample Group

The ages of the participants were all between the ages of 21 and 22 respectively, thus all falling between the ages of 18 and 28. The researcher felt that this age group fell into the group of young men and not only are aware of concepts of the research topic due to one's education but also have been exposed to various media sources. Additionally, all of the participants resided in the city of Cape Town, in the Western Cape province, of SA. Cultural identification varied amongst the participants, however, it happened that all were of the coloured race and whose first language was English. Of course, per the prerequisite eligibility criteria of the study, all participants were of the male gender identity. Factors such as culture, language and race were not important factors to be exclusion criteria for this study. Notably, all participants are or were previously students of tertiary educational institutions.

Unit of Analysis

Individuals were the unit of analysis for this study. More specifically, young adult men's perceptions of socially constructed masculinity portrayed through the media. There was no numerical unit of analysis as this was a qualitative research study.

Recruitment Method

Once the study was ethically cleared by the researcher's supervisor and the IIE's Varsity College, the researcher began recruitment and data collection. The study was advertised through word of mouth by the researcher to individuals fitting the eligibility criteria and prerequisites of the study, while individuals were also recruited through word of mouth by the researcher. Furthermore, the potential candidates for participation in the study were then formally emailed information regarding the study (Maree, 2019). Those individuals interested responded via email to the researcher confirming willingness to participate. The first three responses from individuals wanting to participate were selected, as each individual met the prerequisite eligibility criteria of the study, of being male and between the ages of 18-28. These individuals were formally emailed a consent form, an audio recording consent form and a research study checklist form via email to sign and complete (see Appendices A, B and G). Each email stipulated that each participant was required to fully complete the consent form, the audio recording consent form and the research study checklist form before being able to participate in the study. This process saved the researcher time, through email communication, and money, by not having to print out all those forms (Maree, 2019). However, this process was also required per lockdown restrictions due to the Covid-19 lockdown in SA at the time of data collection, as no non-essential individuals or workers were allowed on the roads and to

have contact with others. All three individuals responded via email to the researcher confirming participation with fully signed and completed forms.

Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were employed as a tool to collect data. Notably, semi-structured interviews are the most widely used in qualitative research (Edwards & Holland, 2013). As per Saunders et al. (2009) define semi-structured interviews, the order in which the questions were asked varied, while new questions were also asked in the context of each interview. There were several benefits of using semi-structured interviews, one being that participants were allowed the freedom to express their views (Savin-Baden & Howell-Major, 2013). Additionally, participants provided reliable and comparable qualitative data (Savin-Baden & Howell-Major, 2013). This type of interview allowed the researcher to guide the conversation and engage with participants (Savin-Baden & Howell-Major, 2013). These semi-structured interviews assisted the researcher to better understand how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped by the media within SA. These interviews gave insight into how participants feel about portrayals of masculinity in the media while allowing the researcher the opportunity to interact with participants (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Thus, allowing participants to share in greater detail, which could be useful for gathering information and gaining deeper understanding (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The interviews were done online as opposed to in-person, due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in SA, as in-person interviews would have violated the law at the time.

Data Collection Resources and Procedure

The researcher had prepared four questions for each interview; however, the researcher did ask further questions in the context of each interview (see Appendix E). The interviews were conducted individually with each participant, over the Zoom video application. Each interview's audio was recorded as soon as the interview began and were stored on the researcher's personal computer as MP4 audio clips, which were all later transcribed. A consent form for audio recording was signed by each participant before each interview took place (see Appendix B). Before questions were asked during each interview, introductions were had between the researcher and participant, while the researcher also shared the study's aims, as well as how the interview would assist with the research. Additionally, the researcher shared the interview procedure, as well as privacy and confidentiality details. Furthermore, the researcher shared the possible risks, discomforts and inconveniences that the participant may face during the study, after which the researcher began with the questions. In closing, the researcher asked if the participant had any questions, thanked the participant for the time spent

and the information shared. Finally, the researcher explained that a debrief form, would be emailed to the participant after the conclusion of the interview (see Appendix F). All interviews were later transcribed by the researcher.

Data Analysis Technique

The interviews were all individually transcribed, using thematic analysis, to find repeated patterns of meaning, known as themes within the data collected (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). As per Braun, Clarke and Terry (2015), there is no universal understanding of what a theme is when a thematic analysis is concerned. A theme captures something important about the data concerning the respective research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An inductive analysis or otherwise known as the bottom-up thematic analysis was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Semantic themes were identified, by not looking beyond what the participants shared (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, this involved describing and summarising what participants shared and discussing the implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, there was a focus on the participants, which went along with the interpretivism paradigm that the researcher applied (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Notably, thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of data analysis within qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2012). Hence, the researcher decided to use this type of data analysis as well as the fact that thematic analysis can be used not only for big data sets but small data sets, like in this study (Guest et al., 2012). This assisted with focusing on identifying and examining the themes of masculine portrayals in the media within the collected data (Guest et al., 2012). Additionally, it allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data and interpret the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since the researcher worked inductively, themes were found within the data, with little reliance on pre-existing codes or themes, thus the coding of the data was done without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another reason for using thematic analysis is that there are no ideal sample size considerations that need to be made, therefore the small sample size used in this study was suitable (Braun et al., 2015).

In terms of transcribing, after data collection took place, the researcher transcribed the data collected from the audio recordings of the interviews into written form (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The richness and the quality of the data depended largely on the quality of the transcribing process taken (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Much of the transcribing took place in phase 1 of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcribing proved to be hard work and time consuming (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was important that transcribing was done

verbatim, where the word order was not changed, and no summarising took place while transcribing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Every word was accounted, while abbreviations, different dialects and slang were all importantly noted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcribing was about more than just words, the recording of pauses and the length of pauses were important, along with emphasis, emotion and fillers were all noted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another consideration for the researcher was that the transcribing of the data was to be done soon after the interviews, however, there are no set guidelines that were followed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to were employed to analyse each transcribed interview. Phase 1 involved the researcher familiarising and immersing with the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The result of this stage was starting preliminary codes and detailed notes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher listened to the interview audio recordings, transcribed, read, re-read transcriptions and then started making preliminary notes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase 2 involved the researcher generating initial codes, with the result of this stage, the researcher had comprehensive codes of how the data answers the research question, where segments of the data that appeared interesting and related to the research was selected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some codes eventually became part of themes, while others were discarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As many potential themes or patterns were initially coded for (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some of the irrelevant data were kept to preserve some contextual relevance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher was aware that some codes belonged to more than one theme, as coding was done more than once, with contradictions being noted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding was be done over three individual Microsoft word documents, for each interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 3 involved the researcher searching for themes in the data collected, with the result of this stage, there was a list of possible themes that were further analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There was a long list of codes with many extracts of the data, such as quotes, that belong to these codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was where interpretative analysis of the data occurred, while the codes organised into broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, it was acknowledged how different codes combined to form an over-arching theme or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some themes often had sub-themes, in other words, a theme within a theme was seen while analysing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase 4 involved the researcher reviewing the themes, where there was coherent recognition of how themes are patterned to tell an accurate story about the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, it saw initial themes later merging into broader themes, the realisation that some themes were not themes and some themes being broken down into separate themes (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). The extracts were looked at, which involved seeing whether the themes do justice to the participants' words and whether the themes reflected the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was aimed for the data within the themes to fit together meaningfully while having clear and identifiable distinctions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

While phase 5 involved the researcher defining and naming these themes, which saw a comprehensive analysis of how the themes contributed to the understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage depended on the satisfaction of thematic map, where the researcher had a fairly good idea of what the different themes were, how these themes fitted together, and the overall story these themes told about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The essence of each theme was defined while considering individual themes and how each theme concerned another theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher determined what aspect of the data each theme captured and detailed analysis for each theme was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An assessment of how individual themes fit into the broader narrative of the data and of what the themes say about the research question was done (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This resulted in sub-themes giving structure to more large and complex themes, which ensured that there was not much overlapping between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Lastly, Phase 6 involved producing the final report, with a comprehensive and detailed description of the results (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher was able to now clearly know and define what the themes were or were not (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An advantage of using thematic analysis was that it allowed the interpretation of the themes in the data collected (Guest et al., 2012). However, a disadvantage was that due to the flexible nature of the thematic analysis, it was difficult to decide what aspects of the data was necessary to focus on (Braun et al., 2015). The researcher aimed for the analysis to be concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting, while being within and across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the researcher aimed for it not to be summary or paraphrasing of what the participants shared (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings and Interpretation

The following is a presentation of the analysed data findings in differentiated themes. Additionally, it includes an interpretation, discussion and insight into the findings in terms of the broader context of the research problem. Furthermore, the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the study were discussed.

Spectrum of Masculinity

The participants mentioned that although there is an overwhelming amount of hegemonic portrayals of masculinity in the media, there are nowadays more portrayals of other masculinities in the media, suggesting that masculine ideals vary across sectors and contexts.

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P1: there is a spectrum of what masculinity means

P2: different ideals of men that the media portrays

P3: there is different understandings of and ideas of what masculinity is

These findings affirm the argument that there are different social constructs of masculinity dependent on the respective sector of society (Berger, Wallis, & Watson, 2012). Additionally, the spectrum or fluidity of masculinities is being portrayed more in the media, however, hegemonic masculinities are still seen and portrayed as the norm (Addis et al., 2010; Sylvester & Hayes, 2010). Moreover, these findings coincide with the research of Morrell et al. (2012) suggesting that there are varying opinions of masculinity, with these differences due to the diversified nature of SA. As per Addis et al. (2010) and Morrell et al. (2012) due to these varying factors, individuals would have different life experiences and understandings of masculinity due to varying portrayals of masculinity in the media. Furthermore, the findings support per Sylvester and Hayes (2010), in which there is no fixed masculinity, however, hegemonic masculinity remains the ideal within society, which results in other masculinities being criticised and marginalised (Addis et al., 2010).

Masculinity in the Media

The participants' masculinity has all been influenced by the media. Nike, GQ, Sports Illustrated and Men's Health magazines were examples given in which a certain type of image of masculinity is portrayed. Additionally, advertisements and celebrities have had an influential influence on the participants' formulation of masculinity.

P2: makes me want to dress like them because I see them as role models

P3: the media does play a big role in socially constructing the way we see males

P2 referred to how only certain influential and physically good-looking individuals are chosen to appear in the media. P1 identified social media as an influential source of media.

P2: who are well-built, who have a big presence in society, who have a big social media following and social influence

P1: it does have a big influence because of the amount of exposure you have to it

The participants explained that portrayals of masculinity in the media are both beneficial in terms of creating awareness of issues or education and detrimental in terms of

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disguising toxic masculine traits, patriarchal dominance or abusive characteristics in relationships with others being portrayed.

P2: as much as our social media can become so beneficial it can also become so good at hiding the true reality of masculinities and the problems that are embedded in it

These findings relate to this idea of masculinity that is portrayed in the media which can be attained through consumerism and wealth (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012; Morrell et al., 2012; Ratele, 2014). Thus, socially constructed masculinity through media does influence young men's masculinity, specifically social media as the findings suggest (Morrell et al., 2012). Additionally, the media remains a useful place to further understand how one's masculinity is shaped (Waling, 2017). Furthermore, through these findings, it appears that the media can still harm one's ideas of masculinity and failure to achieve these ideals results in judgement and marginalisation (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012)

Masculinity within SA

The consensus amongst the participants was that men should use their power in society to make a positive contribution and take the country forward. Male power has often resulted in the disadvantage of others. There is an assumption that men have not taken the right stance or place in society and the idea of harmful social constructs of masculinity has long been overlooked or have not been taught. The participant alluded to education being key to creating awareness of harmful or toxic masculinities in society.

P2: we haven't used it for the right reasons, instead we have come to abuse it, we have come to abuse our women and children,

P2: we've abused all these other genders, hence gender-based violence in our country and it has been like this for a very long time

P2: pointless you know to recognise this privilege, but we are not willing to sacrifice it

Toxic masculinity has been rampant in SA according to the participants, explaining how negatively men are viewed in SA due to, for example, gender-based violence, rape, abuse and the #menaretrash movement. Due to long-standing social constructions of masculinities, men have long abused their adopted and assumed patriarchal power in society. There was recognition amongst the participants that men have to be and do better and can no longer adopt

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harmful or toxic masculinities that are so often portrayed in the media. To bring about change in society, men must do the work in educating themselves.

P2: *if you don't recognize what the men are trash movement is about, then there is a problem, there is a problem in the bigger dynamic, the bigger struggle*

P2: *constant and continual abuse against these women, against these children, and all other genders is completely unacceptable and disgusting*

P3: *over the years for a long time, all the cases, like all the crime that is happening in terms of women in South Africa and you can see that how power has been portrayed in that*

The masculinity of males in SA is a result of what is portrayed in the media, however specifically in Cape Town, one's socio-economic status (SES) has a significant influence as well, as the majority of SA lives in poverty as shared by the participants. Additionally, the participants shared that many households have absent fathers or toxic men at the forefront of the house, leaving young men with poor or no male role models.

P2: *you get broken households, where parents have divorced, the man, maybe the father is no longer invested in the child*

P2: *in terms of the poverty situation I mean if we look at the Cape Flats, how many fathers are actually gangsters, you know dealing drugs, killing people*

P2: *I mean what does their child, their son uhm want to be when they grow up, you know what I'm saying, do they want to be like their father*

These findings affirm Morrell (2002), in which negative portrayals of masculinity do have negative influences on young men. Additionally, these findings go along with Addis et al. (2010) where gendered characteristics are influenced by various factors including SES. Additionally, findings affirm Morrell et al. (2012) in which masculinity is still manifested through aggression, dominance and violence in SA.

Appearance and Wealth

The participants shared how that there is a specific physical appearance or body type that is portrayed in the media that is seen or appears to be more masculine, for example, nice hair and big muscles.

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P2: *well-groomed and attractive men*

P2: *the ideal man is one who is built quite well and wouldn't be fat or average but has a nice muscular build*

P2: *physical build and is very clean, neat and tidy in what they are presenting*

The media choose to portray men that look a certain way along with expensive items, that is appealing to men, which feeds into this idea of consumerism. However, it was noted that masculinity is more than one's physical appearance.

P2: *expensive clothing, dressed nicely, very expensive jewellery on*

P2: *dressed nicely, nice car, nice watch, it almost creates this idea of hey I want to be a man like that*

P3: *I don't think I see it as something defined by the way you look anymore*

How wealth is portrayed through the media, for example, men flashing money, cars, expensive clothing jewellery, has become a symbol of success, class and power.

P2: *no matter what it is and you don't only see this in adverts, but also music videos, you see it in pictures, because money is essentially what people are after*

P2: *aspiring to be like these businessmen, who are dressing nicely, nice cars, nice clothing and the clothing and the cars are a representation of power*

P2: *it shows how much wealth they have, it shows their stance on society, it shows their class*

The idea of gendered social learning and interaction through the Social Learning Theory is supported by these findings (Hearn & Morgan, 2014). Additionally, the findings suggest that the media portrays an ideal looking man, in which men want to achieve (Mcfarland & Petrie, 2012). This feeds the idea that there is the ideal masculinity that can be achieved and that anything contrary to this leaves men feeling insecure or less masculine (Ratele, 2014).

Male Dominance

The typical masculine characteristics as portrayed by the media that the participants mentioned include assertiveness, aggression, confidence, courage, pride and ignorance.

P2: *it is just a power dynamic essentially*

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P2: *there is definitely hegemonic representations of males and masculinities in each and every sector within society*

P2: *powerful man in power, he can do what he wants to, he looks after the people, I want to be like him*

The participants shared how there is still patriarchy embedded within society as a whole where women, children and other genders are disadvantaged or excluded. Patriarchy has become a privilege for men and with men benefitting from this at women's or another gender's expense. An example that was given was in workplaces in which men have the higher-paying jobs and women have lower-paying jobs.

P1: *men still have a very powerful role in today's society*

P2: *patriarchy is literally moving through the systems of the world and has become institutionalized and we see that in the media as well*

P3: *society has constructed that males are supposed to have this power*

It was shared by the participants that things are slowly starting to change, however, when men do not perform a typically patriarchal way, they are marginalised.

P1: *I don't think it's harmful because it is starting to change, it can't be harmful if that change is starting to appear*

P3: *when you start to cross the boundaries, you start to become excluded, marginalised*

Although, the participants did feel that men should take responsibility in society, for example in one's family, workplace and community.

P2: *leading from the front and addressing certain problems that you may have in the community and in society*

P3: *being there for the people that care about you*

P3: *being a good role model, owning up your responsibilities*

These findings support the work of Sylvester and Hayes (2010) that there are gender bias and inequality within society. Furthermore, these findings substantiate the role of the Hegemonic Masculinity Theory and patriarchy in society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

The implications of each theme for the research questions were explained while being supported with sufficient evidence from the data collected and existing literature, to assist in

answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Quotes and extracts from the collected data were used, to provide evidence of the themes and help the reader to understand each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All findings and interpretations were linked to as closely as possible to existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In terms of the research problem, the findings suggest that young men do want to understand how and why the media influences masculinity. While interpretations and perceptions masculinity by young men as portrayed by the media was both challenged and affirmed.

The researcher attempted to address Guba's Four Criteria for trustworthiness in this study (Shenton, 2004). Firstly, in terms of credibility, well-recognised research methods were adopted and applied in this study (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, debriefing took place between the researcher and the participants (Shenton, 2004). The researcher's supervisor assisted, scrutinised and made suggestions regarding the study, particularly before data collection took place (Shenton, 2004). Secondly, in terms of transferability, background data regarding context and theories were established (Shenton, 2004). Thirdly, in terms of dependability, an in-depth methodological description was done to allow the study to be repeated (Shenton, 2004). There was strict adherence to thematic analysis when the data collected was analysed. Similarly, a standardised interview and question procedure was used throughout the data collection. Fourthly, the research addressed beliefs and assumptions regarding the research topic (Shenton, 2004). An in-depth methodological description was done to allow research findings to be scrutinised, with acknowledgement of the study's limitations such as the issues of generalisability (Shenton, 2004).

Not causing any harm to the participants throughout the study was both the ethical and moral responsibility of the researcher (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). To ensure rigour throughout this study, the researcher was extremely mindful and thorough when it came to the questions asked during the interviews (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This was necessary, due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. The researcher was mindful of any potential prior bias or prejudice towards the research topic (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). All participants were treated equally, with any potential bias being limited by the researcher (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The selection criteria for participants were not exclusive or limiting to any race thus ensuring a somewhat diverse range of data collection within the small sample (Maree, 2019). The researcher ensured that the research conducted was reviewed by a supervisor (Maree, 2019). The supervisor was able to address any issues present in the study with the researcher before data collection took place (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Conclusion

The following addressed how the research questions were answered, how the research problem was solved and how the research objectives were met. Additionally, the implications of the study's findings for future practices were discussed. Moreover, the conclusions including an evaluation of the success of the research and possible future actions and future research that can be conducted on the topic were discussed. Furthermore, the ethical implications and how these were addressed were discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study were discussed.

Addressing of Research Problem, Questions and Objectives

In terms of the study's research problem, the findings have affected interpretations and perceptions of masculinity of the participants. Additionally, hopefully, other participants in future studies ideas of masculinity would be positively influenced. It appeared that the young men who participated did want to understand how and why the media influences masculinity. Awareness was also created about the harmful and toxic portrayals of masculinity in the media. In terms of the primary research question, the findings suggest that socially constructed masculinity through different media sources, specifically that of social media and advertisements, do have a significant influence on young men's masculinity. This influence could be both beneficial or detrimental, dependent on the respective context or individual. In terms of the secondary questions, the findings have suggested that hegemonic portrayals of masculinity in the media do negatively influence young men, for example, in SA the prevalence of patriarchy, gender-based violence and gangsterism. The media's portrayal of masculinity does influence what one considers to be masculine, as seen in how wealth and physically appealing men are portrayed as the ideal in the media, specifically magazines. In terms of the study's objectives, an understanding of how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped within SA through different media sources was gained. Additionally, an in-depth understanding of how terms such as hegemonic and socially constructed masculinity through media influence young men's perceptions on what it means to be masculine were obtained. Furthermore, the sources of media which affect one's view on masculinity and what it means to be a father were identified.

Future Research

Future studies may not experience certain challenges that were experienced during this study's data collection. These challenges included financial and time constraints, along with the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. Therefore, a longitudinal approach can be taken with future studies conducted over a longer period with greater funds available. Recruitment, data collection and interviews can be done in-person and not online, as there will possibly be no

lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19. Future studies could ensure that greater funds, time and human resources are available. Additionally, larger sample sizes can be used in future studies, which may aid the generalisability of findings. A larger sample may introduce different factors into the data collection due to varying cultures, languages and races.

Fatherhood and its influence on masculinity can be further researched. Since social media appeared to be the leading source of media that influenced the participants, future studies can research social media specifically and its influence on masculinity. Moreover, toxic portrayals of masculinity were mostly alluded to by the participants, however, the beneficial aspects of masculinity portrayals in the media were less alluded to, which future research could investigate further. Another possible aspect to consider is that a qualitative approach to the research was taken in this study, whereas future research studies could attempt to conduct quantitative studies, which could lead to both interesting and promising findings. Alternatively, as mentioned, this study could be replicated at a larger scale, in which those findings either supporting or contradicting this study's findings.

Contributions and Implications

This study can contribute to existing research on the topic, with now a deeper understanding gained of how media influences the perceptions and realisation of masculinity of young men within SA. Young men would now hopefully be able to be aware of the influence that the media has. Additionally, the extent to which different media sources influences a young man's masculinity within SA has been revealed, with young men being able to identify problematic portrayals of masculinity within the media. Thus, this could have a beneficial impact on the lives of young men, so that younger generations of men can better respond to issues of patriarchy, gender inequality and gender-based violence within SA. Furthermore, an understanding of how the development of masculinity at a young age can later influence adulthood and later fatherhood within SA has been gained. This research could go a long way in paving the way for a better generation of men to combat the issues that plague society such as gangsterism and the abuse of women and children. Overall, young men within SA can benefit from this research, in such a way to better understand both masculinity and how masculinity is portrayed through the media to society.

Ethical Implications

It was ensured that sections of the research were reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and an ethical clearance team (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Ethical clearance was granted by the IIE's Varsity College, therefore ensuring that ethical standards of research were upheld and that the researcher had obtained permission to conduct research (Maree, 2019). It

was the researcher's responsibility that the study was conducted so no harm would befall on the participants, along with ensuring autonomy, while promoting non-maleficence and beneficence (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The researcher was mindful when it came to the questions asked during interviews, due to the sensitive nature of the research topic regarding gender and masculinity (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The researcher was mindful of any prior bias or prejudice concerning the research topic (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). All participants were treated equally, with any bias being limited (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). All interviews followed the same standardised questions and procedure (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The eligibility criteria for participation were not limited to race thus ensuring a somewhat diverse sample (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

All participants were briefed and signed informed consent forms (see Appendix A and B) (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). These consent form included details regarding the study's expectations, procedures, risks and responsibilities (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Participation remained confidential throughout, with all participants informed of the right to withdraw throughout the research process without facing any repercussions (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). All participants' confidentiality was preserved throughout the study (Maree, 2019). Anonymity was ensured, as all the identities of those who participated in the study remained anonymous (Maree, 2019). It should be noted that the disclosure of sensitive information by participants during interviews was a potential risk, however, the researcher ensured that this information was not be made available to any unauthorised individuals, apart from the researcher's supervisors (Maree, 2019). There was no source of deception or harm in this study, with the research contributing positively to society to combat toxic masculinities, which the participants were part of, thus ensuring beneficence (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). All participants were debriefed after interviews, with the researcher's and supervisor's contact details provided to participants via an emailed debrief form (see Appendix F). The first three individuals to sign up fitting the criteria of being male between the ages of 18 and 28, were recruited to participate. In terms of societal value, the researcher ensured that the research conducted would benefit and promote the interests of South African society (Maree, 2019).

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study, including the small sample size, as there was only be 3 participants, therefore, the inability to generalise results to the larger population is an issue (Maree, 2019; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Thus, only having 3 participants means the population was poorly represented by the study's sample. Although it should be noted that

qualitative research studies are often conducted with fewer participants (Maree, 2019). Similarly, as previously mentioned, SA is quite diverse, being multicultural, multilingual and multiracial, means that only having 3 participants decreases the chances of the sample being truly generalisable to the multiple cultures, languages and races of SA (Morrell et al., 2012). As mentioned, all participants represented the same racial group, which did not aid the generalisation of this study. However, this allowed the researcher the unique opportunity to dive deeper into what was shared by each participant in the interviews. Another limitation of this study would be the time constraints, as many recognised and existing research studies were conducted without time constraints, whereas this study was conducted over a few months (Maree, 2019). An additional limitation of this study was the limited access to participants, due to Covid-19, hence, to overcome this obstacle, online interviews were conducted instead. Covid-19 had a detrimental effect on this study, specifically relating to how interviews needed to be carried out. Originally interviews were going to be carried out in-person with participants, however, due to lockdown restrictions, this was not an option. Under the advisement of the researcher's supervisor, interviews took place online, over the Zoom video application.

Moreover, since the purposive sampling method, along with elements of both the convenience and snowball sampling method was easy to employ, it is, however worthy to note that the sample was not entirely random and thus was not be truly representative of the population (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2018). Furthermore, the lack of resources available to the researcher was a significant limitation (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The lack of resources included the lack of funds available, time constraints and the lack of human resources to assist with the conducting of the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Hence, the researcher had chosen to have a small sample size of 3 participants to mitigate these issues. In terms of the lack of financial resources and the various costs involved, such as the electricity used and the data or Wifi needed for the online Zoom interviews. However, the researcher was comfortable with the small sample size as sufficient and useful data was still collected. Individuals that were of easy access to the researcher were selected for this study, thus saving the researcher time and money that would have been spent trying to find eligible participants. During data collection, the initially selected participant made the researcher aware of other eligible individuals who were interested in this study. Lastly, since the participants were contacted or recruited through the means of email and word of mouth, this became a limitation as only certain individuals were reached, as not all individuals had access to the internet, Wifi or the researcher for several reasons, namely socio-economic issues and the Covid-19 pandemic (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

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Appendix A



CONSENT FORM

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Riley Newman and I am a student at IIE's Varsity College. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Lynette Thompson about how to better understand how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped by the social constructions of the media within SA. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of how the media influences the perceptions and realisation of masculinity. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because (insert reason). If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to (explain exactly what participation will involve). You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your (insert what you are examining). If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?
I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE's Varsity College, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.
What will happen to the information that participants provide?
Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my HPSY414 - Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.
What happens if I have more questions about the study?
Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Riley Newman about how to better understand how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped by the social constructions of the media within SA.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

Appendix B



CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Riley Newman to audio record my interviews as part of the research about how to better understand how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped by the social constructions of the media within SA. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

Appendix C



30 June 2020

Student name: Riley Newman

Student number: 20111851

Campus: Varsity College Cape Town

Re: Approval of Honours in Psychology Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Supervisor: Dr Lynette Thompson

Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC): Dr Marizanne Grundlingh

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Appendix D



HONOURS RESE, RESM and RMET ETHICS CHECKLIST

Student name: Riley Newman

Student number: 20111851

Title of the research: The Media's Influence of Socially Constructed Masculinities on Young Men.

	Yes	No	Comment: supervisor/ navigator/lecturer
I am not using human subjects: i.e. I use visual artefacts or visual observation		x	
I intend to use human subjects - I understand that I will not conduct research with human subjects under the age of 18 and other vulnerable groups. - I understand I can only proceed once I receive an ethical clearance letter.			
Interviews/ Focus groups An example of the <i>written consent form</i> I intend to use is attached.	X		
I will record the interview/focus groups and the sample of the letter where I ask for permission to do so is attached.	X		
I plan to use an interview schedule: The example of my research instrument is attached.	X		
I plan to use a questionnaire: The example of my research instrument is attached.		x	
I plan to use a gate-keepers letter: The example of my letter is attached.		x	
I plan to do research on an IIE site/with IIE students/staff/artefacts and I filled in the application for permission to do so. The application is attached. I understand I can only proceed once I receive IIE Approval for this.		x	

Signed: Riley Newman.....

Appendix E

Interview Schedule and Question Guide

Introductions and Purpose

- Opening greetings and introductions (names)
- Participants will also introduce themselves and share a little about themselves
- The participant will also introduce themselves and share a little about themselves (Age, Date of Birth, current studies or work)
- The aims of the study –
 - To explore and better understand how a young man`s masculinity is developed and shaped within SA through the media.
 - Additionally, to achieve an in-depth understanding of how terms such as hegemonic and socially constructed masculinity through media influence the perceptions on what it means to be masculine.
 - Furthermore, to discover which factors affect one`s view on masculinity not limited to different media outlets or sources such as magazines, television and social media.
- How the interview will assist with the research -
 - Contribute to existing research on the topic, with a deeper understanding
 - Create awareness of the influence that the media has
 - Additionally, to discover the extent to which different sources of media influences a young man`s masculinity within SA
 - Create awareness of problematic portrayals of masculinity within the media.
 - Create better responses to issues of patriarchy, gender inequality or gender-based violence within SA
 - To create understanding relating to how the development of masculinity at a young age can later influence adulthood and later fatherhood within SA
 - Pave the way for a better generation of men and fathers to combat the issues that plague society such as gangsterism, violence against women and children
 - Create a better understanding of both masculinity and how the media portrays masculinity to society.

- Thank participant for agreeing to participate in the study

Procedures

Each interview will take no longer than 40 minutes, depending on how much information is shared. The researcher will remind each participant that participation in this study is voluntary. The participants do not have to answer questions that may bring about discomfort. The participant is free to end participation in the study at any point.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Any information shared is strictly confidential and participants will remain anonymous throughout the research process.

Risks, Discomforts and Inconveniences

The study is of low risk and harm. Participants will be inconvenienced by having to give up 40 minutes of their time.

Questions

1. What does being masculine mean to and for you?
2. How would you define ideal male characteristics or qualities as portrayed by the media?
Can you elaborate?
3. What does being a man in South Africa mean to you? What is society's view of men in South Africa?
4. Has the media influenced your opinions and views on what it means to be a man?
Can you elaborate?

Closing

Ask the participant if they have any questions.

Thank participant for their time and the information they shared.

The researcher will email each participant a debriefing form.

Appendix F

Good day,

You took part in a qualitative research study where you were required to participate in an interview. Thank you so much for your participation! This letter provides you with full information about the study in which you participated.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to better understand how a young man`s masculinity is developed and shaped by the media within SA.

Deception

No deception will be necessary, due to the nature of the study`s aims.

Further Proceedings

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries about the study. It is important to resolve any discomfort that this study may have caused.

Researcher: Riley Newman

Email:

Supervisor: Lynette Thompson

Email:

Kind regards,

Riley Newman

Appendix G

Qualitative Research Study Checklist

Please state your name, age and gender below:

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Below is a short checklist with which you need to indicate the most appropriate choice. Please indicate your agreement with each item by placing an x in the most appropriate column of that item. Please be open and honest in your responding:

Race:

White	
Black	
Coloured	
Indian	
Other	

First Language:

English	
Afrikaans	
isiXhosa	
isiZulu	
Other	

Confidentiality will be ensured. Your name and personal details will be kept private. This document will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will have access to this document.

Appendix H

The Media's Influence of Socially Constructed Masculinities on Young Men.

Research Purpose	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors	Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
To better understand how a young man's masculinity is developed and shaped by the media within SA.	To what extent does socially constructed masculinity through different media sources influence young men's masculinity?	Contribute to existing research on gender. Discover the influences of different media sources.	R.W. Connell and R. Morrell.	Theme 1: Men	Paradigm: Interpretivism Epistemology: Discover the underlying meanings and create a deeper understanding of the topic. Ontology: Combination of reality and social constructions that are created by individuals and the media. Axiology: The research would explain the topic. (Uniqueness is valued)	Qualitative	Semi-structured Interviews. Interviews would be recorded and then transcribed/analysed	Mindful of questions that are sensitive in nature. Participants should be treated equally.	Social media and adverts within SA have a significant influence on one's beliefs about masculinity.	Larger sample size can be used to aid the generalisability of findings. Future studies could ensure that greater funds, time and human resources are available.
				Theme 7: Masculinity		Population Young adult men between the ages of 18 and 28, residing in Cape Town, South Africa.				
				Theme 3: Hegemonic Masculinity						
Research Problem	Secondary Questions	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Theme 4: Fatherhood		Sampling	Data Analysis Method	Limitations	Key Contribution	
Research would affect interpretations and perceptions of masculinity. Young men would want to understand how and why the media influences masculinity?	Does hegemonic masculinity in the media negatively influence young men? Does the media's portrayal of masculinity influence what one considers to be masculine?	Fatherhood Hegemonic masculinity Masculinity Media Men Social constructs	The Hegemonic Masculinity Theory proposed by R.W. Connell. Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura.	Theme 5: The media Theme 6: Social constructs Theme 7: Post-apartheid SA		Non-Probability sampling: Purposive method (with elements of Convenience and Snowball sampling methods) 3 participants (All participants would be young adult men between the ages of 18 and 28)	People would be the unit of analysis (Individuals' perceptions of masculinity through the media). Thematic Analysis (uncover themes).	Small sample size. Lack of resources (availability of funds, human resources and time). Covid-19 pandemic. Online interviews.	Social media and adverts as key influences on young men's masculinity. There are harmful and toxic portrayals of masculinity in the media.	Social media's and fatherhood's influence on masculinity can be further researched. Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and online interviews may not influence future studies. A quantitative approach could be taken. Beneficial portrayals of masculinity can be further researched.