Influential Media: Insight into the College Male's Perspective on Masculinity

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The media plays a sometimes silent yet almost always influential role in the lives of individuals. Television, film, and video games have been shown to have the capability to convey information as well as impact comprehension of gender identities as a result of the messages portray by the media (Kivel & Johnson, 2009; Johnson, Richmond, & Kivel, 2008). The media's ability to impact identity and gender construction does not just affect one gender. Men are becoming ever more susceptible to the societal obsession with image that women have been subjected to for years (Ricciardelli, Clow, & White, 2010). One important element of male identity, and an increasing topic of media interest, is masculinity.

Masculinity, the cultural ideas and norms regulating male behavior (Kivel & Johnson, 2009; Soulliere, 2006), is believed to exist in many different forms, yet simply one main form of masculinity is focused upon throughout society and within the literature (Smiler, 2006). This form of dominant masculinity, which emerges from the media's depictions of males, is characterized by violence, aggression, competitiveness and toughness (Soulliere, 2006). These messages are detrimental to a male's expression and personal definition of masculinity. By emphasizing the dominant form of masculinity, men are given limited opportunities to express different types of masculinity such as being non-violent and/or emotional-orientated (Soulliere, 2006).

Therefore, it is important to explore the relationship between media influence, defined as television, video games, films, commercials, and televised sporting events (Kivel & Johnson, 2009; Soulliere, 2006), and masculinity development and expression. This current study investigated the potential media influence on the college male's definition of masculinity.

Literature Review

A review of the literature was conducted to explore the possible connections between media and masculinity as well as the concept of masculinity in general. There was a consistent finding within the literature that masculinity can be influenced by multiple social aspects. One study discussed the unstable state of masculinity and the influence of social validation on masculinity, while another study identified the various types of masculinity. Although these studies do not specifically mention media impact, they are essential to understanding the multiple influences on masculinity.

Kivel and Johnson (2009) studied male participants' early memories and how these memories helped them understand how their gender was influenced by the media. The study's central purpose was to explore the consumption of media by young men to recognize how they construct their own masculinity. Individual experiences were linked to social/cultural issues of gender socialization and participant's responses mirrored broader masculinity themes in society.

Johnson et al. (2008) analyzed male television and movie watching and discovered that participants were inclined to respond excitedly to on-screen violence. They determined that the socially dominant form of masculinity, or hegemonic masculinity, was created through individual and institutional applications and expressed through media messages within television shows and films. Johnson et al. concluded that men used the media to help create their own identities and that the media was responsible for the presence of violence within that definition.

Vandello et al. (2008) conducted five studies on the concept of manhood; their third study though was omitted from this literature review because it focused on women. The first study conducted by Vandello et al. maintains manhood is believed to be an elusive status that requires social assistance to achieve and social proof to preserve. Vandello et al.'s second study

strengthened this position. The fourth study asserts men exhibit intense feelings of anxiety, shame, and the feeling of being threatened when their manhood is questioned or endangered. The fifth study revealed men demonstrated a greater likelihood of having physically aggressive thoughts and also concluded men may become more prone to re-establishing their manhood through the means of aggression.

Smiler (2006) identified 12 images of masculinity and assessed their endorsement among participants. The 12 masculine images included the "average Joe," businessman, family man, jock, nerd, "player," nonconformist, criminal, sensitive "new-age" guy, "tough" guy, effeminate, and "country." The study revealed that there was a greater association with compliance to male norms with men who endorsed the businessman, jock, and tough guy images of masculinity. There was a modest to no association to compliance with male norms for the men who endorsed the "average Joe," family, nonconformists, and "player" images. Smiler suggests this indicates that these images are seen as less masculine.

Soulliere (2006) analyzed messages concerning masculinity being presented by the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) programs and pay-per-view events. The study found that messages from the WWE contained themes of aggression and violence, emotional restraint, and success and achievement. Soulliere maintains these themes are connected with the leading masculinity found within American society. Soulliere also asserts that WWE programs send the additional message that men have to show proof of their manhood via displays of aggression, questioning other men's manhood, and feminizing other men.

Although the current literature described images of masculinity (Smiler, 2006), indicated the potential of the media to teach males about masculinity (Kivel, & Johnson, 2009; Johnson et al., 2008; Soulliere, 2006), and demonstrated the unstable nature of manhood (Vandello et al.,

2008), the current literature does not define masculinity in relation to media influences from the

perspective of college male participants. This study explored the college male's perception on

masculinity and how the media influences it, thereby contributing to the existing literature

regarding masculinity and the influence media has upon it.

Theoretical Framework

The theory used to inform this study was the Family Ecology Theory (Strong, DeVault,

& Cohen, 2005). This theory maintains that families both impact and are impacted by their

environments. The Family Ecology Theory also asserts that the family and its members are

impacted by multiple environments. The theory identifies four environments: the microsystem,

mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem encompasses the most direct

settings and includes the people who exert the most influence over the individuals; such as the

individual's school environment, home, family, and friends. The networks and pathways among

microsystems, for instance, the interaction between the family and school demands placed on the

individual, form the mesosystem. The exosystem contains the environments in which individuals

do not directly participant but which are influential. For example, an individual's parents' place

of work or the committees which enact campus policies might constitute the exosystem. The

culture surrounding the individuals and the laws, values, and traditions of the society as a whole

create the macrosystem (Strong et al., 2005).

As applied to this study, this theory would predict that the media would influence the

college male's perspective on masculinity. The theory indicates that since the messages being

portrayed are part of males' culture, therefore belonging within the macrosystem, these messages

would have an impact on their lives and thus their perspective on what comprises masculinity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to investigate the relationship between the college male's perspective on contemporary masculinity and the potential impact the media has upon their definition, (2) to develop a reliable survey instrument which measures the college males' perception of a "real man" and the potential of media influence on their definition, and (3) to increase males' awareness of media influence in addition to offering an insight into their personal definition of masculinity.

The central research question in this study was "What is the college male perspective on contemporary masculinity in relation to media influences?" We predicted a correlation between responding strongly to the survey statements *I learn about what a "real man" is from media sources* and *I apply media messages about masculinity to my life* and to statements referring to masculine characteristics depicted within media messages such as a "real man" *feels the pursuit of status (achievement) is very important* (PUR)*; competes and wins* (CAW)*; is strong and brave* (SAB); *"gets" the girl* (GTG); *shows emotional restraint* (EMR); *is aggressive* (AGG); *engages in violent acts when he feels justified* (VIO); *emasculates other men to feel secure in his masculinity* (EOM); and *must defend his manhood* (DEF).

Our hypothesis was based upon evidence from both literature and theory. The literature demonstrates that the media does provide messages regarding masculinity, and the Family Ecology Theory states that these messages, which are an aspect of an individual's macrosystem, exhibit influence within the lives of the individual.

Method

Participants

This study was conducted at a mid-size midwestern University. The participants were

113 undergraduate male students who were enrolled in either a general education course or a

major-specific introductory course (refer to Table 1 Frequency Distributions of Age and Hours

of Media Watched).

Table 1

Frequency Distributions of Age and Hours of Media Watched

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-19	64	57.7%
20-21	31	27.7%
22-23	10	8.9%
24+	7	6.3%
Totals	112	100.0%
Hour of Media Watched		
0-5	19	17.0%
6-10	27	24.1%
11-15	16	14.3%
16-20	27	24.1%
21-25	7	6.3%
26+	16	14.3%
Totals	112	100.0%

Research Design

The purpose of survey research was to be able to generalize from a sample to a similar

larger population so that some inferences could be made about some characteristic, attitude, or

behavior of this population of male college students (Babbie, 1990). This study employed a

cross-sectional research design in order to capture attitudes from male college students at one point-in-time. A cross-sectional research design was employed to discover the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem, attitude, or issue by taking a cross-section sample of the population being studied (Kumar, 2005). The study also used self-administered questionnaires for data collection. The rationale for using this method is that self-administered questionnaires are convenient, low cost, and yield a quick return of data.

The population for this study was the university student population. The sample was the male students in either the general education course or the major-specific introductory course. The study used a non-random purposive sampling design; therefore we surveyed only the individuals who possessed the information needed for the study. Using a non-random sample was the best method to ensure for inclusiveness within the classroom, since every student had an equal and independent chance to participant. Also, the purposive sample design allowed for the surveying of a specific population, college males (Kumar, 2005). The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Collection Instrument

To assess college males' perspective on masculinity with regards to media influences a survey was designed. The survey included a brief description of the study, definition of any terms not commonly known, risks and benefits, time commitment, confidentiality, voluntary participation, contact information of the research team and the supervisor, and instructions for completing the survey.

The survey consisted of two demographic questions regarding the participants' gender and ages and 11 closed-ended statements based on a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale was used to measure the intensity of the participants' attitudes ranging from one (*strongly disagree*)

to five (*strongly agree*). The survey also included three demographic questions pertaining to the

participants' weekly media consumption and use of violent media plus two open-ended questions

about media consumption and masculinity. Statements and questions were generated by means

of literature on masculinity development and media messages and theory.

The survey instrument had both face validity and content validity. Face validity refers to

the extent that there is a logical correlation between the instrument questions and the research

question as well as concepts reviewed within the literature. The survey possessed face validity,

since the statements and questions within the survey were derived from the literature, and thus

these questions demonstrated the relationship between masculinity and media messages. Content

validity refers to the degree in which the instrument statements address the entirely of concepts

within the literature reviewed. The survey statements and questions addressed the plethora of

media messages regarding masculinity. The survey was piloted to four college males to assess

the clarity of the statements. The four college males stated the survey was too judgmental and

presumptuous. Upon feedback, the survey statements were changed to be more objective in

nature. To make the survey statements more objective, the signal phrase, "A real man" was

added to the survey before the list of statements.

Procedure

Three classes were surveyed: one general education course and two separate sections of

the major-specific introductory course. Purposive sampling design was used to identify courses

that were typically male dominated.

Students in all three courses were read instructions, including the risks and benefits, and

given the informed consent forms. Female students were encouraged to take the survey but were

also informed that their responses would not be included in the data for the study. Randomization

was not used in order to be inclusive in the classroom. Once the students were handed the

surveys, both the course instructor and the researchers left the room. Upon completion of the

surveys, questionnaires were collected and students were thanked for their participation. In order

to ensure the study had reached its target sample number, in the case of missing data from male

participants, the researchers over sampled by 13 surveys.

Data Analysis Plan

The data was first cleaned and checked for missing data. The cleaned surveys were then

coded using acronyms for each variable. All demographic questions were given a three letter

acronym: *Age of the respondents* (AGE); *How many hours of media per week do you watch*

(HOM); *Do you, on average, play violent video games at least twice a week* (VVG); *Do you, on*

average, watch violent related television shows, movies, or televised sporting events at least

twice a week (VTV). *The demographic question about gender was not given an acronym since*

all respondents were male. Each survey statement which used the Likert scale was also given a

three letter acronym: I learn about what a "real man" is from media sources (RMM); *I apply*

media messages about masculinity to my life (AMM); *Feels the pursuit of status (achievement) is*

very important (PUR); *Competes and wins* (CAW); *Is strong and brave* (SAB); *"Gets" the girl*

(GTG); *Shows emotional restraint* (EMR); *Is aggressive* (AGG); *Engages in violent acts when*

he feels justified (VIO); Emasculates other men to feel secure in his masculinity (EOM); *Must*

defend his manhood (DEF).

The data was analyzed using the computer program *Statistical Package for the Social*

Sciences (*SPSS*). The individual was used as the level of analysis. Since groups were not

compared, the data analysis included: frequencies, mean comparisons, and correlations.

Additionally, a Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis was conducted.

Results

All variables were subjected to frequency distribution analysis. The demographic category of self-identifying gender was eliminated from analysis, since no respondents had selected that gender category. The researchers encountered missing data in the form of a survey respondent not including his age on his survey; thus it was not included in the data analysis. The final number of respondents' responses analyzed was N=112. A number of survey respondents did not clarify the number of hours of media they consumed per week, but instead wrote the word "a lot," which the researchers assessed as meaning 16-20 hours consumed per week based on the number of video games and television shows listed in the qualitative survey responses of those respondents.

For the variables RMM and AMM the majority of respondents disagreed and/or strongly disagreed that they learned about what a "real man" is from media sources and that they applied the media messages about masculinity to their life. For the variables AGG, VIO, and EOM, the majority of respondents disagreed and/or strongly disagreed, with a large number of respondents being undecided that a "real man" is aggressive, engages in violent acts when he is justified, and emasculates other men to feel secure in his masculinity. For the variables PUR, CAW, SAB, GTG, EMR, and DEF, the majority of respondents agreed and/or strongly agreed, with a large number of respondents being undecided, that a "real man" feels the pursuit of status (achievement) is very important, competes and wins, is strong and brave, "gets" the girl, shows emotional restraint, and must defend his manhood (refer to Table 2 for Frequency Distribution Analysis and Table 3 for Means Comparison).

Table 2

Frequency Distribution Analysis

Variable	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total
RMM	35.7%	33.9%	17.9%	9.8%	2.7%	100.0%
AMM	25.9%	35.7%	17.0%	20.5%	0.9%	100.0%
PUR	4.5%	9.8%	25.9%	43.8%	16.1%	100.0%
CAW	5.4%	12.5%	21.4%	34.8%	25.9%	100.0%
SAB	4.5%	7.1%	20.5%	41.1%	26.8%	100.0%
GTG	7.1%	22.3%	28.6%	28.6%	13.4%	100.0%
EMR	11.6%	25.0%	21.4%	34.8%	7.1%	100.0%
AGG	17.9%	27.7%	27.7%	21.4%	5.4%	100.0%
VIO	21.4%	25.9%	29.5%	15.2%	8.0%	100.0%
EOM	26.8%	36.6%	25.0%	8.0%	3.6%	100.0%
DEF	10.7%	20.5%	22.3%	30.4%	16.1%	100.0%

Note. (RMM)=I learn about what a "real man" is from media sources; (AMM)=I apply media messages about masculinity to my life; (PUR)=Feels the pursuit of status (achievement) is very important; (CAW)=Competes and wins; (SAB)=Strong and brave; (GTG)="Gets" the girl; (EMR)=Shows emotional restraint; (AGG)=Is aggressive; (VIO)=Engages in violent acts when he feels justified; (EOM)=Emasculates other men to feel secure in his masculinity; (DEF)=Must defend his manhood.

Table 3

Means Comparison

	RMM	AMM	PUR	CAW	SAB	GTG	EMR	AGG	VIO	EOM	DEF
Mean:	2.10	2.35	3.57	3.63	3.79	3.19	3.01	2.69	2.63	2.25	3.21
SD:	1.08	1.10	1.02	1.15	1.06	1.14	1.17	1.15	1.21	1.05	1.25
Range:	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Note. (RMM)=I learn about what a "real man" is from media sources; (AMM)=I apply media messages about masculinity to my life; (PUR)=Feels the pursuit of status (achievement) is very important; (CAW)=Competes and wins; (SAB)=Strong and brave; (GTG)="Gets" the girl; (EMR)=Shows emotional restraint; (AGG)=Is aggressive; (VIO)=Engages in violent acts when he feels justified; (EOM)=Emasculates other men to feel secure in his masculinity; (DEF)=Must defend his manhood.

Correlations were also run on the variables RMM, AMM, SAB, GTG, EMR, AGG, VIO, EOM, and DEF. A small significant relationship appears to exist between RMM and SAB, EMR, VIO, and DEF as well as between AMM and SAB, GTG, VIO, and DEF. In addition, a medium significant relationship seems to be present between RMM and GTG, EOM, and AGG as well as between AMM and AGG and EOM (refer to Table 4).

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	RMM	AMM	PUR	CAW	SAB	GTG	EMR	AGG	VIO	EOM	DEF
RMM		.627**				.320**	.256**	.392**	.269**	.390**	
AMM						.276**		.354**		.366**	.288**
PUR				.340**	.331**	.278**	.246**	.337**	.300**		
CAW					.553**	.469**		.305**	.275**		.479**
SAB						.554**	.300**	.320**	.302**		.463**
GTG								.502**	.462**	.290**	.453**
EMR											
AGG									.619**	.517**	.508**
VIO										.379**	.410**
EOM											.462**

Note. (RMM)=I learn about what a "real man" is from media sources; (AMM)=I apply media messages about masculinity to my life; (PUR)=Feels the pursuit of status (achievement) is very important; (CAW)=Competes and wins; (SAB)=Strong and brave; (GTG)="Gets" the girl; (EMR)=Shows emotional restraint; (AGG)=Is aggressive; (VIO)=Engages in violent acts when he feels justified; (EOM)=Emasculates other men to feel secure in his masculinity; (DEF)=Must defend his manhood.
~N=112; **Correlation is significant at the $p<0.01$ (two-tailed)

A reliability analysis was run to indicate if the 11 variables (RMM, AMM, PUR, CAW, SAB, GTG, EMR, AGG, VIO, EOM, and DEF*)* were a reliable index to measure the major concept: college males' perspective on masculinity with regards to media influences. The Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of reliability, was .829 for this current study's data set. This value indicates that the survey questions were a reliable measure of the study's major concept.

Discussion

The hypothesis that there would be a correlation between responding strongly to the survey statements *I learn about what a "real man" is from media sources* (RMM) and *I apply*

media messages about masculinity to my life (AMM) and to the survey statements which refer to masculine characteristics depicted within media messages was predominantly supported by the data.

Statistically significant correlations (p<0.01) were found which supported this study's hypotheses. There was a significant correlation detected between the statements: *I learn about what a "real man" is from media sources* and the statements *a "real man" shows emotional restraint, "gets" the girl, is aggressive, engages in violent acts when justified,* and *emasculates other men*. Furthermore, a significant correlation was also identified between the statement *I apply media messages about masculinity to my life* and the statements *a "real man" shows emotional restraint, "gets" the girl, is aggressive, emasculates other men,* and *must defend his manhood*. These findings are supported by theory and literature. The Family Ecology Theory asserts that individuals are influenced by their surrounding environment. According to this theory, there are four environmental levels which enact influence over individuals and the broadest level is the macrosystem. The macrosystem encompasses the attributes of society which include the media and its messages that convey societal attitudes and beliefs (Strong et al., 2005). The belief that the media is a part of the macrosystem, thus having the ability to influence individuals, is echoed by Kivel and Johnson (2009) who stated that the media is able to help mold males' self-concepts, including their notions about masculinity.

Statistically significant correlations (p<0.01) were also found among survey statements, one of which was a large significant relationship between the survey statement a *"real man" is aggressive* and *must defend his manhood*. Vandello et al. (2008) concluded that the best way to understand acts of male aggression is to view these acts as responses to the anxiety males endure as a result of having to live up to the societal norms which deem what is masculine and as a

result of having to prove oneself as a true man. A link between having to defend one's manhood and aggression was established in a study by Vandello et al. in which when one's manhood was threatened, males "exhibited a heightened accessibility of physically aggressive cognitions" (p. 1335).

The frequency distribution demonstrated mixed support for this study's hypothesis. The majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they learned about and/or applied media messages to their lives; yet, the majority of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with six out of nine survey statements regarding masculine characteristics presented within the media. Also, all nine statements concerning masculine characteristics presented within the media had a large number of undecided responses. Inconsistency and indecisiveness among the respondents may have been due to subjects' lack of acknowledgement of the media's influence and/or their unwillingness to recognize the media's influence, although research has shown that the media has the potential to influence males' concept of masculinity (Kivel & Johnson, 2009; Johnson et al., 2008; Soulliere, 2006). The respondents' lack of acknowledgment and unwillingness to recognize the media's influence may have resulted from the lack of attention on males within gender and media research as well as the societal norm which do not ask males to participate in self-reflection and the sharing of their feelings. Most gender and media research has focused on femininity; masculinity has only been studied by default. Only recently have males been the sole focus of this type of research (Soulliere, 2006).

With regards to the belief that a "real man" is aggressive, engages in violent acts when he is justified, or emasculates other men to feel secure in his masculinity, the majority of respondents disagreed and/or strongly disagreed, with a large number of respondents being undecided. The findings from this study are not congruent with the bulk of the literature.

Soulliere (2006) found media messages, especially those obtained from watching World

Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) programs, emphasized the notion that in order to be a man, one

must be aggressive and violent. Soulliere also discovered media messages from the WWE

programs which communicated the belief men emasculate other men thereby securing their own

manhood.

Adding to the research on violence and the media, Johnson et al. (2008) concluded the

media maintains the notion of men as violent beings; Kivel and Johnson (2009) found media

messages in movies which highlight the idea of men using violence for justified reasons.

Additionally, Anderson et al. (2003), after reviewing the research concerning violent media,

demonstrated that exposure to media violence has the ability to cause an increase in physical and

verbal aggressive behavior. Furthermore Anderson et al. verified that individuals who are not

typically aggressive are nevertheless negatively affected by exposure to violent media.

One possible explanation for the incongruity with the literature is that the respondents

failed to acknowledge these traits within the male population as a result of the normalization of

these types of traits. Also, it is possible that the majority of this sample of respondents do not

value these types of masculine characteristics.

For the characteristics that a "real man" feels the pursuit of status (achievement) is very

important, competes and wins, is strong and brave, "gets" the girl, shows emotional restraint, and

must defend his manhood, the majority of respondents agreed and/or strongly agreed, with a

large number of respondents being undecided. The responses given in this study coincide with

what found within the literature. In her study, Soulliere (2006) established that males were

receiving messages which stated that in order to be a "real man" one must value success and

achievement and one must be a winner. Her research also found messages state that winning and

achievement are central to manhood.

Other forms of media, especially movies, have also been shown to continually reinforce the notion that men must be strong both physically and emotionally. Movies also carry on the tradition of viewing men as heroes and holding them to the ideals of heroism, such as being strong, brave, and valiant (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). Through various movies and video games, Johnson et al. (2008) have illustrated how the media emphasizes the notion that males need to get the girl and save the princess. Kivel and Johnson (2009) reiterated this point in their research adding that the media encourages males to impress women at all costs.

Society and the media have conditioned males to believe that showing emotions, minus frustration and anger, is unacceptable. This was demonstrated through Soulliere (2006) research in which she concluded that the WWE was relaying the message to its male viewers that men are not whiners. Men should, and must, employ emotional restraint and avoid any public demonstrations of certain emotions. The need to defend one's manhood is an activity that is socially constructed, as shown by Vandello et al. (2008). Through their research, Vandello et al. presented evidence that shows "manhood is a relatively precarious, socially achieved status" (p. 1330). Soulliere (2006) has established that there is a connection between Vandello et al.'s research and the media. In her research, Soulliere found evidence of WWE messages which informed male viewers about the necessity to defend one's manhood. A "real man" had to show that he was a real man. This was done through acts of aggression, physical competition, and winning.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative comments were analyzed and themed according to their content. The themes were also evaluated according to their frequency. The quotes taken from the qualitative

comments from the respondents were transcribed word for word. Emerging from the qualitative comments as the number one video game played by the respondents was *Call of Duty*. Fifty-one out of the 112 respondents reported playing *Call of Duty*. The top television shows reported by respondents was anything sport related and anything comedy related. Each genre has 41 out of 112 respondents. The television shows *Family Guy* and *South Park* accounted for over 40% of the comedy shows watched. Major themes, which originated from the qualitative comments, were the need to take care of self and others (17 out of 112), sense of duty/responsibility (12 out of 112), and respectful/respect for women (12 out of 112).

One reason for the qualitative comments not reflecting and/or expanding on the survey statements is that the respondents of this study identify with what Smiler (2006) called the "average Joe." Smiler (2006) defines the "average Joe" image as "reliable, responsible, and unexceptional" (p. 624). This image of masculinity is neither extremely masculine nor un-masculine, and it is the only image that was supported by the majority of the respondents in Smiler's research (2006). The possibility of this study's respondents also endorsing the "average Joe" image helps explain the large number of undecided responses on the survey statements. Since the "average Joe" image is not extremely masculine, the respondents who identified with this image would be less likely to endorse the typical masculine characteristics displayed within the media. When asked what his definition of a "real man" was, one respondent's reply exhibited the key qualities of the "average Joe" image as described by Smiler. The respondent replied, "A real man is a guy who walks away from a fight [unexceptional]. Is not an asshole to girls, treats his girl with respect and love [reliable], and doesn't cheat [responsible]".

Another respondent, who when asked what his definition of a "real man" was, replied "A real man eats solid ramen, drinks boiling water, snorts ramen seasoning, then FUCK BITCHES."

This vulgar answer may also be a defensive mechanism in which this respondent is denying his true feelings regarding masculinity in order to avoid experiencing any feelings of vulnerability. The use of denial as a defense mechanism was demonstrated in a longitudinal study by Cramer and Block (1998) where they studied the use of denial from preschool age into young adulthood. Cramer and Block (1998) discovered that young boys employed the defense mechanism of denial in order to reduce anxiety and maintain self-esteem as well as reduce psychological distress. This helped contribute to the boys' continued use of denial as a defense mechanism into young adulthood. Although Cramer and Block do not specify why boys experience greater vulnerability or what causes this vulnerability, asking a male in young adulthood to express his feelings about masculinity may evoke feelings of vulnerability.

While the previous respondent's reply could be considered defensive, another respondent self-reflected and acknowledged the limitations society imposes on males. When asked for his definition of "real man," this respondent answered, "A man who respects women, who isn't affraid [sic] to show emotions, not affraid [sic] to say I love you, is humble. Pretty close butt [sic] @ times it's hard due to the harassment of being like that."

The qualitative comments revealed the diversity among males' perspective on masculinity. The respondents' comments ranged from the stereotypical macho male to the sensitive male who is afraid to show his emotions around other males. The qualitative comments of most respondents though fell among the middle of the masculine spectrum. Multiple respondents left comments that reflected a male's masculine obligation to himself and others.

Limitations

Limitations to this study included the small sample size, the nonrandom design, and the large number of respondents (over 75%) who were ages 18 to 21 years old**.** This age range is the

"college range" and thus may not fully describe males who are in their late 20s or older. Another

limitation was using the five-point Likert scale. The large number of undecided responses

indicated the potential need for a seven-point Likert scale with more variation. Furthermore, the

sampling of just one major-specific introductory course may have limited the range of responses.

Respondents were likely pursuing jobs within the same occupational field and shared personality

characteristics needed to succeed in their desired occupation.

An additional limitation present in this study is the common attitudes shared among those

individuals who live within the same geographical region. The attitudes of males who took this

survey at a mid-sized midwestern university exhibit different attitudes of masculinity than males

in more urban areas or males in other parts of the United States.

Implications for Practitioners

This study has multiple implications within many areas. It has the ability to increase other

researchers and professionals' knowledge and curiosity on this largely unexplored topic by

adding to the literature. This increased interest in the topic of masculinity and the media will

result in more research and thus more materials and knowledge for a wide variety of

practitioners, such as educators, counselors, therapists, and policy makers. The data from this

study could also be utilized by counselors and therapists to assist their male clients with

improving their self-esteem and self-concept by bringing awareness to and identifying the

negative media influences on the clients' expression of masculinity. The data would be able to

help counselors and therapists along with their male clients explore diverse forms of masculinity.

These forms may differ from the dominant form presented by the media and could potentially

better suit clients' personalities and temperaments. By exploring alternative forms, counselors

and therapists would be helping males choose a type of masculinity which is personally

beneficial and not self limiting. Instead of trying to conform to societal expectations, males could choose the type of masculinity that best fit their beliefs and values.

At a national level, implications of this study for public policy level could include the enactment of policy changes within the health class curriculum of junior and senior high schools. Health educators could use this study to inform adolescent males about the reality of media influences on personal definitions such as masculinity and the media's portrayal of negative and self-limiting masculine traits. This change would expose male students to alternative forms of masculinity in an environment which encourages the adoption of positive attributes of masculinity rather than hypermasculine traits.

Implications for Future Research

It is recommended that future research would include a random, large sample in order to be able to generalize the findings nationwide. It would also be useful to increase the variability on the scale-using a seven-point Likert scale instead of a five-point Likert scale.

If the same survey would be used again, it is suggested that there would be two additional questions: one demographic and one open-ended question. The demographic question could differentiate between contact and non-contact sports (e.g.,. football versus tennis). The open-ended question could ask male respondents to give examples of acceptable and unacceptable acts of violence and aggression. Also if using the same survey, it is recommended sampling multiple major specific introductory courses, general education courses, and higher level courses to ensure a variety of perspectives and ages.

Furthermore, future research could compare males on the amount of media consumption, that is, grouping male respondents into categories consisting of hours of media consumed. It would also be interesting to have females respond to the survey statements and then compare

females' perspectives on masculinity to males' perspectives on masculinity. Females could also be grouped into categories consisting of hours of media consumed.

Additional research could be conducted on the significant correlations (at the $p > 0.01$ level) found between the survey statements GTG and SAB, AGG, VIO, EOM and DEF. Such research could help expose the perceptions and beliefs of males which may contribute to their dating and relationship patterns as well as possible dating and relationship violence.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated the importance of males' self-awareness of the type of media consumed and what messages that media is transmitting to its viewers. The lack of research on the topic of masculinity and the media has allowed the male population to flounder in its attempt to construction positive forms of masculinity. The media's masculine messages emphasize violence, aggression, and emotional restraint (Soulliere, 2006). Furthermore, the avoidance of feminine traits increases the likelihood males will partake in activities which objectify, control, and abuse women This affects not only males and their life choices, but also the female population, families, and society as a whole. Statistics have shown that one in every four women will experience domestic violence within her lifetime (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2007). With continued research, such as the study at hand, there may not only be an increased interest among researchers and practitioners concerning this topic, but also a potential shift from the expression of negative masculine traits being expressed as the dominant form of masculinity to an expression of positive masculine traits.

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