INTRODUCTION – MALE AND FEMALE IDENTITIES

1.1 The construction of identities – ‘narratives of the self’

In traditional (pre-modern) societies, identities along with roles and modes of behaviour were largely prescribed by tradition including myths and narratives handed down from previous generations. Gauntlett (2002) says that philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists have concluded that “when tradition dominates, individual actions do not have to be analysed and thought about so much because choices are already prescribed by traditions” (p. 96).

Identity appeared as a word during the Enlightenment around the 16th century, according to Davies (2002, p. 8). The concept of identity became central to modernist thinking. With modernism, tradition, myth and religion continued to be influential in human identity and modes of living, but were largely overtaken by science, technology, law and other institutions based on rational thinking and reason as the certainties and the basis of knowledge and ‘truth’.

Marxism further attacked beliefs and worldviews implanted by institutions such as the Church and economic systems such as capitalism, labelling them “false consciousness” and advocating new strategies for achieving self-consciousness.

With post-modernism, previous pillars of social stability including traditions and modernism’s scientific ‘truths’ were questioned and cast aside. Lyotard (1979) advocated “incredulity towards meta-narratives” (p. 37). Meta-narratives or master narratives provided by traditions, religion and science were challenged and replaced by a new cultural self-consciousness. In this environment, Giddens (1991) says “the self becomes a reflexive project” (p. 53).

In modern societies (ie. societies where modernity or post-modernism is established), Gauntlett (2002) says self-identity is “an inescapable issue” (p. 96). He says that through a
self-discovery process “we create, maintain and revise a set of biographical narratives – the
story of who we are, and how we came to be where we are now …” (p. 99). Giddens
(1991) refers to this process as the “narratives of the self”. These narratives are not created
once early in our lives, but are ongoing constructions. Gauntlett says: “To believe in one
self, and command the respect of others, we need a strong narrative” and this “needs to be
creatively and continuously maintained” (p. 100).

Hall (1990) also sees identity as an ongoing “project of the self”. He says: “… instead of
thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact … we should think, instead, of identity
as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process…” (p. 222).

There are a number of ways individuals and groups construct and maintain their ‘narratives
of the self” in modern and post-modern societies and a full examination is beyond the
scope of this study. But some key components of identity are briefly noted and one in
particular is of major significance for this research.

Marxist philosophy viewed class and economic factors as key determinants of identity. As
shown by Faludi (2000) in her examination of working class men in Stiffed: The Betrayal
of Modern Man, work continues to be a key component in constructing the identities of
men in late industrial and post-industrial societies.

In post-modern cultures, lifestyle has emerged as a central element in self-identities. Lull
(2000) says Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’, which he defined as “a system of socially
learned cultural predispositions and activities that differentiate people by their lifestyles”,
provides a lens through which we can view and understand modern communities (p. 157).
Bourdieu (1990) says people, individually and collectively “… internalise their position in
social space” (p. 110).

Giddens (1991) asserts that everyone in modern society has to select a lifestyle. “Lifestyles
could be said to be like ready-made templates for a narrative of self” Gauntlett (2002) says
(p. 102). Movements such as hippies, punk, grunge, the gay community, and the back-to-
nature eco-trend are examples of lifestyles that carry with them identities for individuals
and groups. But, equally, corporate executives, warehouse living inner city dwellers,
suburban quarter acre block owners, farmers, rock stars, youth and retirees choose and
closely conform to lifestyles. Modern marketers have identified groups and target audiences based on lifestyle factors such as Yuppies (Young Upwardly Mobile Professinals), DINKS (Double Income No Kids), Generation Xers and Generation Ys.

But identities are determined by more than lifestyle, class or economics. Woodward (1997) says “identities in the contemporary world derive from a multiplicity of sources – from nationality, ethnicity, social class, community, gender, sexuality …” (p. 1). The specific role of and focus on gender – and, to the extent that they are related, sexuality – will be examined in this study.

Post-structuralist theory questions the term ‘identity’. Sarup (1988) points out that the preferred post-structuralist term for the individual is ‘subject’ and, emphasising the fluid, ongoing highly personal process of understanding one’s self and others, post-structuralist thinking replaces the term ‘identity’ with ‘subjectivity’. Notwithstanding, the post-structuralist concept of subjectivity is largely understood to be a parallel – albeit for some a preferred replacement – for what others term identity and is constructed and constituted in post-modern societies through the same processes and influences. In this study, references to the constitutive forces of identity can be read as applying to the post-structural notion of subjectivity. Mac An Ghaill (1994) uses both terms, referring to “subjective identities” (p. 9) which will be discussed further in the following section.

1.2 The role of gender in identities

From the start of the 20th century, sex and sexuality have been identified as fundamental to identity. Freud (1973) and psychoanalytic discourses focussed attention on sex and sexuality as key determinants in a wide range of human behaviour and perceptions (Connell, 1995a, pp. 8-21; Gauntlett, 2002, p. 122). Giddens (1991) says: “Sexual development and sexual satisfaction … became bound to the reflexive project of the self” (p. 164).

The terms sex, sexuality and gender are used in various ways throughout the extensive literature in this field, as are the terms male, female, masculinity and femininity. The meanings of these terms will be discussed and clarified as far as possible in relation to each
usage throughout this study, rather than attempting to state definitions in advance, as there are no single agreed interpretations. Some writers use the terms interchangeably, while others continue to dispute their meaning. Gauntlett (2002) notes that the nature of sex and gender has been the subject of long debate among psychologists and sociologists (p. 34).

Freud and Jung, while differing on a number of issues, both saw gender as “rooted in timeless truths about the human psyche” – ie. biologically determined or innate (Connell, 1995a, p.13). This perception of gender dominated thinking about the sexes for the first half of the 20th century.

Sartre (1958) in Being and Nothingness (originally published in 1943) saw the Freudian school of psychoanalysis as too rigid and overly focussed on sexual desire as a principal factor influencing the human condition. De Beauvoir (1997) drew on Sartre’s existential psychoanalysis which moved beyond the static typologies of Freudian psychology in her landmark book The Second Sex first published in 1949 and explored gender as “an evolving engagement with situations and social structures” (Connell, 1995a, p. 19).

Weatherall (2002) attempts to summarise thinking and draws a distinction between sex and gender based on the influential work of anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1984) who proposed sexuality and gender as “two distinct systems”, although Weatherall also uses the terms in varying and somewhat contradictory contexts. Weatherall says: “Since around the 1960s an important distinction has been drawn between sex as biological and gender as social” (p. 81). Then, on the next page she states: “The simple belief in two and only two sexes can be understood, not as a biological given but as a normative social construction, a product of gender discourses” (this author’s emphasis) (p. 82).

Post-structuralist thinkers, particularly in the social sciences, have increasingly argued that “… social definitions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ are culturally constructed” rather than biologically determined (Newbold, Boyd-Barrett & Van Den Bulck, 2002, p. 268). For instance, Connell (1995a) says “masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and constituted in discourse” (p. 5).

There is some acceptance that gender is a combination of both biology and social influences. For instance, while emphasising a constructed view of gender, Weatherall
(2002) does appear to recognise a biological element as well. She says: “Instead of viewing sex as primary and biological while gender is secondary and social, the order is reversed and the boundaries made less distinct. A constructionist view is that social and cultural beliefs are primary and cannot be separated from biological ‘knowledge’.” Further, she emphasises the importance of gender in terms of human identities stating “the meanings associated with the two gender categories unavoidably cloud every aspect of thought, perception and behaviour” (p. 81).

“Gender roles are like scripts”, Nathanson and Young (2001, p. 61) say, although it remains a vexed question whether those scripts are a genetic algorithm or culturally authored. Grbich (2004) cites gender as the third dimension of social space after race and class.

The nature of gender will be further explored in chapter two, as the role of discourse in gender identity varies depending on whether gender is seen as biologically fixed or socially and culturally constructed. Citing Arnot (1991), Mairtin Mac An Ghaill (1994) says “one of the major weaknesses of theoretical work in this area has been inadequate conceptions of sex/gender identity formation.” He goes on: “More recently, theorists drawing on post-structuralism, psychoanalysis and semiology, have provided new ways of thinking about subjective identities” (p. 9).

Feminism has applied considerable study to the relationship between gender and identities and concluded that gender is central to self-identities and identities of women as a class. In introducing a discussion of post-structuralist theory and the concepts of identity and subjectivity, Davies (1993) says: “The division of people into male and female is so fundamental to our talk … and to our understanding of identity” (p. 7).

1.3 Discourses on gender

Both structuralism and post-structuralism recognise the constitutive force of discourse in shaping social structures and identities (or subjectivities). Post-structuralist theory placed greater and slightly different emphasis on discourse, seeking to explore the processes through which a person is subjected to and constituted by structure and discourse. While
post-structuralism introduced the concept of human agency (choice and action) to change discourse and structure, it disputed some aspects of structuralism including the concept of socialisation. Structuralist views held that people were socialised into the world by social structures (eg. policies, mores, worldviews, institutions, laws) and other individuals and groups (eg. family, peers and work colleagues). Post-structuralist theory argues that each person goes through a process of ‘subjectification’ in which, rather than having their identity or subjectivity imposed on them by social structures, they “take up the discourses through which they and others speak and write the world into existence as if they were their own” (Davies, 1993, p. 13). Thus, the potential power or influence of discourse is even greater in a post-structural view of society than its already important role identified in structuralist theory.

Conventional social psychological research viewed language as a medium or mode of expression related to, but existing independently of identity. It was assumed in this view that language and interaction were reflections of gender identities. However, post-structuralist thinking has led to a starkly contrasting view in discursive psychology. Discursive psychology follows what Weatherall (2002) calls “the discursive turn” in the humanities and social sciences, moving away from earlier essentialist and structuralist approaches to focus on language and discourse (p. 75). She says that, in a discursive psychology view:

… identities are produced and negotiated in the ongoing business of social interaction. In this view, identities do not have predefined, essential characteristics. Rather, identities emerge from the actions of local conversations … Thus, identity is not viewed in essentialist terms as something that people ‘are’. Rather, identities are progressively and dynamically achieved through the discursive practices that individuals engage in (p. 138).

Edwards (1997) summarises this as a shift in emphasis and focus from “cognition” to “talk”. Talk in this sense is used broadly. As shown in the following definitions of discourse, Weatherall notes that “discourse is not restricted to spoken language but also refers to written language” (p. 77).

Constructionist views of gender particularly cite discourse as a central element in the construction process. Weatherall (2002) in Gender, Language and Discourse states that
construction of gender is “a product of gender discourses” (p. 82). Davies (1993) says “gender is constituted through the discourses with which we speak and write ourselves into existence”. She adds:

… within post-structuralist theory, it is possible to see human subjects as not fixed but constantly in process, being constituted and reconstituted through the discursive practices they have access to in their daily lives. The tensions and instabilities in each person’s subjectivity become visible … through an examination of the discourses and practices through which our subjectivities are constituted (p. 11).

This study examines a key element of discourse in contemporary societies – editorial mass media content. In order to approach this study systematically, and to understand the importance of findings, it is necessary to define discourse as it operates in modern societies. While a single unilateral definition cannot be identified – discourse has myriad elements – a number of key features have been cited by social scientists, philosophers and media scholars.

Discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak … discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention (Foucault, 1972, p. 49).

Discourse is a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area. These meanings serve the interests of that section of society within which the discourse originates and which works ideologically to naturalise meanings into common sense (Fiske, 1995, p. 14).

Discourse is a body of ideas, concepts and beliefs which become established as knowledge or as an accepted world view. These ideas become a powerful framework for understanding and action in social life (Bilton, Bonnett, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster, 1996, p. 657).

Discourses are not just ‘a bunch of words’ – they determine our social responses. A discourse does not represent what is ‘real’ – it actually produces what we come to understand as real. It determines what can be said and even what can be thought (Woods, 1999).
A discourse is the way objects or ideas are talked about publicly that gives rise to widespread perceptions and understandings (Lull, 2000, p. 173).

Discourse is variously used in the gender and language field. It may be used in a linguistic sense to refer to language beyond that of words. Or it may be used in a post-structural sense to refer to broad systems of meaning … discourse is not restricted to spoken language but also refers to written language (Weatherall, 2002, pp. 76-77).


Discourse is, in fact, the story of reality as it is presented to us through media or other cultural texts (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 85).

Foucault made a major contribution to understanding of identity and discourse with his concept of the “technologies of the self”. Foucault supported the view that identities were constructed from the materials available to people and he advanced the view that one of the key ‘technologies of the self’ was popular discourse. Discourses shape the way that we perceive the world and our own selves, Foucault said (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 133). In his earlier writing, he posed that discourses constrained people (ie. prevented them from saying or doing things they otherwise may have done), while in his later work he suggested that discourses acted more subtly by causing people to “police themselves” (Gauntlett, 2002, pp. 116, 125). In simple terms, Foucault suggested that discourse does not exercise direct overt influence on members of a society, but has a hegemonic power that causes them to conform to certain modes of thinking and behaving.

Examination of discourse is also important noting the Foucauldian focus on the ‘power effects’ of discourses – ie. the effects that they have in society in shaping social and political agendas and even government policy. The types of knowledge discourses produce and institutionalise “shape the creation and sustenance of political decisions, policies, social norms, practices and institutions”, Woods (1999) notes.
1.4 The role of mass media in discourse

In modern societies, particularly liberal democracies, mass media representations are considered to play a key role in discourse, although precisely what that role is will be examined in detail in chapter four. Media representations refer to more than the presentation of information to readers, viewers and listeners. According to media researchers Newbold et al. (2002), media representations refer to “the media’s construction of reality … the relationship between the ideological and the real” (p. 261). In discussing how identity is constructed, Hall (1990) says identity is a “production” that is “always constituted within, not outside representation” (p. 222).

Definitions of representation which explain its significance and importance are provided by media researchers and feminist writers:

Representation refers to the process by which signs and symbols are made to convey certain meanings. Importantly, this term refers to the signs and symbols that claim to stand for, or re-present, some aspect of ‘reality’, such as objects, people, groups, places, events, social norms, cultural identities and so on (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 260).

Butler (1999) says there are two meanings or uses of the term ‘representation’ – one denoting an operative or functional process, and the other suggesting a normative function:

Representation … serves as the operative term within a political process to extend visibility and legitimacy … on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true (p. 3).

Mass media have been studied intensively since the 1920s and their impact on society in a number of areas has been examined in considerable detail. In public debate over racism, mass media were cited as “… a central means of creating, reproducing and sustaining racial ideologies … media representation of race – referring mainly to black people – draws attention to the ways in which for many years people who are not white remained largely invisible, marginalised to the point of insignificance, or were framed by specific and limited stereotypes” (Newbold et al., p. 311).
In *The Media Book*, Newbold et al. (2002) also comment:

Psychologists, criminologists and others continue to be concerned about such matters as the implications of exposure of children and adults to programmes containing scenes of violence; educationalists are concerned with the potential of the media for education; social anthropologists, who are most foremost among those staking out new questions in audience research, are interested in the ways in which people use, experience, relate to, live around and take meaning from the media, and how these factors are contextualised by particular cultures, communities, family structures and ideologies (p. 15).

Historian Bain Attwood (as cited in Jopson, 2003) says more people learned about Australian Aboriginal children being removed from their families by watching the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence* than through reading the works of academic historians. Similarly, Attwood suggested that the film *Schindler’s List* moved far more people to understand something of the Jewish genocide than through reading Saul Friedlander’s weighty history of the Holocaust.

A number of researchers point to the key role and effects of mass media in contemporary societies:

“Without communication there can be no such thing as society. How communication is mediated is therefore a matter of singular social importance” (Beavis, 2002, p.10).

“Media remain central to most people’s lives … next to sleep and work, our next most time-consuming activity is attending to media” (Barr, 2000, p.16).

“… traditionally, social institutions such as family and religion have been seen as the primary media of (cultural) continuity. More recently … the role of ensuring continuity has increasingly been taken over by … forms of communication and entertainment” (Chaney, 1994, p. 58).
In modern societies, “inherited recipes for living and role stereotypes fail to function ... we have to make our own patterns of being and ... it seems clear that the media plays an important role here” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 248 citing Beck, 2002, p. 26).

“Today, popular media are obviously primary channels for the dissemination of prevailing discourses … The news and factual media inform us about the findings of lifestyle research and actual social change … Information and ideas from the media do not merely reflect the social world, then, but contribute to its shape, and are central to modern reflexivity” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 98). Media are key to “propagating modern lifestyles which are templates for narratives of the self” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 103).

“… in a contemporary society, the media are probably the most important producers of meaning, when they make claims about the way the world is, they become powerful ideological institutions” (Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney, 1998, p. 182).

Grossberg et al. (1998) also note specifically in relation to identity: “the media’s ability to produce people’s social identities, in terms of both a sense of unity and difference” is “their most powerful and important effect” (p. 206).

Baudrillard claims that mass media generate what he calls “hyper-reality” which dominates people’s primary consciousness. He says that in post-modern societies much of what audiences ‘experience’ is defined for them by mass media and what is “real life” is indistinguishable from its “simulation ... some fictional simulacrum of the real conjured up by the media” (Windschuttle, 1998; 2000).

“In summary, with the decline of traditions inherent in modernism and post-modernism, identities in general – including gender and sexual identities – have become more diverse and malleable ... mass media suggest lifestyles, forms of self-presentation, and ways to find happiness (which may or may not be illusory) … individuals construct a narrative of the self which gives some order to our complex lives. This narrative will also be influenced by perspectives which we have adopted from the media. Our relationships with our bodies, our sexual partners, and our own
emotional needs, will all also be influenced by media representations” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 113).

It is sometimes claimed that mass media content is “simply entertainment” and that, by implication, socially significant meanings cannot be read off it and significant effects on individuals or society are unlikely. However, Marxists and feminists have long argued that media content is never “just entertainment”, that it is never politically or ideologically “innocent”, that mass media send “messages” to viewers about the way things are, can be, or should be (Nathanson & Young, 2001, p. 189). Nathanson and Young conclude: “The [mass media] productions … cannot be dismissed by anyone with moral and intellectual integrity as ‘nothing more than entertainment’ (p. 136). They comment further: “… there is nothing trivial about popular culture. It is the folklore, the conventional wisdom, of an urban, industrial society” (p. 81).

Lull (2000) cites empirical studies conducted by two American communication researchers which “show that it certainly does matter what people see at the movies and watch on television and that people do not, perhaps cannot, maintain much distance from their mediated communicative interactions” (p. 171).

Also mass media substantially contribute to or create ‘moral panics’, researchers claim. Cohen and Young (1973) cite moral panics as “the presence of a condition about which people feel anxious or threatened, the element of moral indignation” and comment: “The mass media are the main agents and carriers of moral panics” (pp. 343-344). Curran (2002) says “moral panics are generated through selective media representations of reality” (p. 161).

1.5 Mass media discourse on gender – an overview

Newbold et al. comment on the cultural construction of gender: “… the media have been considered central social players in this context … although some writers have cautioned on these effects being assumed rather than studied” (p. 269).
Feminists have extensively cited the importance of mass media and the role of media representations in discourse on gender. Examples of feminist and media scholars’ comments on media representations of gender include:

Weatherall (2002) in her studies of gender in language and discourse concludes: “A context where sexist discourse is rife is in linguistic representations of women in the media” (p. 76).

Tuchman (1978) examined portrayals of women in mass media and concluded that women are “symbolically annihilated by the media through absence, condemnation or trivialisation” (pp. 3-17).

Seger (2004) reports from her studies of women in film and television in the 1970s that “many women featured in movies and TV programs were usually flat, shadowy figures, someone’s wife or girlfriend. Or they were stock figures of fun: the mother-in-law, the kid sister, the old maid … most of the images of women are not just restricted, but negative”.

Humm (1997) in Feminism and Film begins with the assertion: “Film … often and anxiously envisions women stereotypically as ‘good’ mothers or ‘bad’, hysterical careerists … today, every Hollywood woman is someone else’s Other” (p. 3).

Nathanson and Young (2001) observe: “Feminists have long pointed out that the way women are represented in movies or on television can have profound effects on the way men see women in real life and – even more important – on the way women see themselves in real life” (p. 18). They also comment: “Feminists … have made popular culture one of the chief battlegrounds in their struggle for women” (p. 244).

Newbold et al. report from their studies of mass media: “From very early on, feminist analysis attempts to uncover the constructed messages behind the representations of women in the media, attributing to these images a crucial role in the perception of real-life women and thus the maintaining of a social status quo” (p. 269). They also
comment that “hegemonic discourses on women have been reinforced by mass media as a prime instrument” (p. 85).

Feminist concern with the mass media continues in the so-called Third Wave of feminism. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) comment: “It’s clear that women get a bum deal in the mainstream media” (p. 93).

The concern of women with representations in mass media continues today. A 2003 TV commercial “Simpson Street” advertising Simpson dishwashers which depicted a woman having time to bake a cake for a new male neighbour and to gossip drew complaints to the Advertising Standards Council and the advertising agency, Host, on the grounds that it portrayed her as subservient (baking for a man) and trivial (gossiping) (Plaskitt, 2003).

Gauntlett (2002) says: “Media and communications are a central element of modern life, whilst gender and sexuality remain at the core of how we think about our identities. With the media containing so many images of women and men, and messages about men, women and sexuality today, it is highly unlikely that these ideas would have no impact on our own sense of identity” (p. 1).

Much feminist literature on representations of women in mass media attributes blame to men, pointing to the domination of media production roles by men. But some research throws a question mark over such conclusions such as that by Smith (1999). Smith’s study of character portrayals in female-focussed films of the 1930s, 1940s and 1990s found stereotypical portrayals of women but, significantly, it found that increased female creative control which occurred over the period (ie. more women writers, directors and producers) correlated with increased stereotypical portrayals of women – not the converse (p. 67).

In for criticism by Blyth (p. 15). This suggests that mass media representations of gender are not as straightforward or one-sided as feminist studies claim.

In the late 1980s, Men Organised Against Sexism and Institutionalised Stereotypes (OASIS) produced a video and slide show entitled *Stale Roles and Tight Buns* that reviewed depiction of men in advertising and concluded that men were presented either in outmoded negative ways (stale roles) or as sex objects (tight buns) (Nakayama, 2004). Faludi (2000) acknowledges: “In the past half century, Madison Avenue, Hollywood and the mass media have operated relentlessly on men, too. The level of mockery, suspicion and animosity directed at men who step out of line is profound, and men respond profoundly …” (p. 41).

Nathanson and Young (2001), who have provided one of the few recent and specific studies of mass media representations of men, conclude: “Individuals are still judged, either negatively or positively, in terms of qualities alleged to be typical of whatever group they have been assigned to” (p. 203). If this view is accepted, representations of men in contemporary mass media are taken up by society in viewing individual men, and by individual men themselves in determining their place in the world.

Reviewing *Stale Roles and Tight Buns* and its collection of media advertising images of men on the Center for Media Literacy Web site, Nakayama (2004) says “the strong, silent, authoritarian, militaristic and threatening male pervades societal ideals. Although it’s not a realistic nor a positive role to emulate, it also shapes men’s views of themselves and how they measure up to masculine role models”. Nakayama adds: “advertising narrows the definition of what it means to be a man”.

Gauntlett (2002) reports on a major analysis of men’s magazines that he says shows “the huge growth of men’s magazines to be a cultural phenomenon worthy of serious consideration, which should be able to tell us something about men and masculinity today” (p. 166). Schirato and Yell (1999) in a discussion of men’s lifestyle magazines in Australia say: “It is interesting to consider how this change in the profile of men’s magazines impacts on discourses of masculine subjectivity. Magazines certainly constitute a significant site within the culture for the discursive production of subjectivity … changes
in the market and profile of magazines indicate shifts in the ‘available discourses’ … for constructing identities” (p. 84).

As will be discussed in chapter two, Connell (2000) prefers the term ‘masculinities’ to ‘masculinity’ which implies a singular way of expressing maleness – a position shared by Kimmel and Messner (1995, p. 3) and some other researchers. Connell says: “Media research documents … that mass media are crammed with representations of masculinities – from rock music, beer commercials, sitcoms, action movies and war films to news programs – which circulate on a vast scale” (p. 151).

Newbold et al. (2002) comment: “… the media do not simply reflect ‘natural’ gender difference, but are themselves part of their construction and a site for the struggle over their meanings” (p. 289).

Nathanson and Young (2001) conclude:

Whatever the personal motivations of their creators, the impact on readers and viewers becomes a legitimate concern once books or movies enter the public realm. It is true that adults should be able to read books or see movies without feeling threatened enough to fall apart. It is true also, however, that adults should be able to acknowledge the link between their own feelings and the cultural forces that induce them. Women are not merely childish for doing so. And men are not merely childish or (unduly) threatened for doing exactly the same thing (p. 295).

Study of mass media representations of men are also important as they provide a window to examine men and male identities in a wider national and even global sense, rather than on an individual basis or in small groups as occurs with social research such as interviews, ethnographic and other types of in-depth qualitative studies. Feminist writers and researchers have increasingly focussed on the global position of women and the gender implications in international trade, politics and the ‘culture industry’. Connell (2000) says “we must think about how masculinities are constructed by global forces and how men, in all their diversity, are positioned by global society” (p. 33). Mass media provide an opportunity to identify some of the global forces and global dimensions of men and
electronic media, is an obvious vector for the globalisation of gender” (p. 44).

1.6 Why more study of gender and mass media?

While there have been numerous studies of mass media representations of gender, as with
gender studies generally these have focussed predominantly on women. Mass media
representations of men and male identities has been comparatively little studied and some
studies that have been conducted (eg. Busby, 1975) are dated.

The book *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* by
Nathanson and Young (2001) was a recent contribution in this area. The authors comment
in their introduction: “By the 1980s, the word ‘gender’ was routinely used as a synonym
for ‘women’. To study gender is still, by implication, to study women” (p. 8). They add:

... our society was androcentric until recently (focussed on men), at least to the extent that it
focussed on gender – although we do not agree with many feminists on how or why
androcentrism came to prevail. But conditions have changed ... by the 1990s, androcentrism
was increasingly being replaced by gynocentrism in popular culture (p. 5).

Nathanson and Young identified misandry – contempt for males as misogyny is for
females – and noted in their preface that “… no systematic study of misandry in popular
culture has been produced” (p. x).

Katz (1995) notes the lack of scholarly attention to men and masculinities in the past is
consistent with the “lack of attention paid to other dominant groups”. Newbold et al.
(2002) note that this was the case in discussion of race which, for a long time, did not deal
with whites and whiteness (p. 287). Winter and Robert (1980) observed that “ruling groups
are often the last to be scientifcally studied, and men appear to be no exception” (p. 250).
An assumption is inherent in many public discourses that allegedly dominant or pre-
eminent groups do not have issues worthy of consideration.

Brod (1987) states: “While women have been obscured from our vision by being too much
in the background, men have been obscured by being too much in the foreground” (p.19).
Newbold et al. (2002) comment of media representations of men: “… media representations of men and masculinity (or, more precisely, masculinities) should not be perceived as unproblematic … as might have been implied by early feminist writing” (p. 287).

Seidler (1994) agrees, saying: “While it is crucial for men to recognise what women have been obliged to put up with for years, this should not discount what men have to share about their experience” (p. 113).

If mass media have a key role in discourse on important issues such as gender and identity, as is shown in a number of studies, examination of media representations of men and male identities is just as important as studies of media representations of women and female identities.

A further factor suggesting a need for more research is that in the limited studies of mass media representations of men and male identities that have been conducted, the focus has been primarily on advertising and entertainment media (particularly movies and television sit-coms and drama). Newbold et al. (2002) say: “… it is worth noting that one of the most widely studied areas of women’s representations has been and still is advertising” (p. 272) Van Zoonen (1994) comment that advertising has an “obsession” with gender and sexuality.

Gauntlett (2002) also questions the preoccupation with advertising in media research, saying: “Sometimes it is unclear why gendered messages in advertising are singled out for particular attention by researchers … when TV series take up more of our time and attention than ads which fly by every day,” he says (p. 77). As noted by Third Wave feminists Baumgardner and Richards (2000): “critiquing ads is not critiquing the media but only going after something that is already ‘reader beware’, because it is labelled ‘advertising’. It is the editorial content that needs to be read and analysed with a gender lens” they argue (p. 103).

In advertising, scheduling of program ‘commercial breaks’ and the display conventions of press advertisements, as well as production techniques such as voiceover, provide clear
signals to audiences that the content is not reality filmed or photographed. Similarly, with TV and radio comedy and drama, devices such as ‘canned’ laughter and music interspersed within dialogue on the soundtrack signal that the presentation is a media product and not reality – although ‘suspension of disbelief’ can circumvent these signals often.

Conversely, news, current affairs, talk shows and non-fiction articles in newspapers and magazines are presented as if they are ‘real’ and ‘true’. In fact, many programs and publications in these genre make explicit claims to present ‘truth’ and reality with slogans such as “the one you can trust” and “the way it is”.

Media researchers point out that all media representations are selective, limited or framed, and ‘mediated’ (Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney, 1998; McQueen, 1998; Newbold et al., 2002). Newbold et al. state: “… news, current affairs programs, documentaries and similar seemingly ‘real’ representations of reality can represent but a version of ‘reality’ … news is just as mediated and constructed as any other content …” (p. 264).

However, as Newbold et al. warn: “…when it comes to non-fiction programs, like documentaries and news, it is more likely that audiences believe the information they are getting is ‘true’ and are less aware of these programmes being mediated” (p. 262). These media genre, which are often consumed uncritically as ‘reality’, have been comparatively little studied and warrant close attention.

In a discussion of male health issues, Woods (1999) comments: “… we need to identify the discourses around the nature of males in our society, and look for the power effects, or implications, of these discourses – for it is these discourses that will determine the social and political responses to men’s and boys’ health needs.” In the same paper he adds: “… hegemonic, or dominant, discourse on men is most apparent in (and mostly generated by) mass media”.

Echoing widespread concern over mass media representations, Singh (2003) in a concluding summary at a University of Western Sydney education research conference said: “Research helps us free ourselves from unhelpful baggage played out in the media”.
1.7 Thesis outline

This thesis explores representations of men and male identities in Australian mass media and discusses the implications that these representations may have on men, women and the societies in which they live.

Purpose and aims of the research

The aims of this research are two-fold:

1. To identify the predominant images and messages relating to men and male identities represented by influential mass media; and

2. To identify possible implications of these representations for men and boys, in particular, and indirectly for women, girls and societies generally, noting media effects and gender theory which hold that mass media representations are key elements of the constitutive force of discourse and have significant effects in shaping self-identities and social attitudes (although exploration of specific effects is beyond the scope of this study and an area of important further examination).

The research problem

There are four key factors defining the research problem which this study sets out to address:

1. While numerous studies of the role of mass media representations in discourse on gender and alleged effects have been conducted, most gender related media research has focussed on women. Comparatively few studies have examined the treatment and representations of men in the mass media. There is a gap in gender studies in this regard which this study will help fill. Seidler (1994) poses that “feminists have somehow set the agenda for men’s studies and argues that “intellectual issues about the place of men’s studies cannot be settled by saying it is for feminism to set the agenda while it is for men to work out their response” (p. 112).

2. Limited recent studies that have been conducted, such as research by Nathanson and Young (2001) and Faludi (2000), show that men and masculinity are often being
presented in highly negative ways in mass media. Given the impact of mass media as discussed in this study, these emergent findings and their possible implications warrant further exploration.

3. Some analyses of mass media content, particularly in relation to gender, have been based on small samples and unscientific methodology. Nathanson and Young (2001) acknowledged in the preface to their published study that their method was “not scientific” (p. x). To draw conclusions that are “generalisable, objective and summarising”, an aim of deductive nomothetic research as opposed to more subjective idiographic investigation, requires a sufficiently large and representative sample and rigorous methodology (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 11). This study investigates an extensive sample of mass media using research methods designed to achieve a high level of reliability and validity in its conclusions, as well as qualitative methodology for in-depth insights into likely interpretations and meanings.

4. Most media content studies that have been conducted in relation to gender have focussed on movies, entertainment programs and advertising. As noted by Newbold et al. (2002) and others, few studies have focussed on news, current affairs, and other media genre purporting to present ‘facts’ and ‘truth’ such as talk shows and lifestyle magazines and programs. This research focuses on these less studied mass media genre, an important research step as a number of researchers suggest that these media genre may have greater impact than obviously mediated media content such as films, TV drama, comedy and advertising.

**Research questions**

This study addresses a series of research questions rather than an hypothesis. While a number of media content analyses of gender have been conducted, including some examining men and male gender issues, insufficient data are available on mass media representations of men and male identities to pose a central hypothesis.

Faludi (2000) and Nathanson and Young (2001) provide some evidence that men are being widely represented in negative ways in mass media. Hilton (2000), Macdonald and Crawford (2002), West (1995), and others cited in this study also suggest mass media
represent negative images of men, although they do not provide empirical data to demonstrate and quantify their claim.

Given the relative paucity of data supporting this contention compared with the plethora of studies of women in the media, a series of research questions are addressed in this study as follows:

![RESEARCH QUESTIONS]

| 1. What are the main images or portrayals of men and male identities represented in mass media news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle magazines and programs? |
| 2. What are the most prominent messages represented in relation to men and male identities in mass media news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle magazines and programs? |
| 3. What is the balance between favourable and unfavourable images or portrayals as they might be perceived by different groups within Australian society? |
| 4. Noting the roles of mass media in both reflecting and propagating discourse, what are the likely implications of predominant representations of men and male identities for men, boys, women, girls and societies generally? |

**Research methodology**

This study uses content analysis to explore representations of men and male identities in mass media. Content analysis is a well-established research methodology. Neuendorf (2002) says content analysis is “the primary message-centred methodology” (p. 9) and cites studies such as Riffe and Freitag (1997) and Yale and Gilly (1988) which “reported that in the field of mass communication research, content analysis has been the fastest-growing technique over the past 20 years or so” (Neuendorf, 2002, p.1). Riffe and Freitag (1997) found that the number of content analyses published in *Journalism & Mass...*
Communication Quarterly increased from 6.3% of all articles in 1971 to 34.8% in 1995 – nearly a six-fold increase. Fowler (as cited in Neuendorf (2002) reported that by the mid-1980s over 84% of masters level research methods courses in journalism in the US included content analysis (p. 27).

Sociologists have been interested in media content since the early 20th century, starting with Max Weber around 1910 who saw media content as a means of monitoring the ‘cultural temperature’ of society (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998, p. 92). Media content analysis was introduced as a systematic method to study mass media by Harold Lasswell (1927), initially to study propaganda. The methods have been refined throughout the years.

Media content analysis became increasingly popular as a research methodology during the 1930s and 1940s for investigating the rapidly expanding communication content of movies.

In the 1950s, media content analysis proliferated as a research methodology in mass communication studies and social sciences with the arrival of television. Media content analysis has been a primary research method for studying portrayals of racism, violence and women.

With the continuing growth of mass media and new media forms and genre including ‘Reality TV’, ‘docu-drama’ and ‘mockumentaries’ (fiction made to look like documentary) and online media, media content analysis is a highly relevant research methodology to apply in a study of men and male identities.

Berelson (1952) suggested five main purposes of content analysis as follows:

To describe substance characteristics of message content – ie. content characteristics;
To describe form characteristics of message content;
To make inferences to producers of content;
To make inferences to audiences of content;
To determine the effects of content on audiences.
Carney (as cited in Neunendorf, 2002) broadly agreed with this view summarising the three main uses of content analysis as (a) descriptive; (b) hypothesis testing and (c) facilitating inference (p. 52).

Neuendorf (2002) points out that inferences cannot be made as to producers’ intent or audiences’ interpretation from content analysis alone, arguing that an integrated approach is required involving use of content analysis with other research such as audience studies. However, Neuendorf supports Carney’s view of media content analysis as useful for “facilitating” inference even though it cannot directly prove it and, further, Neuendorf adds that content analysis has some predictive capabilities as well as other specialist uses. Neuendorf concludes that there are four main approaches to and roles of content analysis:

- Descriptive;
- Inferential;
- Psychometric; and
- Predictive (p. 53).

While psychometric refers to specialised medical and psychoanalytic uses of content analysis for interpreting the text of patient interviews or statements, the three other approaches are highly relevant to study of gender and identity. The first and most basic role, descriptive, provides an insight into the specific messages and images in discourse and popular culture represented in mass media. The inferential and predictive roles of content analysis, even though they are ‘facilitating’ rather than conclusive, allow researchers to go further and explore likely effects of mass media representations on audiences and on societies. Thus, in the context of this study, media content analysis can facilitate understanding of perceptions of men and male identities; give insights into the likely self-image and self-esteem of men and boys; and begin to explore likely social and political responses to these representations.

Media content analysis can be conducted in a number of ways and the various methods available and the approach taken in this study are discussed in some detail in chapter four.
One of the key criteria advocated by authorities on content analysis such as Neuendorf (2002), who focuses on quantitative content analysis, is that it should conform to the standards of ‘the scientific method’ of research. Researchers such as Neuendorf are critical of analyses which involve high levels of subjectivity and lack of reliability. These deficiencies are caused by, in order of occurrence, (a) lack of a priori design, (b) poor sampling, and (c) lack of objectivity or intersubjectivity as researchers prefer to say, noting that in post-modern and post-structuralist views, true objectivity is impossible (Grbich, 2004). The sample, coding methodology, and steps taken to achieve reliability in this content analysis are outlined in chapter four.

A priori design, and academic research procedures generally, necessitate several steps before undertaking primary research – in this case, media content analysis. Design of a research study, whether a survey or media content analysis, requires that the issues and messages to be studied are clearly identified and understood in advance. In survey research, this is often done through interviews, discussion groups or focus groups within the sampling frame (target population). According to Neuendorf (2002) and others, sound research design for media content analysis is achieved through two key steps:

1. Review of literature on the topic, which exposes the researcher to the language of the field and issues previously identified as of concern; and

2. ‘Immersion in the message pool’ through reading of a sample of media content and other previous content analyses.

Bryman (1988) also sees content analysis as quantitative research, listing it as one of five methods of quantitative research, along with social surveys, experiments, official statistics and structured observations (pp. 11-12).

However, critics of the positivist scientific method argue that a qualitative approach is necessary to “make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Furthermore, feminist approaches to content analysis and other research methodologies such as surveys argue that the positivist approach is “part of the masculine paradigm” involving “control and dominance while suppressing the expression of personal feelings. It is manipulative and instrumental”
While most researchers agree that research should move beyond reliance on quantitative data alone, some feminist methodology advocates research goals which introduce highly subjective elements to research that can jeopardise the reliability and validity of findings. Neuman (1997) notes feminist research methodological steps designed to move beyond the strictures of the positive scientific method, and their pitfalls, as follows:

Disclosure of personal experiences by the interviewer in interviews and surveys (this is seen as ‘leading the respondent’ and can put words in their mouths in the view of other researchers);

Drawing on female skills of being open, receptive and understanding (a contentious claim to female superiority in these areas which is questionable);

Becoming emotionally engaged with respondents (not considered desirable by most researchers as it can cloud researchers’ ability to analyse the data and result in conclusions based on the researcher’s own emotional reaction rather than the data) (p. 262).

Most of these objections relate principally to surveys and interviews and do not apply to content analysis which is an unobtrusive research methodology (i.e. the researcher is not involved in creation or recording of the data, but observes it independently post-event). However, feminist criticism of quantitative research approaches is noted and, in some respects, feminist research approaches which advocate less researcher control and more respondent-orientated focus; more unstructured open-ended formats; and more active listening bring necessary complementation to ‘the scientific method’ of data collection and analysis. The latter, in particular – more active listening – can be applied in content analysis as actively looking beyond the manifest content to identify latent meanings that may be present using semiotic (qualitative) analysis techniques.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) note that “researchers approach content in different ways, using different conceptual and methodological tools” and advocate use of qualitative content analysis to gain deep and rich insights into the likely interpretations of texts (p.
31). Silverman (2000) says “the days of the great divide between qualitative and quantitative research have now largely passed” and cites Bryman (1988) and Hammersley (1992) who advocate that the two forms of analysis can be helpfully combined (p. 157).

Noting the benefits of both types of research, this study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis in line with the requirements for statistical reliability outlined by Neuendorf and the need for semiotic interpretation to draw inferential and predictive conclusions as to likely meanings derived from texts. Newbold et al. (2002), Gauntlett (2002) and Curran (2002) refer to quantitative and qualitative content analysis as complementary and part of a continuum of analysing texts to try to determine their likely meanings for and impact on audiences.

**Scope of the research**

This study commenced with a review of literature on gender including major feminist texts which, while focussing on female gender, have also contributed substantially to discourse on male gender, as well as review of specific studies of men and masculinities. As Kidder (2004) notes, study of men and masculinities “are indebted to the academic framework of women’s studies which created the vocabulary of gender-based discrimination and social constructs”.

Secondly, this study included a literature review of media research citing the importance of mass media in discourse and examining the implications of media representations. This study notes that media effects cannot be assumed and are a subject of continuing research and debate. Given that the aim of studying mass media content is two-fold: identification of possible or likely effects (behaviourist tradition) and societal attitudes that it reflects (humanist tradition), as outlined by Shoemaker and Reese (1996, pp. 31-32), it important that study of media content is framed within sound media theory in relation to both these traditions.

Framed within a literature review of gender studies and media theory, this study conducted an extensive content analysis to explore mass media representations of men and male identities. Content analysis was conducted in two parts:
1. A broad *quantitative* study in accordance with the method outlined by Neuendorf (2002), Neuman (1997) and other researchers in this field;

2. As a second stage, the research involved *qualitative* analysis of a sub-sample of mass media content to examine selected media texts in depth.

This content analysis was conducted in Australia, but included a significant number of international media programs broadcast globally, as well as content sourced from international media such as wire services and affiliated international media groups. Therefore, while having specific relevance to Australia, with increasing globalisation of mass media, findings of this study also have implications for a number of societies including the USA, Canada and the UK.

An extensive sample of newspapers, magazines and TV news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle programs was analysed as outlined in chapter four. General news, current affairs and lifestyle articles and programs were analysed including features, opinion columns, editorials and letters to the editor. Specialist sections and segments such as business, sport and entertainment were excluded on the basis that media coverage of sport has been extensively studied elsewhere (eg. Messner, 1988; Messner, 1992; Messner, Duncan & Jensen, 1990; Messner and Sabo, 1990; and Sabo & Curry Jansen, 1992) and ‘trade’ reporting on business, finance, entertainment, fashion, and other specialist fields was considered beyond the research objectives of this study.

The media sample was analysed over an extended period of six months to gain a large and widely representative data base. In total, this study examined 780 newspapers and magazines and over 330 hours of television, with the intention that it will contribute to scholarly study of gender issues and related social and policy planning.

**Assumptions and limitations**

1. The starting point and underlying rationale of this study is post-structuralist theory on the construction of identity and the role of discourse as a constitutive force in society. It draws on Foucault’s views that identities are constructed from the materials available to people in discourse and that discourses shape the way that we perceive the world and our own selves.
2. Furthermore, this study draws on cultural studies and media studies research which agree that mass media representations are a key element of discourse within contemporary societies.

3. Notwithstanding many studies which show the importance of mass media in shaping social and individual attitudes and perceptions, this study notes that mass media representations do not always correlate with public attitudes. As discussed in chapter four, audiences interpret and use media texts in different ways and effects vary. Sometimes public attitudes and behaviour are directly discordant with media messages, as has been shown in election campaigns where voters have gone against popular media predictions. Proliferation of violence in movies and on television has not been directly connected with increased violence in societies in numerous studies. Therefore, while this study identifies prominent representations of men and male identities in mass media and can draw conclusions on likely effects and implications, further research using methodologies such as audience surveys, focus groups or interviews are required to specifically explore the effects of representations identified. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) strongly advocate integrating studies of media sources, messages and audiences (p. 56).

4. While this study is based on quantitative content analysis following the ‘scientific method’ as outlined by Neuendorf (2002) and qualitative content analysis complying with standards outlined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994); Patton (1990; 2002), Robson (1993) and Silverman (1993) – rather than interviews, life studies or ethnographic research such as observation which rely heavily on the researcher’s perspective and even involvement – the researcher’s gender, age and background are reported for what biases they may contribute and how they may limit, or benefit, this study. Hearn (1993) notes a practical difficulty in relation to gender studies is “the researcher’s motivation and practical relationship to the research in question and the way in which the (gendered) researcher is part of the research process, the research problem and even the research topic being studied. The general issue of reflexivity in social science is thus given a specific gendered significance”. Grbich (2004) states that “the researcher cannot be separated from his/her background, life experiences and memories” (p. 60). Hermeneutic theory also argues that meaning can only be interpreted from some
perspective, a certain standpoint, a praxis, or a situational context, and that one must know about the researcher as well as the researched to place any qualitative study in a proper hermeneutic context (Patton, 2002). Elsewhere, Patton (1990) says the researcher must carefully reflect on, deal with and report on potential sources of error and bias (p. 58).

As part of this reflexivity and transparency, it is disclosed that the researcher is a man researching men. More specifically, the researcher is a ‘baby boom’ generation man, born in the 1950s, with a background and personal history that includes:

A childhood and adolescence growing up in a conservative rural environment with seven years at Catholic boarding school under the tutelage of nuns, priests and brothers during the 1960s;

Service in the Australian Army 1972-76 which included combat training for the Vietnam War, although military action was (thankfully) not experienced as Australia’s involvement ended in late 1972. Transfer to a non-combatant role in Army and Defence Public Relations followed after September 1972 due to prior training in journalism (outlined further below);

A career of almost three decades working in the media and with large companies and organisations as a public relations and media adviser during and after gaining a BA in journalism, media studies and literary studies and an MA by research in media studies;

Two divorces (almost certainly partly due to work and related travel) and resulting experiences in the 1990s of the Family Court, child custody and child support policies and procedures;

Two children, a 25-year-old woman and a 16-year-old boy at the time of completing this study.
This background and personal history frames and, in one sense, limits the perspective of the researcher (e.g. by gender and age). On the other hand, these life experiences serve to familiarise the researcher with the social, political and economic backdrop of men in contemporary western societies. They are experiences shared by many middle-aged and older men today, transitioning from a background in a work-centred, war-torn, largely pre-feminism or early feminism environment through marriage, fatherhood, military service, career, and several decades of feminism and major social, political and economic change. Having a daughter and a son has afforded insights into the life experiences and views of young women and boys today.

Furthermore, and significantly, at a professional level, the researcher has worked as a journalist in the media for seven years, as a public relations executive dealing with the media for 15 years, and most recently as a media researcher with an international media analysis firm for almost 10 years (with some overlap of roles). The latter period has involved academic and professional training in content analysis and considerable experience conducting media content analysis, as well as other research such as surveys. This training and experience in both media production and media content analysis sparked interest in conducting this research and provides a specialist vantage point and expertise to undertake this study.
2.1 Traditional views of gender

‘Traditional’ is used as a term to refer to societies prior to modernism and post-modernism. This study will not enter the debate over whether contemporary societies are late modern as claimed by Giddins or post-modern, as this is not relevant to this research. However, to examine male gender issues today, it is necessary to note the emergence and evolution of gender discourse and its key features.

Gender was traditionally viewed as principally biologically determined, a factor of genes and hormones which were seen to influence behaviour, attitudes, and even mental capacity. Perceived innate gender differences ranged from physiological factors such as male muscular strength and female reproductive capabilities, to claims of psychological differences. Men were arguably more rational and logical. Women were claimed to be emotional and empathetic.

Belief in innate biological characteristics of men and women led to gender roles and formed the foundation of individual and collective human identities for men and women over several centuries.

Traditional roles and identities of women were based around mothering, nurturing and home-making, based largely on their reproductive biology. Traditional roles and identities of men were based around being protectors and providers (hunters in early societies and then ‘breadwinners’ at salaried work in industrial societies).

2.2 The rise and ‘fall’ and rise of feminism

The basis of gender, and the roles and rights assigned to people based on their gender, have come under sustained attack in post-modern societies, as will be further examined in this chapter.
As with almost all movements, the impetus for change came from the dominated and allegedly oppressed rather than the dominant class – in the case of gender, the feminine – although the terms feminine, female and even gender and sex are sites of debate. Feminism is widely seen as one of the most significant philosophies and movements in western societies in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

This study focuses on men and recent developments in gender discourse. But the groundwork of early feminists set the stage of gender studies and forms and shapes much of the debate over gender today. Indeed, some researchers and writers such as Nathanson and Young (2001) claim gender studies have become synonymous with women’s studies and feminism.

Feminism not only described and discussed the role and identities of women but, as will be shown, particularly in its ‘Second Wave’, feminism discussed and described (some would say prescribed) the nature and identities of men.

One of the key challenges in discussing feminism is that it is not a homogenous movement. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) stress feminism is not a “monolith like communism or Scientology. It’s a loose collection of individuals” (p. 54).

Whittier (1995) provided a detailed sociological study of the evolution of American feminism over three decades from the 1970s to the 1990s which chronicled the “continuities” and “discontinuities” of feminism and the “transformation” of early radical thinking into new models. She says: “Newcomers to the women’s movement are mobilising for feminist goals in different ways from long-time activities … newcomers constructed a different model of themselves as feminists” (p. 243).

Castells (1997) notes that “while feminism is present in many countries, and women’s struggles/organisations are exploding all over the world, the feminist movement displays very different shapes and orientations, depending upon the cultural, institutional, and political contexts where it arises” (p. 188).

Nevertheless, certain defining features of feminism can be identified. Dictionaries define feminism as “a movement for social, political and economic equality of men and women”
an even-handed description referring to men and women (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 56). But it is much more – or less than that. Baumgardner and Richards go on to state: “Fundamentally, feminism is a political movement organised for the purpose of getting women out from under subordination … but its soul is consciousness” (p. 82). Significantly, the latter definition eliminates any reference to men other than as oppressors of women.

Feminism has two fundamental elements. First, at its core and arguably the bedrock that underlies it is consciousness – raising awareness among women and instilling a new way of thinking, replacing ‘false consciousness’ with a new perspective of equality and autonomy. In this sense, feminism is a philosophy or ideology. But, second, feminism is a political movement. The political activism inherent in feminism is evident in the long-held motto of Second Wave feminism “the personal is political” – words claimed to have been first used by Gail Chester (1979, p. 13).

Feminism recognises that in order to achieve change, consciousness first has to be raised. Women have to be aware of their situation, of the inequities of it, and of alternatives. Equally, to achieve change, political activism is necessary.

Nathanson and Young (2001) conclude that there “are important differences between one school of feminism and another” but they propose that underlying feminism is “an ideology derived from Marxism and romanticism but with class or nation replaced by gender as the central concept (p. 228).

‘First Wave’ and Liberal feminism

What has come to be called feminism grew out of feminisme, an intellectual movement in 19th century France (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 51). The term entered the women’s movement of the US in 1906 (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 325).

Landmark early feminist writings included Mary Wollstonecraft’s The Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). While criticised by some feminists today and even branded misogynist because of its observation that many women at the time were coquettish and manipulative, Wollstonecraft (as cited in Seymour-Smith, 1998) urged that women should be “taught to think” and struggle against the false psychological categories assigned to
them by men. She attacked the concept of “woman as property” which was endemic in Victorian society (pp. 302-303).

Another early text which addressed women’s rights was John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* written in 1861 and published in 1869.

Feminism gained momentum in late 19th century western societies where women began to campaign for social, legal, economic and political equality such as the right to own property and vote in democratic societies.

In the US, feminism is regarded to have officially begun in 1848 with the launch of the women’s suffrage movement, followed by a campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) of the American Constitution. In the period 1848 to 1920 feminism was focussed largely on the symbolic struggle for the right to vote and this phase of feminism is largely identified with the suffragettes of North America where women finally won voting rights in 1920. In broad terms, what is often referred to as ‘First Wave’ feminism focussed on institutional inequities in society between men and women.

Kristeva (1981), in an analysis of feminism over the past 150 years, described three periods of feminism distinguished by their evolving philosophical and political focus, the first of which she described as Liberal Feminism. Kristeva’s Liberal Feminism closely correlates with what others call First Wave feminism, as she describes Liberal Feminism as focussed on rights and individualism.

*‘Second Wave’ feminism*

With the right to vote won in the US and many other countries (Australia granted Federal and State voting rights to women 12 years before the US in 1908), the focus of feminism from the 1920s onwards turned to job equality (equal pay for equal work), reproductive freedom (the pill and abortion), and further equal rights in political and social fields (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 20).

This new focus has been termed ‘Second Wave’ feminism by a number of feminist writers, although the phase covered a relatively long period (more than 60 years) and embraced a number of changes in focus and philosophy.
Key figures and influences in the evolution of Second Wave feminism were Simone de Beauvoir’ whose 1949 text *The Second Sex* identified women as ‘the Other’ – i.e. as secondary to men. De Beauvoir (1949, reprinted 1997) claimed “… humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being” (p. 16). Elsewhere she comments: “… being different from man, who sets himself up as the same, it is naturally to the category of Other that woman is consigned” (p. 101).

In the 1960s, Helen Gurley Brown’s book *Sex and the Single Girl* publicly claimed, shockingly at the time, that single women liked sex and did not need to be married to enjoy it. She further suggested that women were badgered into marriage by a conservative, misogynist culture (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 153).

Betty Friedan’s landmark book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) raised awareness of “a problem with no name” and urged women to enter the workforce rather than remain in the home dependent on male breadwinners (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 73). Friedan’s book was more polemical than preceding ground-breaking texts such as Mill’s philosophical treatise and de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*. While not as philosophically cogent as these, Friedan’s book was a protest and a call to arms and it galvanised women in America into action. In 1966, Friedan founded the National Organisation of Women (NOW) which became an influential and long-running women’s group – albeit a liberal feminist one which was at times criticised and opposed by radical feminist groups. A simplistic summary of early Second Wave influences is that Wollstonecraft and de Beauvoir made people think; Friedan motivated women to act.


In Britain, Juliet Mitchell’s *Woman’s Estate* (1971), which grew out of an earlier essay entitled “The longest revolution”, drew heavily on both Marxism and Freud’s theories of psychoanalysis in its examination of the ideological dimension of women’s oppression. In

Sheridan (1990) also cites Australian Anne Summers’ *Damned Whores and God’s Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia* (1975) as an influential early Second Wave text which examined women’s oppression within imperialism (ie. framed with a structuralist view).

Any classification of periods or era involves over-simplifications. It is important to recognise that a diverse range of views and philosophies comprised what is broadly termed Second Wave feminism. But the key characteristics have been documented by feminist writers and aid understanding of the evolution of gender theory. The early stages of Second Wave feminism were strongly influenced by humanist and existentialist philosophy, particularly as advocated by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943, reprinted 1958) and Marxism. De Beauvoir drew on the work of Sartre, but re-interpreted existentialism, according to feminist writers such as Grosz (1990a), addressing the oppression of women which Sartre ignored. By the 1960s, Marxism in both its economistic and humanist forms dominated feminist thinking (Grosz, 1990b, p. 62).

A further shift occurred, influenced by structuralists such as Althusser who challenged humanism and claimed that consciousness provides but a subjective view of reality. He categorised information into two types: ‘science’ which was truthful objective knowledge, and ‘ideology’. Althusser proposed that ideology was “not the result of a conspiracy or collusion of those in power. Nor was it a function of alienation specific to capitalism that would somehow disappear after the revolution like a veil being removed to reveal the real object underneath”. It was a “product of institutions, practices, and value systems that produce and validate some ideas and denigrate or exclude others. What the subject believes are products of his or her own thoughts are in fact produced elsewhere … and serve political and class interests in obscured but unconscious form” (Grosz, 1990a, p. 68). Althusser’s thinking directed feminists away from humanist and liberal philosophies towards a more structural account of oppression.
Another key influence on feminism was French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, who drew heavily on Freudian theory of the unconscious and sexuality. Many aspects of feminism resonate with Freudian theory including his account of the construction of sexuality involving the Oedipus complex and castration fears. For Lacan, the phallus was the key signifier of the symbolic order (patriarchy) which oppressed or ignored women. “She is positioned in the symbolic order as a spoken exchanged object, not as a subject who is a partner within exchange” Grosz (1990a) summarises (p. 75).

In Kristeva’s (1981) analysis of three stages of feminism, the early period of Second Wave feminism broadly correlates with what Kristeva terms Radical Feminism which focussed on redressing the secondary role of women (the Other) and attacking patriarchy. Radical feminism celebrated womanhood and the feminine (and why shouldn’t it?). But, in this context, early Second Wave and Radical Feminism viewpoints were based on binary structuralist thinking about gender and power. Radical Feminism promoted women against men (eg. goals to attack and break down patriarchy). Whereas Liberal Feminism operated within the existing social and political institutions and sought to win rights for women based on rationalist debate (eg. equal pay for equal work), Radical Feminism sought to overthrow patriarchal systems and replace them. It proposed that, in order to give women power, it had to be taken from men.

A further significant evolution in Second Wave feminist thinking was triggered by poststructuralist political and philosophical theory in relation to power, especially the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Foucault opposed the Marxist and Freudian view of power as a form of inhibition or repression, a negative concept of power. Foucault says, instead, that power in its typical functioning form is a productive, creative force. He says inhibition or repression is, at most, a ‘terminal’ or last resort form of power (Grosz, 1990a, p. 83). In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault questioned the major features of psychoanalysis. Perhaps the most relevant aspect of Foucault’s theory to this study is his view of how power is exercised or manifested. Whereas liberal political theorists (eg. Hobbes, Locke and Mill) maintained that power is a social and legal right established through social contract in which individuals agreed to give up some personal power for the good of society, and Marxism posed that power was a property or right of one class over another to keep it subjugated, Foucault held that “power is not possessed, given, seized,
captured, relinquished or exchanged. Rather, it is exercised. It exists only in actions” (Grosz, 1990a, p. 87).

Foucault does not deny feminist views of women as an oppressed group. But he makes an important contribution to gender theory by “demassifying and localising” power and identifying it as “a continually changing grid that runs unevenly through the whole of society”. In other words, generalisations about men holding power and women holding none are not valid, according to Foucault. He says power cannot be conceptualised as a global phenomenon, although in his later writings he did posit that power manifested itself in self-regulation and self-surveillance and that this could occur through sexualities – ie. women (or men) could behave a certain way voluntarily because of discourse and ideology concerning their gender. “At the level of discourses, power utilises strategies for the production of truth and the disqualification of non-truth”, Grosz summarises from Foucault (1972).

Late Second Wave feminism was identified by Kristeva (1981) as Post-Structuralist Feminism because of its shift to post-structuralist, post-modernism theory. The ‘demassification’ of power and the breakdown of simplistic binaries and rational analytical ‘truths’ held to be sacrosanct in structuralism and modernism led to challenges to essentialist views of gender, power and identity and deconstruction of many of the tenets of modern society. Post-Structuralist Feminism was even more radical than Radical Feminism in one sense. However, it began to recognise some of the ambiguities of power and the complexities of discourse.

A further important concept advanced by Foucault in relation to power was that, as well as “creating points of intensity” power generates “sites of resistance” (Grosz, 1990a, p. 88). Foucault (1998) proposed that “where there is power, there is resistance” (p. 95) – that is even though power has intentions or objectives, it can never be entirely successful in achieving them because the presence of power creates resistances. Elsewhere he wrote: “Power relationships … depend on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support or handle in power relations. The points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network” (Foucault, 1980, p. 95).
This concept of power is at odds with the oppressive, united and universal concept of patriarchal power allegedly held and enjoyed by all men which most Second Wave and Radical feminists proposed. While Sheridan (1990) says feminist theory “has changed, through structuralist and post-structuralist revisions of Marx and Freud, and moved away from their totalising or universalizing tendencies of the past” (p. 42), a monolithic concept of patriarchal power remains in much feminist discourse.

It was the later theory of Foucault on the ‘self regulation’ effects of power that Second Wave and Post-Structuralist feminists took up in their attack on patriarchal power – and conveniently ignored some of Foucault’s views on how power is distributed and re-distributed. Others retained views anchored in Freudian influenced structuralist theory such as Lacan’s or the post-structuralist theories of Derrida which will be further discussed in the following.

According to Grosz (1990a), feminists opposing or ignoring Foucault argue that “he neglects the fact that the various technologies of power he outlines operate in quite different ways according to the sex of the bodies they take as their objects” (pp. 107-108). It may be true that Foucault never adequately considered gender, particularly women, in his theory on power. However, such argument does not explain away Foucault’s important point that power is unevenly distributed – even among men. Not all men, whose bodies are approximately1 sexed the same, have a universal, consistent share of power. The wide differences in power held by various men and groups of men in society identified in other studies (eg. gay studies and studies of black men in racist societies) suggest that sex of bodies is not an over-riding determinant of power and does not destabilise Foucault’s theory on power. Weigman (1994), from her studies of African-American male representation, says: “… some men are, in fact, oppressed by women of the prevailing race and class – assumptions about power as uniformly based on sexual difference (men as oppressor, women as oppressed) have been forced to give way” (p. 2).

A summary of Foucault’s view of power suggests that it exists in actions, not in a static state, and it is distributed unevenly throughout society – among men and women. At the

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1 The term ‘approximately’ is used noting research indicating male and female bodies are not a simple binary (one or the other), but a range of variations in primary and secondary sexual characteristics. However, these do cluster into two groups of characteristics which are commonly identified as ‘man’ and ‘woman’.
level of discourse, power can lead to self-regulation (self-policing) by individuals and groups lacking power. But it cannot be viewed universally or globally or as static. Rather, power operates through a grid flowing to and from various individuals and sub-groups (not uniformly to whole categories such as one gender) and, as well as supplying power, the grid generates resistances which, depending on their level and intensity, serve to redistribute power. This is not to suggest that power and resistance operate as a balanced binary. But studies of power that ignore its non-universal method of distribution and resistance which provides the potential for redistribution within the system (as opposed to outside intervention), are generally pursuing political goals rather than an understanding of power.

Notwithstanding Foucault’s influential analysis of power, many feminists hold to dated Marxist concepts, describing patriarchal power as “something that men, as individuals or as a group, exercise over women” in a conscious and intentioned way (Grosz, 1990a, p. 87). Simplistic universalised understandings of power have permeated much feminist thinking and literature. For example, Mansbridge writing as recently as 1995 defines feminism as “the commitment to ending male domination” (p. 29).

The Redstockings Manifesto, developed in 1969, two years after the first Women’s Liberation convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan, echoed this simplistic universalised view of power and propelled feminism from its early liberal origins to a more radical stance. The Redstockings Manifesto stated:

We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy; men dominate women, a few men dominate the rest (Castells, 1997, p. 178).

Castells (1997) in *Power and Identity*, states “Patriarchalism is a founding structure of all contemporary societies” and he goes on to claim that “interpersonal violence and psychological abuse are widespread precisely because of male anger, individual and collective, in losing power” (pp. 134, 136).
Rowland and Klein (1990) comment: “Within the private domain of the family, marriage, and reproduction, men have structured a system whereby woman’s reproductive capacity leaves her vulnerable and powerless, domestically exploited, and entrapped in economic dependence” (p. 278). They add that “radical feminists have been wrongly accused of developing a ‘conspiracy’ theory, with its intimations of paranoia”. However, on the next page of their paper, the same authors state:

Men as a group enjoy the privileges of power. It is in their best interests to maintain the existing patriarchal system, and they have structured the world in order to maintain this unequal power imbalance … A man exerts power over all women, and over some men. Men continue to do it because they need to live their emotional lives vicariously through women (pp. 280-281).

Such claims offend good theory (and men) in two respects. First, they show, despite claims to the contrary, the prevalence of universalising and generalising in feminist theory in relation to men, while, at the same time, feminists say men should not universalise or generalise in relation to women – or in relation to themselves. Second, as Deleuze points out, “only those directly concerned can speak in a practical way on their own behalf (Foucault, 1977, p. 209). Furthermore, feminist theory addresses subjectivity/objectivity arguing for self-validating rather than ‘other validating’ and asserting “the route to knowledge and emancipation has been constructed through subjectivity rather than objectivity” (Hearn, 1993). Throughout feminism, there is evidence of women speaking not only on behalf of women, but directly describing and inscribing men’s views, intentions, beliefs and motives of which they have no subjective experience and often no empirical data other than anecdotal examples.

Derrida’s deconstruction theory also had a significant influence on feminism – if not on mainstream ‘women’s liberation’, certainly on intellectual feminism. As noted by many other researchers, Derrida makes for difficult reading and interpretation. But a key element of his theory which influenced feminism was his claim that western metaphysics was structured in terms of dichotomies and binary oppositions. Furthermore, within binary structures, Derrida proposed that one occupied the dominant position and defined the terrain of the other, placing it in a subordinate or secondary position. In other words, in Derrida’s binary oppositions, the pairs do not define two equal terms. In each pair, one
represents a positive and the second represents a negative value, a lacking of the first (Grosz, 1990a, p. 93). Derrida (1973; 1978) coined the now famous term ‘differance’ to describe the primacy of the dominant term over the repressed term.

Not surprisingly, a number of feminist intellectuals and academics took up Derrida’s binary theory and applied it to gender studies – for example, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. However, Derrida’s theory of deconstruction is widely regarded as complex and a detailed discussion is not possible in this study. It is suffice for this study to note the influence of his theory on Second Wave and Post-Structuralist feminism during the 1970s and 1980s and even until today.

It is important also to note that many feminists took issue with Derrida – as well as Lacan and other philosophers from whom they drew influence. Grosz (1990a) says of Derrida and Lacan: “At best, women are eulogised or treated as metaphors; at worst they are ignored or actively silenced under the general category, ‘man’ or ‘humanity’” (p. 103).

Nevertheless, the influence of these thinkers is summarised positively by Grosz: “Between them, Marx and Freud have become virtually indispensable reference points for informed feminist theories. Foucault and Derrida, and, through their readings of him, Nietzsche, have been used to problematise Althusser’s separation of science and truth from ideology, and Lacan’s postulate of a single organising structure in symbolic identity, the phallus” (p. 110).

In summary, while First Wave and Liberal feminism focussed on overcoming institutional inequities for women and gaining rights, Second Wave, Radical and Post-Structuralist feminism focussed on power and identified patriarchy as the primary source and manifestation of personal, social and political power in modern societies. Furthermore, Second Wave and Radical feminists, and some Post-Structuralist feminists, argued that patriarchal power not only existed universally, but that it was intentionally and aggressively established and maintained by men to control and oppress women and that most or all men were beneficiaries of this power.
‘Third Wave’ or Post-feminism

Late 20th and early 21st century feminism has been labelled post-feminism by the media and some academics. However, many feminists reject this term, arguing that it suggests that feminism has ended, or that in deriving the term from post-modernism, it implies that feminism has been or can be deconstructed to a state where it has no clear meaning or identity. Some media have directly suggested that feminism has lost its way, failed or even died. For example, *Time* magazine ran a controversial June 1998 feature entitled “Is feminism dead?”

In a review entitled “From girl to woman to grrl”, Soccio (1999) discussed post-feminism, citing Tania Modleski (1991) who describes post-feminism as “a decidedly conservative and reactionary phenomenon in which both popular culture and cultural criticism assume that the goals of feminism have been attained” – an assumption which Modleski says is at the very least premature.


Faludi (1991) says: “It seems that the ‘post-feminist age’ was an interested manipulation of some short-term trends, excessively highlighted in the media”. Based on these views and argument, this study uses the term ‘Third Wave’ Feminism rather than post-feminism.

Baumgardner and Richards (2000), in *ManifestA: Young Women, Feminism and the Future*, admitted Third Wave feminism “doesn’t have an easily identifiable presence” but point to “hubs” unique to the new generation of feminists (p. 79). They say that in the 1990s, feminist attention turned to new issues (new in the sense of focus, not occurrence) including sexual abuse, violence against women, HIV/AIDS awareness, eating disorders, body image and access to technology such as the Internet (p. 21).

In terms of its central philosophy, Third Wave has involved a ground shift from a view of women as the same or equal to men towards celebration of ‘difference’ but with equality (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 250). In an attempt at a definition, Newbold et al. say:
CHAPTER 2  

Gender Images in Transition

The third wave of feminism … accepts sex-positive attitudes, the celebration of previously taboo areas such as sexual attractiveness, fashion and pro-capitalist ideologies; perhaps partly inspired by the 1980s role models such as Madonna. It can be seen as a backlash against writers such as Andrea Dworkin – post-feminism sees woman as equal but different, and that they can ‘have it all’ (p. 423).

Baumgardner and Richards (2000) also see Third Wave feminism as, to some extent, a reaction to the “anti-feminine, anti-joy emphasis that they perceive as the legacy of Second Wave seriousness” (p. 80).

Camille Paglia has been a prominent, albeit controversial, proponent of Third Wave feminism. In Sexual Personnae and her other writings, she advances sex positive and man-positive views. Paglia (1990; 2003a) suggests that the pleasures of living with men outweigh the dangers and she has earned the ire of many feminists with her attacks on established feminist theory including constructionist views on gender and what Newbold et al. (2002) paraphrase as “sex negative, bra-burning, hairy lesbians” (p. 251).

“Post-feminism … is playful, inconsistent, confrontational and transgressive, unafraid of sacrificing sacred cows in order to confront texts with elements of pleasure, sexuality, and shallowness,” Newbold et al., add (p. 251).

Third Wave feminists attempted to reclaim terms such as ‘girls’ and even ‘girlies’ – terms to which Second Wave feminists took great exception. Girlies believe that women can do ‘girl things’ such as wear pink, dress up and have fun, and still be serious women. Riot Grrrls was a 1990s initiative which, among other goals, sought to reclaim and rehabilitate language epithets that had been used negatively against women such as ‘chicks’, ‘slut’, ‘fuck’ and ‘cunt’. They were not the first feminists to address such terms but, whereas Second Wave feminists were highly critical of language denoting female genitalia such as ‘cunt’ being used as a derogatory description, Riot Grrrls and some other Third Wave feminists sought to use the term and thus rehabilitate it with a more positive meaning. The extent to which they have been successful is a matter of conjecture.

“Girlie culture is rebellion against the false impression that since women don’t want to be sexually exploited, they don’t want to be sexual; against the necessity of brass-buttoned,
red-suited seriousness to infiltrate a man’s world,” Baumgardner and Richards (2000, p. 137) conclude.

New generations of feminists have concerns with three aspects of radical Second Wave feminism, Castells (1997) says. He identifies these as (a) sexual expression, with modern Third Wave feminists rejecting the “classic feminist dress code that used to avoid the traps of femininity” and instead wanting to wear lipstick and dress up; (b) lesbianism, with modern feminists wanting sexual freedom but not necessarily interpreting this as open advocacy of lesbianism as some radical feminists did; and (c) separatism from men, with new generations of feminists forming alliances with gay men’s groups and even engaging with heterosexual men committed to constructive dialogue (p. 183).

While acknowledging that feminism is a diverse cultural and political movement incorporating a wide range of philosophies and views, radical elements have strongly advocated separatism from men including lesbianism. In fact, some have not only proposed lesbianism as a preferred expression of sexuality, but openly advocated the destruction of heterosexuality. Wittig (1992) says: “This (our survival) can be accomplished only by the destruction of heterosexuality as a social system which is based on the oppression of women by men and which produces the doctrine of the difference between the sexes to justify this oppression” (p. 20). It is somewhat ironic that a movement allegedly enshrining principles of freedom, choice and autonomy should seek to openly oppose not only men, but women who choose heterosexuality.

Third Wave feminism has rebelled against (feminists may prefer to say evolved from) this doctrinaire approach as well as what some refer to as the overall-wearing anti-feminine mantra of radical Second Wave feminists. This evolution of feminism has not been a smooth transition or even an entirely agreed change of position. Third Wave Feminism has within it divergence referred to as the “feminisms of equality” and the “feminisms of difference” (Grosz, 1990b, p. 333). Grosz concludes: “In opposition to egalitarian feminism, a feminism based on the acknowledgement of women’s specificities … has emerged over the last ten years or more” (p. 339).

Grosz acknowledges that “feminisms of difference seem strangely reminiscent of the position of defenders of patriarchy: both stress women’s differences from men”. However,
she goes on to argue: “For patriarchs, difference is understood in terms of inequality, distinction, or opposition, a sexual difference modelled on negative, binary, or oppositional structures within which only one of the two terms has any autonomy; the other is defined only by the negation of the first … In the case of feminists of difference, however, difference is not seen as difference from a pre-given norm, but as pure difference, difference in itself, difference with no identity” (this author’s emphasis) (p. 339).

Contemporary figures in Third Wave Feminism include Naomi Wolf, author of *The Beauty Myth* (1991) and other texts, Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues* (1998), and new-age entrepreneurs such as singer Ani DiFranco who established a one-woman record label, Righteous Babe, in the 1990s.

Third Wave Feminism has a 13-point agenda, according to Baumgardner and Richards (2000). They list this as:

1. To ‘out’ unacknowledged feminists, specifically those who are younger, so that Generation X can become a visible movement (a clear indication of the political dimension of feminism);

2. To safeguard a woman’s right to bear or not to bear a child, regardless of circumstances;

3. To make explicit that the fight for reproductive rights must include birth control, the right for poor women and lesbians to have children, partner adoption for gay couples, subsidised fertility treatments for all women, and freedom from sterilisation abuse;

4. To bring down the double standard in sex and sexual health and foster male responsibility and assertiveness in areas such as safe sex, family planning and child care;

5. To tap and raise awareness of feminism’s revolutionary history and to have women’s history taught to men as well as women as part of all curricula;
6. To support and increase the visibility and power of lesbians and bisexual women in the feminist movement including in high schools, colleges and the workplace;

7. To practice ‘autokeonony’, described as a way of seeing activism not as a choice between self (or individualism) and community but as a link between the two that creates balance;

8. To have equal access to health care regardless of income;

9. To allow women who so desire to participate in all reaches of the military including combat (although interestingly this does not stipulate whether women should be subject to military conscription when men are);

10. To liberate adolescents from slut-bashing, listless educators, sexual harassment and bullying at school as well as violence in all walks of life;

11. To make the workplace responsive to an individual’s wants, needs and talents;

12. To acknowledge that, although feminists have disparate values, we share the same goal of equality and of supporting one another in our efforts to gain the power to make our own choices;

13. To pass the US Equal Rights Amendment (p. 278).

This ‘manifestA’ covers a range of basic human rights that are almost certainly supported by thinking men as well as women and returns focus to an objective of equality (point 12) – albeit equality with difference. Some critics conclude that Third Wave Feminism is trying to have the best of both worlds. To some extent, this may be true. Whatever the case, feminism is not a simple singular philosophy, but an evolving, multi-faceted movement with myriad elements and positions.

It is important also to note that the various periods or types of feminism summarised briefly here did not follow each other chronologically, nor did one replace the other. Rather, they represent some of the major schools of thought in feminism and, while there
has been some progression from early First Wave and Liberal feminism through Second Wave and Radical feminism to Post-Structuralist and Third Wave approaches, elements of all remain in existence and overlay each other.

Some modern feminists speak of a further evolution which they term ‘New Feminism’. Cannold (2004) describes New Feminism as “a kinder, gentler revolutionary with fewer enemies than a nun … a social movement that no longer causes division by identifying female oppression or fighting to change the way the world is organised. New Feminism speaks only in muted tones about how all women’s ‘choices’ must be respected.” However, Cannold makes it clear she does not support this “internecine peace between conservative and revolutionary women” which she says is impossible and renders women “little more than patriarchs without balls”.

**Ideological or superiority feminism**

Some researchers such as Nathanson and Young contest the equality goals of modern feminism and pose another type of feminism. They say feminist literature and popular culture claims point to an ideological feminist goal of superiority, evidenced in common claims of the innate superiority of women (eg. women are better communicators, women are more caring) as well as manifest political aims of achieving superiority.

Feminism cannot be viewed simply as an attack on men, as this ignores much of its history of consciousness-raising and political campaigns widely supported by both men and women such as the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, and the removal of obvious injustices such as preclusion from many occupations and property ownership. However, while mainstream feminism has mostly addressed practical goals of equality and emancipation for women, academic and intellectual feminism has been responsible for substantial undermining of men collectively and individually in two respects.

First, a corollary of some feminist progress has been regression of men’s roles and identities. Nathanson and Young (2001) say: “Men in our time in fact have good reason to fear that feminist ideology leaves them with no basis whatsoever for a healthy identity. A fundamental premise of feminism is that women can do, and should do, everything that men do. That leaves precisely nothing on which to base masculine identity except for those immoral things that women, unlike men, are allegedly immune to. In other words, men can
make no distinctive, necessary, and valued contribution to society as *men*” (p. 231). This aspect of male disadvantage and suffering at the hands of feminists, to be fair, has been accidental – what the American military would call ‘collateral damage’.

However, a more sinister element of feminism, often advanced by intellectuals and invisible to mainstream feminism, has been explicit and sometimes quite vitriolic attacks on men. Even though pioneering American feminist Betty Friedan (1963) declared “man is not the enemy” and warned that “female chauvinism is highly dangerous and diversionary”, some elements of feminism have criticised Friedan for being too conservative and directly attacked men.

Extreme examples of feminist attacks on men are Valerie Solanas’ *SCUM Manifesto* (named for the Society for Cutting Up of Males) and her various writings calling for the castration and/or killing of all men. While Solanas was widely regarded as mentally unstable, and eventually confined to an institution, similar attacks on men have been made by other feminists and, as this study will show, these are continuing in contemporary discourse.

Andrea Dworkin (1987) made it clear that she wants as little to do with men as possible, describing heterosexual intercourse as an “invasion of female bodies”. Effectively, she accuses all heterosexual men who have relationships with women as rapists. In other words, all heterosexual men are criminals. Dworkin also has advocated that women become vigilantes and murder the men who afflict them (Nathanson & Young, 2001, p. 249). While Solanas’ and Dworkin’s comments have been rejected by many feminists, these types of comments nevertheless form part of the discourse on men and male identities in modern society.

Mary Daly (1984) had this to say in her book, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*:

> The weapons of Wonderlusting women are the Labryses/double axes of our own Wild wisdom and wit, which cut through the mazes of man-made mystification, breaking the mindbindings of master-minder double think … Recognising that deep damage has been inflicted upon consciousness under phallocracy’s myths and institutions, we continue to name patriarchy as the perverted paradigm and source of other social evils (pp. ix-xii).
It is clear that Daly blames men for most or all of society’s evil. Feminist writer, Marie Tulip (1990) admits: “Daly’s willingness to engage in all-out battle with the demonic forces of patriarchy on the level of language, image, myth, symbol, ritual and concept is hugely confrontational” (p. 237). As well as attacking patriarchy as ‘demonic’, Daly attacks women who are prepared to work within patriarchal structures labelling them ‘fembots’ and ‘painted birds’ and says initiatives such as women’s refuges, health centres and affirmative action are “compromising and subverting”. Instead, Daly calls for outright revolution – if not physically, at least in terms of constructing a new world to replace patriarchy.

Nathanson and Young (2001) point out that many feminists have subscribed to the “theory of collective guilt” and “the conspiracy theory of history” in levelling universalised criticisms at men. Feminists have argued that men have been intentionally oppressing women “since the beginning of time”, Nathanson and Young say, and they point to feminists such as Andrea Dworkin, Laurel Holliday and Mary Daly “who argue that men are collectively and vicariously guilty for all human suffering, past and present” (p. 66).

Segal (1987) notes that the public face of feminism is sharply critical of men and little inclined to make distinctions between groups of men. Citing Segal, Connell (2000) acknowledges: “The man reading feminist writing is likely to encounter pictures of men as rapists, batterers, pornographers, child abusers, militarists, exploiters, and images of women as targets and victims” (p. 144). He will also read in feminist and profeminist literature a narrative of men as part of an organised patriarchy, intentionally subjugating and oppressing women as part of his unrelenting quest for power of which, allegedly, all men are beneficiaries and privileged (eg. Butler, 1999; Connell; 1987; Daly, 1984).

A men’s issues Web site carried an article in 2003 by Horst Sommer which lamented: “Over 30 years, feminism has replaced the benevolent patriarch with an emasculated monster. We have gone from the era of ‘Father Knows Best’; to the era of Daddy molests; from Dad as family head to deadbeat dad” (Sommer, 2003).

The breakdown of the nuclear family which revolved around a man, woman and their children has been widely documented by sociologists. Castells (1997) concludes that “what
is at issue is not the disappearance of the family but its profound diversification, and the change in its power system” (p. 222). Citing Reignot and Spina (1996), he adds: “There is no new prevailing type of family emerging, diversity is the rule. But some elements seem to be critical in the new arrangements: networks of support, increasing female centeredness, succession of partners, and patterns through the life cycle” (p. 227). The moral issues inherent in such new family structures are matters outside the scope of this empirical study of representations of men and male identities, but issues concerning fatherhood and the role of men in families are closely related to male identity. Extensive research has found that children suffer through lack of contact with their fathers. For instance, nearly a century of developmental and family research including six categories of empirical studies showing the “powerful influence of fathers’ love on children’s and young adults’ social, emotional and cognitive development” was reviewed by Rohner and Veneziano (2001). Notwithstanding, the nuclear family structure of a husband, wife and children has been breaking down in the late 20th and early 21st century and “female centredness” increasing. Exemplifying hostility towards nuclear families and, in particular, the place of men in them, Stacey (1990) says: “if there is a family crisis, it is a male family crisis” (p. 269). How radical feminist attitudes accommodate male children is unclear, except in the sense of reconstructing them as advocated by many education and gender academics.

Feminist attacks on men cannot be dismissed as something that happened in the distant past by early radicals. An article by feminist writer Eva Cox in *The Sydney Morning Herald* Good Weekend magazine (as cited in Macdonald and Crawford, 2002) shows the sometimes vitriolic nature of attacks on men. On the sensitive and tragic subject of increasing rates of attempted male suicide which should be of concern to all of society, Cox wrote: “Maybe men’s incompetence in this area should make them feel better” (August 26, 2000). She later apologised for the statement, but it demonstrates a concerning tone in contemporary discourse.

Another woman columnist writing in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Virginia Haussegger, a presenter for ABC TV news in Canberra at the time, commented on the breakdown of marriages and relationships:
For men in particular, such ‘permanent temporariness’ might seem a pretty good place to be, while they drag their adolescence well into their 30s and even their early 40s. With plenty of guilt-free sex readily available, and the ties of commitment and responsibility pretty thin on the ground, men really are ‘having it all’ (Hausegger, 2003).

This paragraph provides a goldmine for text analysis and discourse analysis in terms of its tone and content. In two sentences it refers to no fewer than four common criticisms by women of men – never grow up; won’t make commitment; screwing around/promiscuity; and the age-old feminist claim that ‘men have it all’. The final phrase is a subjective statement containing a tone of resentment towards men. This could be excused as an individual woman’s viewpoint, except that Hausegger was writing as a so-called ‘objective’ journalist employed by the national broadcaster and writing in a leading quality daily newspaper.

Another recent example of the continuation of the demonisation of men by feminism was the declaration in 2000 of Valentine’s Day, traditionally a day of celebrating heterosexual love, as V-Day to draw attention to violence against women. To make sure the message was not about reducing violence against all humans – women, children and men – the organisers staged Eve Ensler’s The Vagina Monologues as part of the event, a play that portrays men in a harsh light and sympathetically depicts lesbianism (Nathanson & Young, 2001, p. 250).

While these may be extreme examples, claims that men are innately violent, warlike, sexually promiscuous (a pejorative term which women sought to escape from in favour of sexual freedom and choice), insensitive, commitment-phobic, and even innately evil form part of gender discourse. Feminist literature has even ventured as far as suggesting that men are not necessary to society at all. Such claims have not been isolated or made frivolously. De Beauvoir (1949, reprinted 1997) noted: “In many species the male appears to be fundamentally unnecessary” (p. 36). Modern science is finding and promoting ways for women to reproduce through insemination from sperm donors. This is further discussed later in this chapter under “The new focus (or lack of focus) on men and masculinity”.

Nathanson and Young (2001) differentiate between two types of feminism – one based on equality and one based on superiority which they refer to as “ideological feminism” and
also as “superiority feminism” (p. 199). They point to nine characteristics of ideology and argue that a number of these apply to feminism, particularly “dualism”, “essentialism”, “hierarchy”, “collectivism”, “utopianism”, and “quasi-religiosity” (pp. 200-213). They argue that the rhetoric of ‘difference’ turns to the rhetoric of hierarchy in much feminist philosophy – what they call “feminist triumphalism” (p. 62). They say this line of feminist philosophy and discourse suggests “male sexuality is innately evil, but female sexuality is innately good” (p. 214). “After several decades of ‘identity politics’ on behalf of women, feminists have convinced many people that women are somehow superior to men” (p. 50).

Castells (1997) raises the same concern, discussing what he terms “cultural feminism” and “essentialist feminism” – the latter of which closely correlates with Nathanson and Young’s view of superiority feminism. According to Castells, cultural feminism is focussed on building space for women within existing culture. It includes ‘feminism of difference’ but in a benign co-existence sense, and may involve separatism, but not to the extent of sexual separatism through lesbianism. “Essentialist feminism goes a step further, and proclaims, simultaneously, women’s essential difference from men, rooted in biology and/or history, and the moral/cultural superiority of womanhood as a way of life” Castells says (pp. 196-197).

Fuss (1989) also discusses essential or superiority feminism, noting that “essentialism can be located in appeals to a pure or original femininity, a female essence, outside the boundaries of the social and thereby untainted (though perhaps repressed) by patriarchal order” (p. 2).

Irigaray (1977) also advocates an essentialist feminism in her early texts (pp. 210-217). In another example, Weatherall (2002) describes, without substantiation, women’s interactional style as “co-operative” while men’s is “competitive” (p. 79).

Merchant (1980) notes another stream of essentialism that links womanhood to history and culture, citing the myth of a matriarchal golden age when women’s values and worshipping of the goddess assured harmony. This is the sub-set of feminism that makes claims that if women were in charge, there would be no war and that if more women were in senior positions, business would be more ethical. Spretnak (cited in Castells, 1997) says “Spiritualism and ecofeminism are also among the most powerful manifestations of
essentialism, bringing together biology and history, nature and culture, in the affirmation of a new age constructed around women’s values and their merger with nature,” (p. 198).

Superiority feminism is evident in popular discourse such as in everyday statements that women are better communicators than men and claims that women are more empathetic, caring and even more ethical than men. For instance, in a major ‘op ed’ opinion column in The Age newspaper under the heading “Women mean good governance, which means good business”, Margot Cairnes (2003) wrote: “Women can often help build more trusting environments because they are naturally gifted in the areas of intuition, emotional intelligence and relationship building”. Elsewhere in the same column she commented of men: “It is certainly true that the widely recognised aspects of good corporate governance – transparency, integrity and accountability – cannot thrive in the boy-dominated sameness of Australian boardrooms (p. 13).

In a half-page editorial column in Sydney’s Daily Telegraph headed “What women want: world domination”, Caroline Regidor (2003a) stated baldly:

If women ruled the world it would be more peaceful because women’s experiences cause them to think differently about the value of human life … if women ruled we would benefit from women’s ability to listen and compromise (p. 30).

It is clear from this statement that Regidor believes women are superior to men in a number of respects and would make superior political and world leaders. But, as common in such populist debate, she fails to cite any empirical evidence to support her generalised claims. In fact, she ignores considerable historical evidence to the contrary – for instance, the ancient exploits of Cleopatra or the more contemporary track record of Margaret Thatcher in taking Britain to war against Argentina in the Falklands and waging industrial war against the unions in England and Wales.

In a twist of logic and irony, Weatherall (2002) says women such as Margaret Thatcher “disassociate from other women and use men as their reference group … to all intents and purposes ‘becoming men’” (p. 127). In other words, when men do wrong, it is because they are men. When women do wrong, it is because they have become men or like men.
International media reporting of terrorism has exposed widespread superiority feminist views. Miranda Devine, analysing the seizing of children at a school in Beslan by Chechen terrorists in 2004 wrote in *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

... one of the most unfathomable aspects of Beslan is that some of the terrorists who took of the Russian school were women. How could any person inflict such torture on innocent children, you wonder, but especially how could a woman whose earthly purpose is to create and nurture life.

We have always thought of women as the gentler sex, the protectors, the nurturers. While men might wage war and commit atrocities against one another, women protect the children, laying down their own lives without question, if necessary. It was innate, we thought. Many a utopian has talked of how gentle and peaceful the world would be if women were in charge (Devine, 2004, p. 15).

Her comments such as “we have always thought of women as the gentler sex”, her claims to women’s propensity to protect children as “innate” and her aside that “men … wage war and commit atrocities” propagate discourse that demonises men and lauds women as innately superior in many aspects of humanity. Furthermore, noting the charging of US Army private Lynndie England with 19 counts of abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, the trial of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko for Rwanda’s 1994 massacre, and suicide bombings by Chechen and Palestinian women, Devine asked: “Are the Lynndies and Paulines and suicide bombers ‘pawns in a man’s game’”? In strikingly similar tone to Weatherall’s comments on Margaret Thatcher, Devine seeks to lay the blame for “a new unleashing of female violence” at the feet of men.

This is not an isolated instance that can be dismissed as one woman’s opinion or simply a popular newspaper journalist’s view. Commenting on the case of Lynndie England and other American military women abusing Iraqi prisoners, Melissa Embser-Herbert, an associate professor of sociology from Hamline University, Minnesota, wrote in *The Washington Post* (reprinted in *The Sydney Morning Herald*):
What motivated the young women seen in these photos to participate in such degrading acts? Were they trying to be accepted as ‘one of the boys’? Was this a way of fitting in? (Embser-Herbert, 2004).

Embser-Herbert’s comments exhibit superiority feminist views in that they imply the women’s behaviour was not natural to them as women, but was caused by pressure on them from men to fit in and be accepted. Furthermore, this statement, like others cited, imputes violence and aggression to men as a generalised attribute.

Some pro-feminist men take up and advance the same superiority notions in popular discourse, a tendency which Seidler (1994) considers is motivated by guilt (p. 110). For instance, Sydney business trainer, Mark Holden claimed during a series of major corporate collapses and business frauds in 2003 that these could have been avoided if more women were at the helm of big companies. Holden said company boards were “usually very ‘blokey’, old school tie, old boys’ networks with few women” and he claimed women possessed “innate” leadership competence and had competitive advantages over men in co-operative and teamwork skills. Holden failed to cite any evidence of this and a leading woman CEO, Film Australia’s Eve Mahlab, rejected his essentialist claims saying: “It’s not a question of having women in the boardroom. It’s a matter of having the best people – and many of the best people are women” – a position that most men and women would support (Robinson, 2003, p. 4).

Nathanson and Young (2001) conclude: “Either directly or indirectly, ideological feminism has resulted in the teaching of contempt for men” (p. 237). Specifically, they researched and reported examples of feminists (and often the media and others following feminist thinking) laughing at men; looking down on men; blaming men; de-humanising men; and demonising men. They concluded: “…the worldview of our society has become increasingly both gynocentric (focused on the needs and problems of women) and misandric (focused on the evils and inadequacies of men)” (p. xiv). Examples of mass media content analysed by Nathanson and Young are discussed in chapter three.

Connell (2000) also points to “the damaging effect of a certain kind of feminist criticism which lumps all males together and relentlessly blames them” (p. 170). Camille Paglia is seen as a traitor by some feminists due to statements such as: “A major failing of most
feminist ideology is its dumb, ungenerous stereotyping of men as tyrants and abusers …” (Paglia, 2003c).

Radical feminists criticise the views of those they term egalitarian feminists who advocate women seeking equality within changed but not necessarily revolutionised societies. However, despite some dating of her treatise, the words of Germaine Greer (1999) sound a warning:

Wars cannot be won, as any Englishman ruefully contrasting his post-war fortunes with those of guilty Nazi Europe is confusedly aware. Women who adopt the attitudes of war in their search for liberation condemn themselves to acting out the last perversion of dehumanised manhood (p. 354).

Much of the criticism of men is mediated and communicated through mass media. Hilton (2000) says: “… men today are … subjected to a relentless stream of what can only be called anti-male propaganda in advertising and the news media”.

Preliminary reading conducted as part of this study suggested that there is direct and at times blatant criticism of men in mass media and that it is not only socially and politically acceptable but popular and even ‘sport’ to ridicule, trivialise or demonise men. For example, top-rating Sydney morning radio host, Wendy Harmer (2003) reported a New Zealand medical study which found men are unprepared for the lack of sexual relations that followed childbirth by their wives. Harmer said on radio: “Men are unprepared after childbirth for the next 18 years.” Her male co-hosts responded “That’s not fair, Wendy.” But Harmer continued to lambast men. Had the reverse occurred and the male radio announcers criticised women on radio, there no doubt would have been an outcry and complaints to broadcasting and regulatory bodies.

2.3 The new focus (or lack of focus) on men and masculinities

It has been only relatively recently that gender discussion began to focus on men and on the related but significantly different subject, masculinities. Initially, this was triggered largely in response to feminism and ‘women’s liberation’. Kidder (2004) in American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopaedia concludes that “men’s studies first emerged
during the late 1960s and 1970s as a response, in part, to the second wave of American feminism”.

In the mid-1970s a small Men’s Liberation movement existed in the United States (Connell, 1995a, p. 24). An intellectual mostly-academic led element of this movement focussed on changing men – often in line with women’s (feminist) prescriptions (Connell, 1995a, p. 220). The National Organisation for Changing Men founded in the 1980s, later renamed the National Organisation for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS), was an example of new ways of thinking about men and exploring new ‘masculinities’. Precepts put forward included men escaping from traditional hegemonic forms of masculinity and adopting new ways of thinking and behaving. Often this was suggested to involve discovering their ‘feminine side’ – ie. becoming more like women. Concurrently, populist manifestations of an emerging men’s movement opposed feminist views and, not surprisingly earned the ire of and dismissal by feminism as a ‘backlash’.


Two broad and more established types of men’s movements emerged in the 1990s – one based on new-age self-help therapy, or what Connell (2000, pp. 16, 53) and others term the ‘mythopoetic’ men’s movement, and the other on right-wing evangelism such as The Promise Keepers in the US. The former, influenced by poet Robert Bly, agreed with feminists in opposing patriarchy and traditional masculinity and “tried to feminise themselves and emphasise their ‘feminine side’”, according to Nathanson and Young (2001, p. 344), while the latter sought to remake themselves spiritually through devotion to family and God. Other splinter groups included ‘wild men’ who tried to recapture what they saw as the primal nature of man by dressing up in war paint and beating drums in the forest (Faludi, 2000, p. 228), and the New Lads who sought to preserve traditional modes of masculinity. Men’s groups were polarised with “right wing anti-feminists at one extreme and leftie anti-patriarchal yuppies at the other”, according to one review (Guilliatt, 2001).

Both of these key movements grew out of popular culture and discourse on men’s issues, coalesced largely by early ‘men in distress’ texts such as Herb Goldberg’s *The Hazards of*
Being Male (1977) which referred to men living their lives “in harness” (Faludi, 2000, p. 14). Major best sellers that particularly shaped popular culture discourse on masculinity and men’s issues during the 1990s included Robert Bly’s Iron John (1990) which was on the New York Times bestseller list for 12 months and Steve Biddulph’s, Manhood (1994) which sold 100,000 copies and saw him interviewed by media worldwide. Other popular culture books in the late 1990s and early 21st century which discussed men’s roles and identities included (titles shown as they are informative):

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus (John Gray, 1992);
Mars and Venus in the bedroom: a guide lasting romance and passion (John Gray, 1995);
Ten Stupid Things Men Do to Mess Up Their Lives (Laura Schlessinger, 1998);
Ordinary Heroes: A Future for Men (Michael Hardiman, 2000);
Understanding the Tin Man: Why So Many Men Avoid Intimacy (William July II, 2001);
If Men Could Talk, This is What They Would Say (Alon Gratch, 2001).

Kidder (2004) identifies four major men’s movements in the US in the 1980s and 1990s: (a) the Promise Keepers and (b) the mythopoetic movement as discussed by Connell and others, plus (c) a pro-feminist movement and (d) a men’s rights movement.

By 1985, Eugene August’s annotated bibliography Men’s Studies contained around 600 entries and this grew to over 1,000 entries by 1995 when it was updated (Kidder, 2004). More recently, Flood (2004) has compiled The Men’s Bibliography: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Writing on Men, Masculinities and Sexualities which provides an extensive list of texts describing the evolution of men’s movements and philosophies on men and masculinities.

The so-called ‘men’s movement’ has had a chequered and somewhat illustrious history in Australia as in the US. A group calling itself The Men’s Confraternity led a march on West Australia’s Parliament House in 1992. The group was described in the media as “a crusade of angry dads with an extreme right wing view that feminism and the Family Court are undermining men” (Guilliatt, 2001). Guilliatt also cites key figures in the Australian men’s
movement including Barry Williams, head of The Lone Fathers Association who he 
describes as “a favourite among journalists looking for a foot-in-mouth quote”; 
Queensland MP Tony Smith who admitted hitting his wife and who was picked up by 
police outside a brothel in 1997; and Pat Heffernan of Parents Without Rights who 
supported Robert Parsons, a Melbourne man who brutally murdered his wife on the steps 
of the Dandenong Family Court in 1997.

Many popular culture men’s initiatives have been tentative at best and, in some cases, 
misguided, misogynist and mostly ineffective in providing or stimulating an informed and 
balanced debate on the changing role and circumstances of men in society. Such activities 
and questionable policy platforms have been quickly seized upon by feminists and 
dismissed as a ‘backlash’ and as the unjustified grumblings of a powerful and privileged 
majority. Faludi (1992) in her best-selling text Backlash: The Undeclared War Against 
Women, said: “The truth is that the last decade has seen a powerful counter-assault on 
women’s rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won 
victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women” based on “a bedrock 
of misogyny” (pp. 12-13). Referring to the 1980s and early 1990s, Faludi said “the 
backlash decade produced one long, painful and unremitting campaign to thwart women’s 
progress” (p. 492).

It is significant that academic research and scholarly investigation of men’s issues has been 
conspicuously lacking other than examination of men through a feminist lens. Hearn 
(1993) says “more recently … there has been a major growth of clearly and explicitly 
focussed and clearly and explicitly critical studies of men” but adds “increasingly, men are 
being scrutinised in ways that attend to feminist scholarship”. However, attention is 
beginning to be focussed on men from a range of perspectives – if not widely within 
gender studies, at least within education, health and social sciences. Some examples of 
events and developments signalling the emergence of serious interest in men’s studies – 
some pro-feminist and some taking different views – include:

The establishment of a post of Nordic co-ordinator for men’s studies in Scandinavia 
(Connell, 2000, p. 4);
In 1998, Chile hosted a conference on masculinities in Latin America (Connell, 2000, p. 4);

A number of universities have established specialists groups and formed alliances such as the University of Western Sydney’s involvement in the Men and Families Research Group;

Charles Sturt University, Bathurst inaugurated Men’s Week in 1999 after many years of holding a Women’s Week. The week celebrated masculinity, while also raising awareness of health and welfare issues confronting men (Moloney, 2000);

An International Association for Studies of Men has begun to link men involved in critical studies of masculinity (Connell, 2000, p. 55; West, 1995, p. 8);


But what is masculinity? Is it synonymous with men and male? How should one proceed to study men and male identity issues?

2.4 Gender issues – questions that pre-empt any discussion of men

Two fundamental issues pre-empt any discussion of men as they go to the heart of what is being discussed and even whether it can be discussed at all. While these issues are not the focus of this study, they need to be noted and addressed to identify the point of departure and the definitions of key terms that are used in this investigation.

Sex and gender – biological or social construct?

The first is whether gender is biologically determined or whether it is socially and culturally constructed – or some combination of both. This question is fundamental to any discussion of gender and gender identities. If as some say, gender is innate, determined by biology, then the nature of men and women is predetermined and relatively fixed and only minor if any change can be socially effected. However, if gender is socially and culturally constructed as argued by many involved in gender and cultural studies, then gender is
fluid, changing from time to time and society to society, and malleable – ie. it is a matter of will and consciousness that can be changed and influenced by discourse.

Most 19th century understandings were that sex (usually expressed as a binary of male and female) and gender were the same thing and that they were biologically determined – ie. innate, determined by genes and hormones. The terms masculine and feminine were used to describe gender traits of men and women respectively and were seen to be primarily influenced by biological factors.

Influential in this view of sex and gender as synonymous and innate was psychologist John Money who drew on embryologists’ research which, as early as the 1920s, identified that foetal development involved a single embryonic promordium or gonad which gave rise to either an ovary or testis, and hormones which triggered the development of male or female genitalia from a single set of structures. In the 1950s, Money extended this concept of separation from a single structure into two distinct genders to psychological development. Anne Fausto-Sterling (1995) describes Money’s influential theory as a “fork in the road” which occurs early in human development and lists Money’s “road signs” which signal male or female as:

1. Chromosomal sex (denoted by the presence of an X or Y chromosome);
2. Gonadal sex (when the X or Y chromosome instructs the foetal gonad to develop into a testis or ovary);
3. Foetal hormonal sex (in which the embryonic testis produces hormones which influences following events);
4. Internal morphologic sex (development of internal organs such as the uterus);
5. External morphologic sex (development of genitalia
6. Brain sex (discussed later in this chapter);
7. Sex of assignment and rearing;
8. Pubertal hormonal sex (when another emission of hormones occurs triggering developments such as hair growth and breast enlargement);
9. Gender identity and role;
10. Procreative sex (pp. 128-129).
On the face of it, Money’s list of 10 gender differences does not rule out exceptions, such as a person having an XXY or XYY chromosomal structure, thus opening the door to possibly more than two genders, although this thinking was not engaged seriously for almost half a century and remains debated today. Nor does it preclude social and cultural influence on gender. But his theory positions sex and gender as fundamentally determined by biological differences.

Summarising essentialist views on gender, Garfinkel (1967) posed eight “rules” on members’ “natural attitudes” towards gender. Kessler and McKenna (1978) summarised these as:

- Female and male are the two and only two genders;
- Gender is stable and enduring, assigned at birth or before;
- Genitalia are a fundamental aspect or designator of gender. Females have a vagina and males have a penis;
- Anyone who does not clearly belong to one of the two genders is abnormal;
- There are no transfers from one gender to another;
- Everyone belongs to one of the two genders. There is no such thing as someone without a gender;
- Two and only two genders are a naturally occurring fact; and
- Membership of one of the two genders is natural and inevitable (pp. 113-114).

In 1975, Wilson was another who claimed that the difference between the sexes was determined by biological differences with little influence from social and cultural factors. He believed this to be true of all human societies and asserted that genetic differences between the sexes are great enough to cause a substantial division of labour (Kaplan & Rogers, 1990, p. 211).

Males and females were seen to act in accordance with ‘sex roles’ scripted by their biologically determined gender. Sex roles thinking held sway for much of the mid-twentieth century and shaped social institutions and practices.
However, sociologists attacked biological determinism or essentialism, as it was termed. Joseph Pleck, a prolific writer on the subject, criticised the sex role identity of men in his 1981 book, *The Myth of Masculinity*, pointing out that biological determinism and functionalist sex role discourse were based largely on assumptions with little empirical evidence of innate biological or psychological differences between the sexes (Connell, 1995a, p. 25).

Certainly some of the early claims of biological determinism, particularly those applied to women, lacked scientific evidence and earned a bad reputation for this school of thought. Views such as those by philosopher Immanuel Kant that women were ethically inferior to men (Hoff-Sommers, 2000, p. 91) and that women were too emotional to hold positions of authority or own property, even subject to hysteria, were indefensible in the face of expanding knowledge and, understandably, caused and continue to cause outrage among women (Kaplan & Rogers, 1990, p. 206).

The unscientific basis of early claims of biological determinism in gender, and the increasing study of gender within the social sciences during the late 20th century, saw a shift to a view of gender as mostly if not totally socially and culturally constructed.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, post-structuralist thinking dominated the social sciences. Post-structuralists stressed the discursive and textual nature of social life – what Weatherall (2002) terms “the discursive turn”. This was accompanied by a shift from essentialist (innate biological) thinking to constructionist approaches for understanding gender (pp. 75-76). Over the past few decades, academic discourse, particularly in the social sciences, has been strongly biased towards a view of gender as socially and culturally constructed (eg. Brod & Kaufman, 1994, p. 3; Bibler, Sears & Trudinger, 1999, pp. 1-16; Connell, 2000, p. 28; Tacey, 1997, p. 47). Paglia (2003b) notes: “… in the last quarter century of mandarin theorising, ‘gender’ has been revised to mean society’s ‘inscription’ on the human mind and body”.

Vance (1995) traced the development of construction theory of sexuality and gender between 1975 and 1990 and comments that it “drew on developments in several disciplines: social interactionism, labelling theory, and deviance in sociology; social history; labour studies, women’s history and Marxist history; and symbolic anthropology,
cross-cultural work on sexuality, and gender studies to name only the most significant streams” (p. 39).

Vance notes a range of different and even conflicting views within gender constructionism and differentiates between constructionist models, radical forms of which argue that there are no essential sexual differences, and what she terms a “cultural influence” model in which sexuality is seen as “the basic material – a kind of universal Play-Doh – on which culture works” (p. 44).

A number of writers have attempted to differentiate between sex and gender including anthropologist Gayle Rubin in her widely quoted essay “The Traffic of Women: the Political Economy of Sex” (1975, reprinted 1984). Rubin (as cited by Butler, 1999) asserts a distinction between sex and gender which assumes the discrete and prior ontological reality of a ‘sex’ which is “done over” in the name of the law and transformed subsequently into ‘gender’ (p. 94). Butler notes that “distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed” (p. 9). However, Butler remains committed to a constructionist view and suggests that “perhaps the construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender” (p. 10). Butler argues that the body cannot be sexed prior to constructed gender since it is precisely gender that provides the conceptual framework for reading the body’s biological determinations. Weigman (1994) supports this view, arguing for “the impossibility of maintaining a separation between sex and gender” (p. 5). So attempts to separate sex and gender lead the argument back in a circle to constructionism.

“That gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction, is an important theme in the modern sociology of gender”, Connell (1995a, p. 35) says. Elsewhere, Connell comments specifically in relation to male gender:

Masculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structure, prior to social interaction. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies in a given social setting (Connell, 2000, p. 12).

Masculinity is “implanted in the male body, it does not grow out of it” (Connell, 1995b, p. 126).
Kimmel and Messner (1995) support a constructionist view, saying: “... our identity as men is developed through a complex process of interaction with the culture in which we learn the gender scripts of our culture ... men make themselves, actively constructing their masculinities within a social and historical context” (p. xx).

Grosz (1994) says in her examination of male and female bodies and sexuality: “There is no ‘natural’ norm; there are only cultural forms of body, which do or do not conform to social norms” (p. 143).

Beale (2001) comments that “the ‘gender revolution’ movement that emerged in Europe and the US in the 1980s went further still, arguing that the entire gender system is an oppressive and divisive piece of social engineering, a human invention that has little to do with biology” (p. 28).

As briefly discussed in chapter one, some sociologists and psychologists suggest a combination of biological factors and social construction constitutes gender. Jungian psychological literature notes that masculinity is, in large part, a result of social conditioning, but also recognises a biologically inherited element. Betcher and Pollack (1993) argue that men’s aggressiveness is, in part, biologically driven, but they add that cultural factors which restrict men’s expression of emotion and lead them to anger makes them far more aggressive than nature destined them to be (pp. 256-257). Goodwin (as cited by Mariani, 1995) in a speech to the American Psychiatric Association on causes of violence posed what he termed a “reasonable” position between the extreme poles of environmental and biological determinism. “Biology versus psychosocial is anachronistic. The question is how do psychosocial forces and biological factors interact with each other,” Goodwin proposed (p. 142).

However, Connell (1995a) strongly disputes what he calls a “common sense compromise” between the ‘nature versus nurture’ poles of opinion – a middle view that both biology and social influence combine to produce gender differences (p. 46). “If biological determinism is wrong, and social determinism is wrong, then it is unlikely that a combination of the two will be right,” he says (p. 52).
Mariani (1995) mounts an even more strident attack on a middle ground position. She labels Goodwin’s view “a rhetorical dodge typical of biobehaviouralists” and says of his claim that psychosocial forces and biological factors interact together to form gender identity “… all of this is so much hot air” (p. 142).

Connell (1995a), drawing on ‘communities of practice’ thinking from anthropology advanced by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, pp. 461-490 and discussed by Weatherall (2002, pp. 123, 135), goes on to argue that gender is “a structure of social practice” which he posits is the everyday conduct of life organised in relation to a reproductive arena. He says this is not the same as posing a biological base to gender – “we are talking about an historical process involving the body, not a fixed set of biological determinants. Gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do (which he calls ‘gender projects’), it is not social practice reduced to the body” (p. 71). Connell elaborates on this concept of gender in a later text in which he says: “… when we speak of masculinity and femininity, we are naming configurations of gender practice” (Connell, 2000, p. 28). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet describe gendered practices as constructing members of a community ‘as’ women or ‘as’ men, and argue that this construction also involves constructing relations between and within each sex. Thus gender identities are accomplished through the activities of communities (Weatherall, 2002, p. 135). Relevant to this study, a feature of the discursive psychology approach to gender is that it incorporates the influence of discourses and local practices on the constitution of gender identities (Weatherall, 2002, p. 145).

Taking his ‘communities of practice’ (CofP) approach to gender further, Connell (2000) says of men and male identities: “Gender for men is not simply received from agencies of socialisation or from discourses, but is very actively made, both individually and collectively, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting. From bodybuilders in the gym to managers in the boardroom to boys in the primary school playground, a whole lot of people are working hard to produce masculinities and have them recognised by other people” (p. 178). In the constructionist view of gender, male-sexed humans ‘do’ masculinity and female-sexed humans ‘do’ femininity as a practice learned from social interaction and discourse.
Connell states further, in opposition to considerable scientific evidence: “The embodiment of gender is from the start a social embodiment” (this author’s emphasis) (p. 59). “From the start” in human development is surely the point of conception and growth of a foetus in the womb and this stage of human development involves no social interaction, yet considerable biological forces are at work. This is not argued to support a biological determinism argument, but an argument that gender is totally a social and cultural construct seems equally difficult to substantiate and untenable.

While social sciences promote a social construct concept of gender, popular discourse has continued to take the view that maleness and masculinity are largely innate. Texts such as Bly’s *Iron John* and Biddulph’s *Manhood* argue that men are “suffering” and address this by seeking to help men re-discover their “true [inner] self” – ie. their biological or innate elements (Tacey (1997, p. 13). Popular texts are noted, but are not examined in detail in this study as most lack empirical or scientific data to support their claims. Furthermore, some promote populist and pop-psychology approaches including initiation ceremonies, drum beating and ‘back to nature’ forest excursions. Kipnis (1991) comments that it is inappropriate for men in contemporary western culture to adopt rituals of primal cultures (p. 164).

However, there is also considerable debate within academia, mainly outside the social sciences, on what are loosely described as ‘nature versus nurture’ concepts of gender. Paglia (2003b) notes that: “The overwhelming majority of today’s gender theorists belong to humanities departments and have made little or no effort to inform themselves about anatomy, physiology, endocrinology or evolutionary biology …” . She controversially goes on to advocate that teachers need to “steer psychology of gender courses back toward scientific and historical rigor”.

While mostly advancing a constructionist view of gender, Weatherall (2002) recognises a biological element as well, describing a constructionist position on gender in the following terms: “Instead of viewing sex as primary and biological while gender is secondary and social, the order is reversed and the boundaries made less distinct. A constructionist view is that social and cultural beliefs are primary and cannot be separated from biological ‘knowledge’” (p. 81).
Psychological, medical and endocrinal studies point out and continue to discover significant differences between men and women. Maushart (2003) cites a US Psychology Today report on recent research and concluded “It’s safe to talk about sex differences again” (p. 38). Indeed, evidence of significant biological and psychological differences between men and women has existed for 60 years or more. This is not noted to return to an argument for essentialism or biological determinism in gender; this researcher’s reading of the literature does not support such an argument. But scientific evidence does challenge social sciences notions that gender is entirely socially and culturally constructed.

Kimura (1992) reports: “It appears that perhaps the most important factor in the differentiation of males and females is the level of exposure to various sex hormones early in life” (p. 26). Kimura’s findings, published in a paper entitled “Sex differences in the brain” in Scientific American (1992; 1999), substantially contradict social constructionist theories advanced by academics in the humanities and social sciences.

Wilber (1996) says biology plays a part in the differences between genders, especially the potent hormone, testosterone, and he notes that certain gender characteristics appear cross-culturally, referring to work by Carol Gilligan (1982) who suggests men tend toward individuality and autonomy, whereas women tend to stress relationships (p. 304).

Hoff Sommers (2000) cites research by Laura Allen, a neuroanatomist at the University of California Los Angeles, which found seven or eight of 10 structures in the human brain measured are different between men and women (p. 89). Research does not suggest that male or female characteristics are superior in any sense; only that they are different and distinct in a majority of cases.

Further more recent studies published in Molecular Brain Research in 2003 report that 54 genes with different levels of activity in the developing brain of male and females have been discovered in mice. A research team at the University of California in Los Angeles led by Professor Eric Vilain believes the study is likely to have applicability to humans. Whereas genetic research since the 1970s has focussed on testosterone and oestrogen as responsible for differences between men and women (testosterone ‘switches on’ the male gene SRY that sits on the male Y chromosome), Vilain’s team of researchers report that other genetic factors are at work well before SRY is hormonally triggered. They found 18
genes were more active in the brains of male mouse embryos and 36 genes were more active in female mouse embryos. “If the same applies to humans, then sexual identity is rooted in every person’s biology and springs from variation in our individual genome,” Vilain (2003) says. This research shows gender differentiation is evident long before social and cultural influences which begin at birth.

In a study of autism, Baron-Cohen (2003a) discovered major psychological differences in the brain structures of men and women. In a summary of his theory, Baron-Cohen (2003b) identified the male brain as more orientated to ‘systemising’ which he defined as “the drive to analyse and explore a system, to extract underlying rules that govern the behaviour of a system. The systemiser figures out how things work …” he says and terms this the type S brain. “Systems can be as varied as a vehicle, a plant, a library catalogue, a musical composition, a cricket bowl or even an army unit. They all operate on inputs and deliver outputs, using ‘if X is true, then Y must follow’ correlational rules,” he explains (p. 4). According to Baron-Cohen, the male brain is less orientated to ‘empathising’ – the “drive to identify another person’s emotions and thoughts and to respond to these with an appropriate emotion” which he terms a type E brain. Baron-Cohen acknowledges that “not all men have the male brain, and not all women have the female brain” and argues that his theory is not a return to stereotyping. He says “I would weep with disappointment if a reader took home from my argument the message that all men have lower empathy and all women have lower systemising skills”. He says, however, “on average, more males than females have a brain of type S, and more females than males have a brain of type E”. Baron-Cohen further clarifies that his theory does not suggest the male brain is more intelligent, or vice versa. He says “both processes give rise to different patterns of intelligence” (p. 6).

Baron-Cohen makes an interesting observation also that “society is less tolerant of a poor empathiser than of a poor systemiser. Someone with empathising difficulties may end up isolated, ostracised, teased or even bullied, and with no simple strategy for how to circumvent their problem. In contrast, someone with systemising difficulties can pick up the telephone and call for help when a system or machine needs fixing” (p. 5). The extreme male (type S) brain, capable of meticulous systemising but no empathising, exhibits the characteristics known as autism, according to Baron-Cohen, drawing on brain theory first developed by German Hans Asperger in 1944. Baron-Cohen says “those with the extreme
male brain … experience a disability, but only when the person is expected to be socially able. Remove this expectation, and the person can flourish”. However, “Systemising gets you almost nowhere in most day-to-day social interaction”, he adds (p. 5). There is no doubt that Baron-Cohen’s research will create debate. But it and other evidence points to substantial biological differences between men and women.

While not claiming that these factors fully account for gender, there are fundamental biological and psychological differences between men and women, according to a wide body of research. In a review of literature on gender differences, Beale (2001) concludes: “Gender differences may be rooted at least partly in our genes, and children seem initially to be hard-wired to impose them on themselves. Feminists who once chanted that men were chauvinist pigs, for example, were later forced to concede weary defeat in trying to deter their own sons from rough play, toy guns and risk-taking (p. 29).

Many contemporary educationalists and psychologists support the “common sense compromise” dismissed by Connell. Maccoby (1999) says that “while gender is largely a product of cultural forces, those forces come into play so early in childhood and are so universal that they must be deeply grounded in our biology”. According to a review by Carpenter (2000), Maccoby found biological influences and social environments jointly influence gender development.

This research is not cited to argue that gender is not socially and culturally constructed. Rather, it informs discussion and suggests that gender characteristics are almost certainly a combination of both innate and constructed elements. Constructionist views of gender advanced almost exclusively within the social sciences fly in the face of extensive genetic, medical, endocrinal and clinical psychology research and the experiences of many educationalists, as well as parents, and need to be revised in the light of such research.

Clearly, a constructionist approach to gender suits feminist argument. If gender is largely or even partly biologically determined, being a man and being a woman – and masculinity and femininity – are largely or at least partly programmed genetically and, therefore, limited in the degree to which they can be changed. But, under a constructionist approach, women can be anything they want to be, and men can be anything they (or women) want them to be. Seidler (1994) points to this convenient and highly contentious “pervasive
social constructionist view” of gender within social theory saying that it “helps foster a form of rationalism that gives the idea that our lives are within our rational control, and that through will and determination alone we can determine our lives” (p. 100). He adds: “it tends to assume that all our feelings and desires, as modes of classification or mental constructions, can somehow be ‘remade’ or ‘remodelled’ as an act of will and determination” (p. 113). Seidler goes further to warn of the danger of social constructionism (and feminism) reinforcing a particular moralism in relation to how men should be (p. 114).

There is support for both biological determinism and social construct theory within feminism. While Second-Wave feminist theory, rooted in sociology and psychology, has mostly advanced the view that gender is socially constructed, Third-Wave feminism has returned, to some extent, to a biological determinism view. Third-Wave feminists such as the ‘Girlie’ movement seek to celebrate the difference of women compared with men, as well as differences between women. From their study of mass media representations of gender Newbold et al. (2002) conclude: “There is a fundamentally essentialist element to post-feminism [Third Wave feminism], that significant biological, ‘natural’ differences exist between genders and transcend ‘social constructionist’ arguments” (p. 251).

Feminist philosophers such as Virginia Held and Sara Ruddick are prominent ‘difference feminists’ (Hoff Sommers, 2000, p. 106), although it should be noted that some ‘difference feminists’ use the position to argue women are superior to men and are, therefore demonstrating what Nathanson and Young (2001) identify as “ideological feminism” or “superiority feminism”.

Irigaray (1996) warns feminists of the contradiction in claiming to be equal to man. She says: “…claiming to be equal to a man is a serious ethical mistake because by so doing woman contributes to the erasure of natural and spiritual reality in an abstract universal that serves only one master: death (p. 27). In other words, if feminists claim equality and ‘sameness’ between the sexes, they lose the opportunity to advocate their own uniqueness and difference. Irigaray’s comments lead into a second key issue which must be considered before attempting to discuss men.
**Men and women – are they generalisable categories?**

A number of thinkers have asked whether there are generalisable categories called ‘women’ and ‘men’ and an identifiable set of qualities or conditions that comprise ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’. While these seem self-evident in popular discourse, these generalisations or ‘universalities’ (terms applied universally to differing constituents of groups and the groups as a whole), are challenged by some and the cause of much debate in academia.

Some feminists criticise Irigaray for her support of ‘difference’ feminism and her attempts to define women and femininity, even though her description is in positive terms. For instance, Moi (1985) says: “… any attempt to formulate a general theory of femininity will be metaphysical. This is Irigaray’s dilemma … she falls for the temptation to produce her own positive theory of femininity. But, as we have seen, to define ‘woman’ is necessarily to essentialise her” (p.139).

Connell (2000) applies the same thinking to discussion of men as a category. He says: “To talk at all about a group called ‘men’ presupposes a distinction from and relation with another group ‘women’. That is to say, it presupposes an account of gender.” He goes on to argue that “we need some way of naming conduct which is orientated to or shaped by that domain (gender)”, noting that masculine conduct or masculine identity can go together with a female body and vice versa (p. 16). Indeed, this may be true. But Connell’s argument becomes circular and self-defeating. If, as he says, we cannot engage in a discussion of men as a category distinctive from women without entering the territory of gender characteristics and behaviour, and that gender is socially constructed and not consistent within categories of men or women, then, under Connell’s rules of debate, we cannot engage in a discussion of men at all.

Further, Connell says that not only is masculinity and his preferred term ‘masculinities’ a gender concept, but that the term ‘man’ is inextricably linked to masculinity/ies. Elsewhere, he rejects biological (innate) elements of gender, arguing that gender is a construct or, as he calls it, “a configuration of gender practice” (p. 29). Thus, Connell seems to be saying that ‘man’ is simply a product of socially constructed behaviours and that there are no common biological elements of men which bind them as a category or by
which they can be identified as a category of a species – an argument that is contrary to a substantial body of physiological, medical and endocrinal evidence.

Irigaray (1996), in her statement supporting ‘difference’ feminism and opposing claims of equality and sameness as man quoted previously, goes on to say that denying discussion of women in specific terms and subsuming them into an “abstract universal” is “suicide” from an identity point of view. She says: “Aside from her own suicide, she thus deprives man of the possibility of defining himself as man, that is a naturally and spiritually sexed person” (p. 27). Irigaray, as many feminists have done, argues for the study of ‘women’ as a category and as physically and spiritually sexed individuals and, as a corollary, supports the study of ‘men’ as a category and as male-sexed individuals, despite acknowledged differences between individuals within those categories.

Grosz (1990b) also points to the paradox that feminism faces if it denies the practice of identifying women. She says “if women cannot be characterised in any general way … if we are not justified in taking women as a category, then what political grounding does feminism have” (p. 341)? Studies of women have been myriad over the past five decades and continue. Argument that allows study of women as a category also can equally be harnessed to support study of men.

Studying men as a category is not to deny differences – even wide differences – between men and forms and expressions of masculinities, as well as similarities between men and women – or, as Connell says, masculine conduct and identity by female bodies and feminine conduct and identity by male bodies.

The debate over gender is certain to continue. A useful exit from this definitional dilemma is provided by Hearn (1993) and Clatterbaugh (1998) who suggest that the object of focus is men. Clatterbaugh says “… talking about men seems to be what we want to do”. He goes on: “talking about masculinities … simply imposes a layer, a very confused layer, between ourselves and the social reality that we want to discuss”. He notes that the terms ‘masculinity’ and ‘masculinities’ “carry a lot of historical baggage” and are “extremely ill-defined” (p. 41). Furthermore, Clatterbaugh notes that writings by women, in contrast to much of the writing by men, talk about men, not masculinities (eg. Brod & Kaufman, 1994; Friedan 1963; Frye 1983; Jaggar 1983; Sargent 1981 and Tong 1989) and argues
“we are more likely to maintain our bearings by … talking about men, male behaviours, attitudes and abilities, on one hand, and images, stereotypes, norms and discourses, on the other” (p. 43).

That is the approach taken in this thesis. This study adopts Clatterbaugh’s approach and focuses on men. In particular, it focuses on representations of men in mass media as a key element of discourses and images, stereotypes and norms, rather than seeking to identify or define masculinity or forms of masculinities. This study, as many others have done, recognises that there are wide differences between men physically, psychologically, sexually, and in terms of socio-economic status, education and other factors, as there are with women. Feminism has, for more than 50 years, focussed study on women and women’s issues. Suggestions by some feminists and profeminists that similar study of men and men’s issues cannot be undertaken are self-contradictory and smack of ideology with their implication of ‘close the gate after we’re in’. This study unapologetically focuses on men as an under-studied group in the field of gender studies and contemporary media content analysis. With relatively rare exceptions, men are identifiable in society and in texts with a high level of accuracy – certainly with sufficient accuracy to meet the criteria for systematic study. Views of gender and sexuality as a variable and wide-ranging scale rather than a simple binary, while suggesting caution and flexibility in viewpoint, do not preclude study of men. Even cross-dressers, transvestites and ‘drag queens’ who exhibit mixed manifestations of femininity and masculinity are identifiable as ‘men’ by their Adam’s Apple and other features such as head size.

Sedgwick (1995) strongly supports Clatterbaugh’s differentiation between discussion of men and masculinities, arguing “it is important to drive a wedge in, early and often and if possible conclusively, between the two topics, masculinity and men whose relation one to the other is so difficult not to presume” (p. 12).

Side-stepping the definitional barriers posed by Connell is important as further serious study of men and men’s issues is overdue and timely in contemporary western societies.
2.5 The changing roles and identities of men

The role of men in developed western societies has changed markedly in the past few decades. From traditional roles of hunters and providers, protectors, breadwinners, father figures, heads of families and leaders – roles which were valued in society, celebrated, and upon which men could base their identities – the roles and identities available to men today have either become no longer unique to men or been substantially diminished. Women can now be providers, protectors (such as serve in the military), breadwinners, leaders and heads of families, while still enjoying their traditional roles as nurturers and homemakers if they so choose.

In the industrial age that spread from Europe and became the primary economic framework of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, men went into salaried work and men’s identity was made in mines and on the factory floor (Connell, 1995a, p. 36). This is confirmed in studies by West (1996) who reported that men who grew up in the 1930s and 1940s described their life and that of their fathers as centred on work. Work remained a dominant paradigm of men’s lives in the corporate world of the 1980s and 1990s and, to a large extent, continues today despite talk of ‘downshifting’ and workplace flexibility. Such discussion has not yet been matched by any substantial social change, as evidenced by Australian Bureau of Statistics figures on average working hours of men.

Seidler (1994) says “men were supposed to be impersonal, career-orientated breadwinners providing support for their wives and families, a shoulder that others could depend on” (p. 116).

Industrial Age men were raised to a “utilitarian” versus “ornamental existence”, Faludi (2000) comments. Work provided “a truth on which a man’s life could be securely founded. Out of that security grew authority – an authority based, as in the root meaning of the word, on having authored something productive”, she says (pp. 85-86). Historian John Morton Blum’s description of the inherent virtue of “husbandmen” further explains this role and source of identity for men during three centuries of industrialisation (Faludi, 2000, p. 21).
As western societies entered the post-industrial age, also called the Information Age, major economic and structural change has occurred which has negatively affected men. Faludi points out that with a ‘new economy’, a new culture emerged in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century (p. 120). It was this period that saw “the betrayal” of modern men which she describes (pp. 21-30). In her 2000 text, she reports that during the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century the major social forces affecting men were “downward social mobility and unemployment”. With this came “shame from the suspicion that the world discredits your claim to manhood, finds it useless, even risible” (p. 144).

Faludi presents case studies including a group of men working in the Long Beach Naval Shipyard who devoted their lives to their work and took great pride in their achievements. She says: “The shipyard represented a particular vintage of American masculinity, monumental in its pooled effort, indefatigable in its industry, and built on a sense of useful productivity … the shipyard’s men grounded their own worth and identity not in the masculine model of the warrior but in that of the builder” (p. 55). However, Faludi documents how the shipyard closed leaving the men without work, the primary source of their worth and identity. That they were no longer ‘breadwinners’ and productive was a “vast unspeakable shame” she says (p. 65).

Many men identified by Faludi and, more recently, in research such as that by West (1996; 1999), face lives symbolised in Richard Matheson’s 1950s novel, \textit{The Incredible Shrinking Man}. The lead character, Scott Carey had a good job, a suburban home, a pleasure boat and a pretty ‘housewife’. But when he passed through a mist of atomic radiation while on a boating vacation, he started to shrink. As he shrunk, the promises and commitments made to him by his employer for security, his wife and others quickly faded. He was fired and ended up living in his cellar hiding in a doll’s house and fighting off giant spiders with a sewing pin. While \textit{The Incredible Shrinking Man} was fiction, the author Matheson was a World War II veteran who came home with a 50 per cent disability after almost losing his feet at the age of 18 marching across Europe with the 87\textsuperscript{th} Acorn Division known as the ‘trench foot division’. He went to work with Douglas Aircraft in California but began to write short stories and novels about his diminished existence. In a 1952 short story, ‘Brother to the Machine’, his male hero ruminated on life working in a futuristic industrial world: “To be a man, he thought. No longer is it a blessing, a pride, a gift” (Faludi, 2000, pp. 30, 78).
The US Bureau of Labour reported in 1996 that the fastest declining jobs around the world were leatherwork, ship building, and jobs in heavy industry – all men’s jobs. In comparison, the fastest growing jobs were data processing, childminding and positions in service industries – jobs mostly filled by women (West, 1999).

A 2002 front page report in *USA Today* cited research by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research in Washington DC which found men’s jobs are more susceptible to economic downturn than women’s jobs. The report commented that in the last six economic downturns, factories have shed jobs, while the services sector has added workers, noting that seven out of 10 workers in factories are men, while six out of 10 workers in the services sector are women (Hagenbaugh, 2002).

This is borne out by unemployment figures which show that men’s rate of unemployment is higher than women in many countries. Castells (1997) reports that the unemployment rate of men in the US in 1994 was 6.2%, slightly higher than women at 6%, while in Canada 10.7% of men were unemployed compared with 9.8% of women, and in the UK the difference in 1993 was quite marked with 12.4% of men unemployed compared with 7.5% of women seeking employment (p. 168).

An Australian example of the perilous economic environment faced by many working class men is the town of Port Kembla south of Sydney, once a leading steel producing centre. At the beginning of the 1980s, Port Kembla employed 22,000 people, mostly men. In 2003, it employed 5,000.

When men are employed, statistics show that many work increasingly long hours which inevitably affects their personal relationships and social involvement. In 2002, 35% of full-time Australian male workers were working 50 hours or more a week (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 120). This has increased from 23% in 1982 – perhaps offering some explanation of why many men are absent from families so much and why they do not do more domestically.

Pocock (2003) identified that the “work/life collision” has high social costs for mothers, fathers and families. The central argument of her 2003 book entitled *The Work/Life*
Collision is that working lives are getting longer and private lives are shrinking – conditions that are particularly pertinent for men given their average working hours and limited access to flexible work arrangements or leave for family or personal reasons such as paternity leave.

Bodies are a key part of identity, according to many gender researchers and writers including de Beauvoir (1949), Greer (1999) and Grosz (1994) who focussed specifically on this aspect of identity in Volatile Bodies. Nathanson and Young (2001) point out in relation to male bodies:

In the remote past, men made distinctive and valuable contributions to the community by virtue of their male bodies (apart from anything else) … their comparative advantages of size, strength and mobility … were important for hunting, pushing iron ploughs, or wielding weapons in battle … in the recent past, beginning with industrialisation, the importance of male bodies has declined steeply (pp. 87-88).

While many of the roles once performed by men because of unique or special attributes of their bodies have become redundant, women retain their unique body roles such as giving birth. Nathanson and Young conclude that “women as a class … retain both their biological identity and any cultural ones they choose”. But, they add, “men as a class … have neither: biological identity is ruled out on the grounds that women can do everything men can do (although men cannot do at least one thing women can do), and cultural identity is being ruled out on the grounds that women should be encouraged to do everything men do” (p. 88).

Another key source of men’s identity related to their bodies is fatherhood and a number of researchers have identified that fatherhood in both its biological and social dimensions is also problematic. An Australian Institute of Family Studies conference in 2000 was told that “boys and young men now live in complex cultural contexts where experiences of what it is to be a male and a father are rich and diverse, but also confusing and contradictory – even the definition of ‘father’ is currently contested” (Sullivan, Graig & Howard, 2000).
Edgar (1997) notes that men’s biological repertoire in terms of reproduction is limited to insemination, whereas women’s “more complex range of capacities includes ovulation/menstruation, gestation (the growth of a child inside the womb) and lactation (breastfeeding)” (p. 11). In contemporary societies, men’s insemination role in fathering is being reduced to a sterile laboratory procedure of artificial insemination by sperm from anonymous donors in an increasing number of cases. Blakenhorn (1996) estimates that artificial insemination by anonymous donors accounts for around 30,000 births a year in the US. Furthermore, recent medical experiments have reported that male sperm can now be grown artificially in a laboratory. If such technology continues to develop, men’s biological role in fathering could become redundant.

As well as suffering a loss of identity as fathers because of artificial insemination and laboratory ‘sperm banks’, men have become objectified and marginalised as ‘spunks’ and sperm donors by some independent women who want to have children without attachment to a man. For instance, high profile woman CEO, Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, said of her one-time husband in an interview: “I didn’t particularly want a husband. All I really needed was some sympathetic sperm. Gordon obliged and Justine was born in 1969” (Langley, 2003). Roddick’s comments are pertinent as she is widely seen as an exemplar and role model for women and her comments were widely reported in major mass media.

Separation from their children as a result of divorce is increasingly common for men with rising divorce rates, and has had major impact on men. Research by Hawthorne (2002) among non-resident fathers involved in Family Court of Australia cases found that 56.5% wanted more time with their children and that most were dissatisfied with their level of input into decisions concerning their separated children. He found 56% had little or no say in decisions regarding their child and, specifically, many complained about lack of input into how their child support payments were spent.

Family Court of Australia statistics show that in 2002-2003 child custody was given to mothers in 69% of contested custody cases that went to trial, compared with 22% of custody awards to fathers. Uncontested custody arrangements under Consent Orders and settlements prior to Family Court trial saw children remain resident with mothers in 78% and 76% of cases respectively, compared with just 9% and 13% of custody orders to
fathers. While custody to fathers has increased in the past decade, analysis of Family Court statistics shows custody is overwhelmingly granted in favour of mothers, even in cases where fathers go to court to seek custody of their children (Family Court of Australia, 2003).

In the UK, the Blair Government released a Green Paper in 2004 outlining key proposed changes to post-separation child custody and father access, noting that “with nine out of 10 parents with care being mothers, [post-separation parenting] is seriously gendered” (Burgess, 2004).

Hawthorne (2000) says a “deficit paradigm of fathering” is promulgated in academic and popular discourse and argues that this deficit perspective underlies many studies of fathers, citing Hawkins and Dollahite (1997), Holland (1998), and McKenry, Price, Fine and Serovich (1992). He supports studies by Baker and McMurray (1998) who say non-resident fathers experience a system that they see as against them because so much of what is written about them is negative and implies that they are uncaring of children.

Men’s concern with child custody laws and arrangements are surfacing in popular discourse as well as academic research. An historian from La Trobe University, John Hirst (2004), wrote a column in a national newspaper on the experience of Steve (a pseudonym) after his marriage broke up. Hirst reported:

Without notice, his wife had left him and taken their two boys. She and the boys could not be found. Steve missed the boys terribly and was desperate to know that they were safe and to see them again. It seems it is not an offence in this country for a wife to secrete her children from their father – or at least not one that any authority takes seriously. In this case, the Commonwealth Government assisted the wife by paying her social security benefits and declining to tell Steve where she was. The wife proved elusive. She changed addresses and, when tracked down, refused to open the door to receive an order requiring her to attend court. Legal argument then ensued … By then six months had passed since she had left. Though she was evading the court, the Commonwealth continued to pay her benefits.

These figures may not add up to 100% because of custody awards to non-parents and joint custody awards.
After reporting protracted hostile negotiations, Hirst continued:

I went with Steve to collect his children for his first access visit, of which his wife had been given notice. No one was at home. Next day Steve learned from his lawyer that his wife had entered the legal arena with a claim that he was violent towards her and a danger to their children. Steve could contest these claims in court, but that would take time. Or, he could have very limited access immediately under supervision and accept the demands that his wife through her lawyer imposed on him. These were that he be psychiatrically assessed, that he take a course in anger management and that he be regularly tested for drug use. He still had not seen his boys. He would submit to anything to see them.

Hirst reported that, subsequently, the psychiatrist found Steve mentally sound and stable and said he should see his children. The anger counsellor reported positively. The drug tests were clean. After monitoring Steve with his children, the psychiatrist concluded he was a good father and no evidence of violence was found. Hirst concluded:

So the court finally awarded him the standard access – every other weekend. Nothing was said to the wife about her lies. Steve was simply meant to be pleased at getting this outcome which he had been awarded six months before and which his wife’s accusations had taken from him. No citizen should have this power over another (p. 13)

Another example of men’s frustrations and concerns with fatherhood and what they see as a loss of status within families was published in the “First Person” column of *The Times* in London. The article, by an anonymous man, headed “Only losers get married” was written slightly tongue in cheek, but with serious undertones and telling points including:

Marriage brings a man no more rights over the reproductive process than he had before. Zero. If a woman gets pregnant, she can abort the child as she wishes. The father-to-be doesn’t have a right to be consulted, or even informed. At least two UK courts cases have confirmed this … But what if a woman lies that she is on the pill and gets pregnant? Presumably the man isn’t expected to support that child, is he? Strangely enough, he is. The law does not recognise that mothers … can act fraudulently in conceiving this way; instead, it taxes the man. Even when it comes to children wanted by both partners, the law sides heavily with the wife, the ex-wife, the mother. Women win more than 90 per cent of custody cases. Men, for sure, are usually awarded access, but that means little – 50 per cent of the 50,000 contact orders made each year
are broken – nearly always at the expense of the father. How can I pay lip service to a laughable institution such as modern marriage, an institution so obviously devalued, trashed and unbalanced, from the male point of view? (“Only losers”, 2004, p. 6)

In the UK, a number of groups including Fathers 4 Justice have staged public protests to draw attention to the plight of separated fathers. For instance, Fathers 4 Justice member, David Chick climbed The London Eye on September 11, 2004 wearing a Spiderman mask (The Sunday Times, London, September 12, 2004, p. 2) and a few days later another member of the same organisation, Jason Hatch, climbed on to the front balcony of Buckingham Palace wearing a Batman outfit. Hatch defied security to attach a large banner to the palace stating “Super dads of fathers 4 justice – fighting for your right to see your kids” (The Times, London, September 14, 2004, p. 3).

Another important area where the identities of males is being affected and potentially shaped for life is in education, according to a number of researchers and writers. West (1995) says there are gross inequities in the education of boys in Australia. He writes: “Since the time of the Whitlam Government (1972-75), there has been discussion about programs to encourage girls. Much of the existing literature sees girls as victims, boys as villains”.

West is not alone in his concerns and in citing a bias towards girls in education and a lack of focus on the needs of boys. In the US, Hoff Sommers (2000) claimed major failings and inaccuracies in research led to high profile feminist Carol Gilligan announcing in 1990 that American girls were in crisis, triggering a major shift in education focus to girls. Gilligan’s reported findings prompted the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to commission a poll among girls. In 1991 the AAUW announced the results, claiming that most girls emerged from adolescent with a poor self-image. The AAUW then commissioned the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women to conduct a second study which was released in 1992 in a report entitled “How Schools Shortchange Girls”. The report claimed there was a direct causal relationship between girls’ [alleged] second-class status in the nation’s schools and deficiencies in their level of self-esteem and called for major change in the American education system (Hoff Sommers, 2000, pp. 21-22).
The relevance of this research to men becomes apparent in what followed. Hoff Sommers reports: “In 1994, the allegedly low state of America’s girls moved the US Congress to pass the Gender Equity in Education Act which categorised girls as an ‘under-served population’” and led to a major focus of resources and attention in education to the needs of girls. Boys were seen “both as the unfairly privileged gender and as obstacles on the path to gender justice for girls” (p. 23). This research shaped the landscape of education for the next decade in the US and influenced other countries including the UK and Australia.

However, Hoff Sommers claims there is evidence that the basis of Gilligan’s claims and the US Government’s approach to education was wrong. She comments: “The description of America’s teenage girls as silenced, tortured, voiceless, and otherwise personally diminished is indeed dismaying. But there is surprisingly little evidence to support it.” She cites psychiatrists and paediatricians who reported research that found 80% of adolescents of both sexes were normal and well adjusted and a University of Michigan and a US Department of Health and Human Services survey of 3,000 high school seniors around the same time which found 86% of girls and 88% of boys (highly consistent) said that they were ‘pretty happy’ or ‘very happy’ with school overall (p. 19). Further, she cites extensive research which found girls outperforming boys, and boys in fact suffering in the education system, evidenced by higher drop-out rates, lower academic performance and fewer progressing to university. Other research findings cited by Hoff Sommers contradicting those of Gilligan included:

- Girls read more books;
- Girls outperform males on tests of artistic and musical ability;
- More girls than boys study abroad;
- More girls than boys join the Peace Corps;
- More girls are enrolled in university. The US Department of Education reported that in 1996 there were 8.4 million women enrolled in college (university), but only 6.7 million men. Furthermore, the US Department of Education estimates that, by 2007, there will be 9.2 million women in tertiary education in the US compared with 6.9 million men (pp. 25).

In relation to boys, Hoff Sommers reported:
Boys were three times as likely as girls to be enrolled in special education programs; 
Boys were four times as likely as girls to be diagnosed with attention deficit or 
hyperactivity disorders; 
More boys than girls are involved in crime, alcohol and drugs; and 
More boys than girls suicided (pp. 25).

Hoff Sommers concludes: “… talk of girls drowning and disappearing in a society that 
favours boys … of ‘gender apartheid’ … are outrageously and recklessly false” (p. 93). She adds elsewhere in the same text: “Gilligan’s central thesis – that boys are being 
imprisoned by their conventional masculinity – is not a scientific hypothesis. It is an 
extravagant piece of speculative psychology” (p. 133).

A number of education academics including Lingard (2003) reject Hoff Sommers’ views. Lingard says it is a matter of “which boys” and “which girls” are being talked about. The central tenet of Lingard’s rejection of Hoff Sommers’ views appears to be based on 
opposition to essentialising or generalising, and clearly there are differences between 
various schools and the boys and girls who attend them based on economics, class, 
ethnicity, and so on. But, interestingly, such differentiations were not made in arguments 
for increased attention to girls’ needs in education. Gilligan’s 1990 research, that by 
Wellesley College in 1992, and similar education studies in Australia did not identify 
‘which girls’ were disadvantaged, but instead called for and gained affirmative action 
policies in favour of girls generally. Lingard describes calls for more attention to the needs 
of boys as “a divisive political issue for policy makers and teachers” and rejects such 
recommendations in a Federal Government Standing Committee on Education and 
Training report “Boys – Getting it Right” which he said should be called “Boys – Getting it 
Wrong”.

However, in the US a number of research studies contradict Gilligan’s claims and indicate 
that boys are not enjoying the advantages that have been alleged. In 1995, prompted by 
criticisms from scholars who questioned Gilligan’s and the Wellesley College Center for 
Research on Women findings, the AAUW commissioned a further study of gender and 
academic achievement. The study concluded that “the earlier reports of a tragic
demoralisation and short-changing of America’s schoolgirls have been greatly exaggerated”. The research found the differences between boys and girls were “small to moderate” (Lee, Chen & Smerdon, 1996, p. 1) and concluded “the public discourse around issues of gender in school needs some change … inequity can (and does) work in both directions” (Lee et al., 1996, p. 34).

Hoff Sommers also cites research by Hedges and Nowell (1995) which found girls’ deficits in math were small but not insignificant, but went on to note of boys “the large sex differences in writing … are alarming. The data imply that males are, on average, at a rather profound disadvantage in the performance of this basic skill”. Hedges and Nowell (as cited in Hoff Sommers, 2003) warned: “The generally larger number of males who perform near the bottom of the distribution in reading, comprehension and writing also have policy implications” (p. 33).

In Australia, Teese and Polesel (2003) report that, on average, 27-30% of boys in the western and south-western suburbs of Melbourne do not finish secondary school and the drop-out rate rises to 40% on the Mornington Peninsula south of Melbourne and to 46% in north-west Melbourne. By comparison, the drop-out rate for girls peaked at 22.4%.

As well as indicating that boys are at a disadvantage in school, some research also indicates that boys may be actively discriminated against in school systems. A Macquarie University education publication reported in 2003:

In Australian primary schools teachers typically nominate a boy as the most behaviourally troublesome student in the class and of the four students per class who are, on average, regarded as troublesome, three are typically boys. Our recent research on teacher attention to boys and girls in primary classrooms paints a grim picture of life in the classroom for many boys … Boys typically experience a very negative classroom environment … boys, on average, are told that their classroom behaviour is inappropriate 44 times per week (compared with girls 18 times). Praise for appropriate classroom behaviour is typically experienced about 12 times per week by both boys and girls … Many boys could be excused for the negative attitudes they hold about school and hence their poor reading levels. We are also left to wonder as to the effect that this barrage of disapproval might have on boys’ self-esteem (Wheldall, 2003).
West (1995) reports cases of prejudice against boys in school. He cites an incident in which a woman teacher reported difficulties with boys in her class. When the principal of the school went to talk to her, he found an “All men are bastards” diary prominently displayed on her desk and numerous newspaper clippings around the walls documenting “the evil some men had done”.

Marsden (2002a) says of boys: “… theirs is an uneasy world. For 30 years now they’ve been getting the message that men are stupid, men are irresponsible, men can’t handle commitments, men are at best bastards and at worst rapists”.

Hoff Sommers concludes “more and more schoolboys inhabit a milieu of disapproval … boys live under a cloud of censure, in a permanent state of culpability … boys feel continually attacked for who they are. We have created a sense in schools that masculinity is something bad” (p. 57).

Even some feminists have spoken out on negative representations of males which start with boys in the school system. Doris Lessing, interviewed by London’s Guardian newspaper, was reported saying:

I find myself increasingly shocked at the unthinking and automatic rubbishing of men which is now so part of our culture that it is hardly even noticed … I was in a class of 9-10 year-olds, girls and boys, and this young woman was telling these kids that the reason for wars was the innately violent nature of men … you could see the little boys sat there crumpled, apologising for their existence, thinking this was going to be the pattern of their lives (The Guardian, August 14, 2001).

A range of statistics and research findings point to significant problems faced by boys and men in contemporary societies.

Men have a life expectancy five to seven years shorter than women in most western societies. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) reports that, as at 2002, the life expectancy of women is 82.4 years compared with 77 years for men (p. 36).
Men’s suicide rate is four to five times higher than equivalent age women, and up to eight times higher in some age groups (Woods, 2001). The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that, in 1998, 2,150 males died from suicide compared with 533 females. To put that in perspective, in the same year, 1,731 people died in car accidents – 419 less than the number of men and boys who suicided (Thrower, 2000, p. 53). Australia, alarmingly, has one of the highest male suicide rates in the western world. Costello (2000) notes that focus on a ‘youth suicide’ problem is misdirected, pointing out that the suicide rate of men aged 20-39 has increased by 93% since the 1970s and by 18.5% in just two years between 1998 and 2000. “Australia does not have a ‘youth suicide’ problem. Rather, it’s ‘male generational suicide’”, “Costello says. Female suicide rates are low and stable in all age groups.

Men die from injury at more than twice the rate of women – 57 per 100,000 per year compared with 21 per 100,000 per year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 80).

Overall, men die at a greater rate in all age groups. Among young Australians, there are nearly three male deaths to every one female death, according to Australian Bureau Statistics 1999 figures. Some pro-feminist researchers such as Connell (2000) argue that such statistics prove little if anything. He argues: “Some pop psychologists work up statistics of men’s troubles (such as earlier death and higher rates of injury) into claims that men, not women, are the truly disadvantaged sex (eg. Farrell, 1993)” (p. 149). The purpose here is not to claim, as Connell imputes to Farrell, that women are not disadvantaged, but simply to show that men face issues which, by any rational reading, indicate problems that need to be addressed.

Boys face learning problems at school and are widely identified as behind girls in key learning areas. “The effects of educational under-achievement for the students themselves and for society generally are too profound to be ignored,” the 2002 Australian Federal Government report “Boys: Getting it Right” concluded. The report found boys trailed 19% behind girls in final year examination results (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). While some educationalists reject this report, a Program for International Student Assessment
(PISA) study (2001) carried out by the OECD in 32 countries also noted that boys’ lagged behind girls in every country studied. West (2002a) says: “The underachievement of young men is a significant challenge for education policy that will need particular attention if the gender gap is to be closed”.

Boys are much more likely to be suspended or excluded from school (West, 2002a). “Boys: Getting it Right” reported that boys comprise 80,000 of the estimated 100,000 suspensions and expulsions from schools each year (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002).

Girls are 11% more likely to complete school than boys (West, 2002a). Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) figures show 80.7% of girls continue to Year 12 compared with 69.8% of boys. Education academics at a University of Western Sydney education conference in Sydney in 2003 argued that this trend was not a sign of girls excelling and boys not being adequately catered for by the education system. Feminist-orientated arguments suggested that boys leave school because they have jobs and that girls stay at school because “the labour market is hostile to girls”. While it is true that during the recessions of 1981-1983 and 1989-92 more female jobs were lost in the teenage and youth labour market segments, overall statistics on employment show under-educated boys worse off than girls. Of boys who do not complete Year 12, 46% become unemployed shortly after, compared with just 15% of girls who become unemployed. Educationalists argue that a relatively high number of girls leave the workforce in their twenties (50% the UWS conference was told), a statistic which was interpreted by feminist educators as evidence of continuing discrimination against women (University of Western Sydney, 2003). But this is a deduction not supported by data – in fact, it is contradicted by data. The Australian Bureau of Statistics census (2003) reported that, in 2001, 70% of women aged 25-34 years were employed in the paid workforce, up from 61% in 1986. Also, the number of women not in the labour force can be at least partly explained by the fact that many choose not to work or to work part-time, as research cited in chapter five confirms.

More girls than boys also continue to study beyond Year 12. In Australia, the number of young women in the age group 15-24 studying has increased from 36% to 56%
between 1986 and 2001, and women comprise 55% of all higher education students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, pp. 41, 84).

More women are also going to and graduating from university in Australia and most western countries. In the US, Hoff-Somers (2000) reported 45% of full-time university enrolments were male, while 55% were female. A 2003 Organisation of Economic Development (OECD) report showed that, in the 25-34 years age group, almost 40% of Australian women have university degrees compared with 30% of men. The OECD reported that this trend was common across many western societies except in the UK where the rate was almost even. (See Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>1995</th>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEW ZEALAND</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<td>Women</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Women</td>
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<td>35%</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Table 1. Percentage of men and women attaining tertiary education.**

Worldwide it is estimated that 98% of the occupants of prison cells are men (Costello, 2000) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) reports that 11 times more young men aged 20-24 are imprisoned than young women of the same ages (p. 20).

Non-resident fathers, estimated by Clare (2000) at between one in six and one is seven of all fathers, are forced by Family Courts to “support their children and former wives at levels that leave them living in poverty and are victims of a system which neither acknowledges their deep sense of loss after separation nor legitimises their grief” according to Hawthorne (2000), leaving them with “a pervasive sense of loss” (Stewart, Schwebel & Fine, 1986, pp. 55-65).
Citing of problems experienced by men and boys should not be viewed as a “competing victims syndrome” as Cox (1995) attempts to do dismissively. It should be possible to support feminist views such as those of Summers (2003) which hold that women face many inequities and still have a long way to go to gain equality, while at the same time recognising that men face inequities and unfairness which should be studied and addressed. For those who argue that the word ‘some’ should used in discussing men in this context to avoid universalising which is seen to be inherently inaccurate, there are two responses. In relation to specific issues, it is usually more accurate to say some men are affected, or that men face some inequities and unfairness. However, this research shows that, both in relation to many specific issues and in a wider social context, men collectively as a category, and not only some individual men, are implicitly and explicitly disaffected.

The rise of misandry

The position of men and boys in modern and post-modern societies such as Australia is being exacerbated by a trend which is the focus of this study. Not only are the traditional foundations of men’s identities being eroded or taken away by economic, social and technological change, but the vacuum left is being filled with highly negative discourse on men’s nature, roles and identities. In their study, Nathanson and Young (2001) concluded: “The traditional universe on which men relied for self-esteem and self-confidence is crumbling. A suitable replacement has not yet emerged. And almost any attempt to create one is quickly denounced” (p. 295).

Researching in North America, Nathanson and Young found misandry (hatred or vilification of men) widespread in popular culture – specifically in TV shows, movies, TV commercials and journalism. They noted that prior to release of their book, Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture, few people, including those in academia, knew the word ‘misandry’, while the term for hatred and vilification of women, ‘misogyny’ is widely known and used. This may be, as some feminists claim, simply because misogyny is widespread and misandry is not. Or it may be, as evidence suggests, that hatred and vilification of men has simply been unrecognised – that it is a new “problem with no name”.

Nathanson and Young note: “It is now unthinkable for people, especially public figures, to ridicule or attack women. (Those who do are quickly punished in one way or another.) But
it is considered perfectly respectable for women to ridicule or attack men” (p. 221). Nathanson and Young’s media analysis will be further discussed in chapter three.

Hoff-Sommers (2000) refers to “the tiresome misandry that infects so many gender theorists who never stop blaming the ‘male culture’ for all social and psychological ills” (p. 134).

Macdonald, McDermott and Di Campli (2000) identify and warn of the “pathologising” of men. They cite a conference in Sydney in 2000 entitled “Men and Relationships” at which “50% of the papers were about – not building men’s relationships as fathers, lovers, citizens – but men and violence”.

Research reported by Woods (1999) and West (1996; 2002b) shows that men are widely criticised and presented negatively at all levels in contemporary Australian society. Woods says “when the word ‘men’ appears in the media, it is often in relation to some negative attribute – men as rapists, sexual harassers and abusers, practitioners of violence, unfeeling (or at least out of touch with feelings) and concerned only with power and control”.

West (1996; 2002b) reported interviews conducted with men of various ages on what it has been like to be a man from 1900 to today. In relation to the way it was West reported: “We found that men were looked up to. To be a man was to have a job and a family. The men … were breadwinners, heads of families.” In his review of the way it is today, West cited a survey in The Age newspaper which found “males feel they aren’t respected as much as they were 30 or 40 years ago” and from his interviews concluded: “Men are the butt of jokes on TV and radio. White males, perhaps heterosexual males, feel they are the only ones who can be ridiculed with impunity”.

A study of men conducted by the Men’s Health Information and Resource Centre in conjunction with Older Men: New Ideas, published by the NSW Committee for Ageing, reported on one retired participant who sought to volunteer for community service to assist with a support group for young boys. He reported:

… I rung up the person on the phone and I spoke to a lady. She was a coordinator of the group so you could imagine she was running young boys, ten or eleven, maybe twelve. And she
asked me was I over 49. I said yes. So she said, ‘we don’t take any members over 49 years of age’. I said why and she said ‘well there is the um, things that old men do to young boys’ (Macdonald, Brown & Buchanan, 2001, p. 17).

Claims that negative comments on men are simply reporting or stating the facts do not stand up to scrutiny. Some discourse is simply wrong, analysis shows. An example is a report and a number of subsequent statements by Hanson (1995; 1999) who was director of the Women’s Educational Equity Act Publishing Centre which was established following US research showing inequities to girls in schools and alleged advantages to boys. This report and related statements are cited as the report was commissioned by and presented to the US Congress and was widely reported in mass media, thus it became a significant artefact of discourse. Hanson made the following claims:

- Every year nearly four million women are beaten to death;
- Violence is the leading cause of death among women;
- The leading cause of injury among women is being beaten by a man at home; and
- There was a 59% increase in rapes between 1990 and 1991.

Hoff Sommers (2000) claims there are glaring inaccuracies in Hanson’s claims, arguing:

- The number of female deaths annually in the US from all causes is around one million – so Hanson’s claim of four million female deaths from beatings by men is grossly inaccurate;
- The leading cause of death among women in the US is heart disease (c. 370,000), followed by cancer (c. 250,000). Homicides of women in the US that year were 3,600 – far few than suicide (c. 6,000) – so the claim that violence is the leading cause of death among women is also untrue;
- Between 1990 and 1991 rapes in the US increased by 4%, not 59% as claimed by Hanson – and the number has fallen since (p. 49).

Other examples of unsupported statements about men are cited later in this study.
There are some signs that things are changing. A major re-focussing on boys’ education has taken place in the UK and the US is reviewing its ‘girl focus’ in education, Hoff-Sommers reports. In Australia, the Federal Government launched the Lighthouse Project in 2002, a program to help selected schools inspire boys. Also, in 2004 the Australian Federal Government commenced a review of child custody laws and arrangements to give divorced men more access to their children.

Against this background of feminism and changing economic, industrial, technological and social conditions, there has been a growth in men’s studies, starting from the 1980s (Brod, 1987; Kimmel, 1987; Newbold et al., 2002, p. 287) and an emerging Men’s Movement. The latter has had a chequered history, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Some men’s groups have been ill-directed into regressive practices and therapies focussed on machismo. Others have been anti-feminist and represented men as ‘victims’. However, recently several countries have seen the emergence of serious discussion of men and men’s issues.

Seidler (1994) suggests that “it might be that various studies will bring into question assumptions that both socialist and radical feminist theory make about men. I think this is something that should be welcomed” (p. 112).

Germaine Greer (1999) observed in the conclusion of her widely acclaimed text, *The Female Eunuch*: “The first significant discovery we shall make as we racket along our female road to freedom is that men are not free” (p. 371).
MASS MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER
– WHAT PREVIOUS STUDIES HAVE FOUND

Before undertaking content analysis of mass media to identify representations of men and male identities in news, current affairs and other pseudo-factual media genre such as talk shows and lifestyle media, a review of existing research on mass media representations in relation to gender, and men particularly, was undertaken for two reasons. Firstly, reviewing previous media studies is part of literature research to gain a sound understanding of the issues identified in the field and theories thus far developed. Secondly, reviewing the findings of previous media content analyses, particularly recent studies in relation to men and male issues, is part of ‘immersion in the message pool’ advocated for designing a media content analysis as outlined under “Research methodology”.

This review is not exhaustive, but it summarises a number of noteworthy gender-related media studies and those examining representations of men in particular.

4.1 Objectification and trivialisation of women – the feminist perspective

As has been outlined in chapter two, feminists focussed on mass media as one of the key battlegrounds of their struggle for independence, equality, rights and respect. A large body of research exists on the portrayal and treatment of women in mass media. This study cites only a few examples as the focus here is men and men’s issues. But it is useful to note feminist and women’s concerns with mass media as they demonstrate that concern with mass media representations of gender and gender identities is a long-standing and ongoing one, and the corollary of bias against women has often been alleged bias in favour of men. This oppositional claim arising out of feminist research is a point of debate in this study and a site of contention.

Feminist studies of mass media content argue that media representations of gender are ‘misrepresentations’ through both what they say and what they don’t say – ie. what they...
omitted. Studies have examined movies, television programs, advertising, magazines and newspapers.

In the journal *Women and Film* launched in the early 1970s, Smith (1972) declared: “Women, in any fully human form, have almost completely been left out of film … The role of a woman in a film almost always revolves around her physical attraction and the mating games she plays with the male characters” (p. 13).

Rosen (1973) commented of movies: “… the cinema woman is a Popcorn Venus, a delectable but insubstantial hybrid of cultural distortions” (p. 10).

A decade later, Kaplan (1983) wrote: “In Hollywood films … women are ultimately refused a voice, a discourse, and their desire is subjected to male desire. They live out silently, frustrated lives, or, if they resist their placing, sacrifice their lives for their daring” (pp. 7-8).

In the preface to a 1990s book of film reviews, Maio (1991) referred to movie portrayals of women as “often reprehensible” (p. vii). She stated further: “Women are not only given less screen time, when we’re up there on the screen we are likely to be portrayed as powerless and ineffectual … where are the triumphant women heroes to match the winner roles men play constantly” (p. 2).

Gunter (1995) reported content analysis of advertising on television in the 1970s which found strong evidence of stereotyping. For instance, of all advertisements featuring women, three-quarters were for kitchen and bathroom products.

An analysis by Coltrane and Messineo (2000) of almost 1,700 TV commercials broadcast between 1992 and 1994 found that characters in the ads “enjoy more prominence and exercise more authority if they are white, or men”.

By the mid-1990s, a study of 500 prime-time TV commercials in the UK by Cumerbatch (as cited in Strinati, 1995, p. 186) found that advertisers had become wary of showing women doing housework and, for the first time, it was found that men were shown cooking...
more often than women. But these, Cumberbatch said, were special occasions in contrast with the more routine cookery duties of women which had traditionally been shown.

Gunter (1995) provides a summary of findings of various media studies of representations of gender in television programs such as drama and ‘sit coms’. Gunter reports that media content studies in the 1970s consistently found that marriage, parenthood and domesticity were shown on television to be more important for women than men (pp. 13-14). Citing Gunter, Gauntlett (2002) adds: “… men were more likely to be assertive (or aggressive), whilst women were more likely to be passive” (p. 43).

Stirling (1987), examining the treatment of women and men in Australian newspapers, explored a range of expressions and linguistic techniques including “metaphor, metonymy, punning, passivisation and syntactic parallelism” and concluded that these served either to exclude women or to define them narrowly and negatively (pp. 109-128).

Hawes and Thomas (1995) compared language bias against women in British and Malaysian newspapers and reported that sexist language in Malaysian press was less explicit than in British press, but even in Malaysian media there was a bias towards males as a topic of serious news stories (pp. 1-18).

Feminist studies of mass media were particularly critical of portrayal of women as sexual objects such as ‘page three girls’ in popular newspapers and ‘girlie’ magazines, as well as in movies and in advertising.

Even where feminist studies found no evidence of overt bias against or objectification of women in mass media, they allege that mass media reinforce male supremacy and subjugate women. Weatherall (1996) examined the popular British soap opera Coronation Street. She concluded: “I found that scripts of … Coronation Street provided virtually no evidence of pervasive bias against women in language. Nevertheless, in particular scenes language was used in a way that assumed women’s secondary status in society (p. 77).

O’Donnell (1999) conducted an extensive study of European soap operas on television and, even though he found that women were portrayed frequently and often in primary roles in ‘soaps’, he concluded:
… the matriarchal figures of so many soaps may be an expression of the structural weakness of women in contemporary European societies rather than of their personal strength. They are allowed to be strong when their strength has been depoliticised and others are struggling as they struggled before. The disappearance of men is irrelevant since the structures which gave them power as individuals remain in place. If soaps are a women’s genre, their initial message may be flattering, but their ultimate message would appear to be survival in a battle where the other side’s troops may disappear or retire but whose generals and heavy artillery remain primed for action off-screen (p. 224).

O’Donnell’s explicit reference to “the other side’s troops” is an indication of a somewhat hostile and opposed position to men, and her military metaphors of “troops” and “generals” and “heavy artillery” are suggestive of a gender war which is part of some feminist views, despite protestations to the contrary. Also, her conclusion that leading parts are given to women, but that is only because men are standing in the wings ready to take over if or when they choose is a subjective deduction beyond the data.

Some feminists and women writers claim that mass media continue to misrepresent women. For instance, Regidor (2003b) writing in *The Daily Telegraph* on popular culture, particularly TV shows, stated: “Usually the camera, represents the male gaze, hence female figures are the subject of voyeurism in cinema history – think ‘Lolita’.” However, in commenting on the popular TV series *Idol*, Regidor did acknowledge that “when the camera pervs on Millsy (a male contestant), the gaze is female” (p. 24).

Macdonald (1995) cites major changes in mass media representations of women from the late 1980s through the 1990s. She says: “Believing both that feminism’s battles had been won, and that its ideology was now harmless by virtue of being out of date, advertisers invented ‘post-feminism’ as a utopia where women could do whatever they pleased, provided they had sufficient will and enthusiasm” (p. 90). It is questionable whether advertisers invented post-feminism and Macdonald’s assertion that advertisers believed feminist ideology was out of date and harmless is not substantiated. However, Macdonald does identify a significant change in representations of women in mass media over the past few decades.
Media studies during the 1990s found major changes in the way women and men were depicted in mass media. A 1995-96 study found 43% of major characters in TV shows were women – up from 18% in 1992-93 (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 58). A 1995-96 study conducted by Lauzen and Dozler examined the roles of women and men and found that, on a character-by-character basis, females and males were equal in all criteria studied (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 59).

Gauntlett comments: “... the woman we expect to see in ads these days is the busy, confident, attractive success, in control of her professional and social life, and a kitchen slave to no one. Men do not tell her what to do; instead, she sometimes gets to have a laugh at the expense of men” (p. 76).

Nevertheless, feminist concern over the representations of women in mass media continues – and perhaps with good reason. But, to return to the objective of this study, what are the representations of men in mass media identified in studies to date?

4.2 Media representations of men – findings of studies 1980-2001

Early gender-orientated studies of the media, usually conducted through a feminist lens to examine women’s relative position to men, found a “message environment of androcentrism” (male domination), Neuendorf (2002) reports “with males heavily overrepresented in sheer numbers and routinely given more important roles and sex stereotyping”. Neuendorf cites a number of studies of gender role portrayals in mass media including, in chronological order, Greenberg (1980); Kalis and Neuendorf (1989); Weaver (1991); Chappell (1996); Drewniary (1996); Michelson (1996); Watkins (1996); Barner (1999); Lemish and Tidhar (1999) and Low and Sherrard (1999). Busby (1975) conducted a comprehensive study of male images in mass media particularly relevant to this study but, as Neuendorf notes, the research is in need of an update (p. 202). Other studies cited show much has changed since 1975.

As noted in chapter one, limited studies of representations of men in mass media other than feminist studies have been conducted. However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, some researchers have begun to look specifically at men and men’s issues. Some of the studies
conducted during the past few years are briefly reviewed here and their key findings summarised in the following.

**Men in the press**

Beynon (2002) examined how masculinity was discursively constructed by the British quality press (The Times, The Guardian, Sunday Times) and in books such as Faludi’s Stiffed: The Betrayal of Modern Man and Clare’s Masculinity in Crisis during a three-year period from 1999-2001. Beynon reported that four discursive themes ran through the media content of which the two key ones were:

1. “Men running wild” such as bad fathers avoiding responsibility for their children or absentee fathers, male atrocities in places such as Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia; and

2. “Emasculated men” such as portrayed on Men Behaving Badly and in TV commercials, where men were depicted as “utterly incompetent and infantile” (p. 143).

Beynon concluded that men and masculinity were presented overwhelmingly negatively and as “something dangerous to be contained, attacked, denigrated or ridiculed, little else” (p. 143).

While agreeing that “women were objectified for decades in men’s media, advertising and pornography”, Gauntlett (2002) notes that “nowadays several women’s magazines objectify men using the same kind of language and imagery as men’s magazines” (p. 187). He cites:

- *Cosmopolitan* magazine’s “Hunk of the Month” feature and naked male centrefolds published in the US edition in 2001;
- *Elle’s* July 2001 US cover offering “Hola boys: Eye candy for grown-up girls”;
- *B’s* “Lust” page for male film and media stars;
- *New Woman’s* “Bloke” section; and
- *More’s* “Men Unzipped” section and its male centrefold wearing underwear only.
A comprehensive analysis of the content of the new men’s magazines was undertaken by Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks and published in Jackson et al. (1999, pp. 353-368), Stevenson et al. (2000, pp. 369-388) and the book Making Sense of Men’s Magazines (Jackson et al., 2001). Gauntlett (2002) comments that “men’s magazines are often accused of trying to re-assert sexism and male dominance, and are said to be part of a ‘backlash’ against feminism” (p. 173). Meanwhile, women’s magazines publish the kind of male objectification and trivialisation outlined by Gauntlett earlier.

Men on TV

A pioneering study of media representations of men by Askew and Ross (1990, as cited in West, 1995) reported that “most of the male heroes in comics and on television, whether goodies or baddies, are violent”.

Katz (as cited in Newbold et al., 2002) reported that “violence on screen, like that in real life, is perpetrated overwhelmingly by males” (p. 291).

One of the most contemporary and cogent analyses of modern mass media representations of men has been provided by Canadians, Nathanson and Young (2001) who used an art historian approach of formal analysis to examine mass media treatment of men and male issues, particularly on television and in movies. They state that, by the 1990s, misandry had become pervasive on American television (p. 10). They point to TV programs such as The Simpsons in which the father character, Homer, is lazy at work, chauvinistic, irresponsible and often stupid, and the son character, Bart Simpson, is mischievous, rude, cruel to his sister, rebellious and naughty. By comparison, the mother and daughter are presented as thoughtful, considerate and mild-natured.

Another media program cited by Nathanson and Young is Home Improvement. They report an interview with star of the show, Tim Allen, by TV Guide critic, Christopher Loudon, who writes: “Some would argue that Home Improvement is all about men being jerks” and adds that “it’s really a celebration of how smart – and tolerant – women are.” Allen agrees that it is both. Just as some women perpetrate negative (mis)representations of women, some men contribute to and even exploit negative (mis)representations of men – in this case for a laugh and popular success. Nathanson and Young comment of Home Improvement: “…men in general are slobs and fools but can be trained or ‘housebroken’
by women … without the civilising influence of Jill’s feminist lessons, Tim would be just another male barbarian” (p. 40). They add: “Everything specifically identified as ‘masculine’ on Home Improvement is overtly mocked, not celebrated … Home Improvement propagates exceptionally crude stereotypes of men” (p. 41).

Men Behaving Badly, a British television program broadcast in 1996-97, was a turning point in a trend of negative representations of men, according to Nathanson and Young. As the title suggests, it was a litany of men behaving badly.

Macdonald and Crawford (2002) agree with Nathanson and Young’s analysis, saying “TV shows as The Simpsons, Home Improvement and the British show Men Behaving Badly – which blatantly says it all – show negative images of men and boys – that men are incompetent”.

In his review of gender in contemporary TV programs, Gauntlett (2002) points to three popular programs as examples of a ‘turning of the tide’ that has occurred in relation to representations of women and men.

Ally McBeal (1997-2002) whom Gauntlett notes is a successful professional woman in a lead role focussed on a quest for sex, pleasure and romantic love. “Ally’s colleagues, Ling and Nelle are tougher, and both have been out with men from the law firm who are typically portrayed as rather geeky and lacking self-assurance. The show sides with the women and often shows them making fun of the men …” (p. 60).

Sex and the City (1998-2003) in which Gauntlett says female ridicule and objectification of men is taken further with “male sexual performance … subject to laughter and scathing review.” The four main women portrayed in Sex and the City, Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte regularly discuss men in disparaging tones, rating their sexual performance, objectifying them as ‘studs’ for women’s pleasure and often deriding them as insensitive, shallow and stupid. Feminists argue that Sex and the City celebrates women’s sexual liberation and that they only do what men did in the past. However, there is further evidence of a double standard in this. Women argued against such stereotyped and discriminatory portrayals, not on the basis that women should have equal access to such roles and forms of behaviour, but on the basis that
such portrayals and behaviours were wrong. As such, it should hold that they are equally wrong when applied to men.

_NYPD Blue_ (1993-2002) has provided particularly rich study of modern masculinity over the years, Gauntlett says, centred around the main detective character Andy Sipowicz. When he was first introduced, Sipowicz was “a stereotypical stout, sleazy, bigoted, divorced recovering alcoholic cop” (p. 62). However, over the years, the program has evolved the male characters in _NYPD Blue_. Sipowicz grieved over the death of his grown up son; he showed joy at the birth of his child Theo; he showed a protective love and loyalty to his professional partners Kelly and Sorenson. But, despite this element of what some may see as balance and humanity, Sipowicz and other men in the show are portrayed as tightly-wound, angry, deficient humans in many respects, exhibiting traits ranging from alcoholism and gambling to violence.

_Veronica’s Closet_ is another TV show which, along with _Sex and the City_ and _Grace Under Fire_, is largely about women’s “hunt for men” and in which men are objectified and trivialised, according to Newbold et al. (2002, p. 250). In these shows also, women discuss men as sex objects, often in crude and explicit terms in the fashion that women have long criticised men for doing in relation to women.

Nathanson and Young (2001) also identify television news magazines as sources of negative portrayals of men. They conclude from their analysis:

The problem of journalistic bias – and, therefore, of manipulation – has been discussed many times from perspectives of both the right and the left. There is probably truth to complaints from both sides. When it comes to gender and relations between men and women, however, the bias usually favours women. It would be unthinkable for a journalist, except one willing to pay a high price in public hostility, to say anything that could be construed as unflattering or disadvantageous to women as a group … but things like that are routinely said about men (p. 69).

They instance the NBC _Today_ show feature series, “He and She” which interviewed a number of people. Nathanson and Young reported: “One woman, Marna LoCastro, has the nerve to go on national television and proclaim the superiority of women in blatantly
stereotypical ways: ‘I think that we’re more sensitive. I think we’re more emotional. I think we’re more, more caring. I think we’re more dependable than males. I do’” (p. 73). While this statement was made by a woman interviewed on the program and not the program’s presenters, it is part of the content of news magazines and Nathanson and Young comment that it is typical of statements made about men in popular discourse.

**Men in the movies**

A number of studies and books have reported on examinations of men in movies including *Screening the Male* (Cohan & Hark, 1993), *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men* (Kirkham & Thumim, 1993) and *Me Jane: Masculinity, Movies and Women* (Kirkham & Thumim, 1995). Also, some feminist studies of mass media portrayals of women have included examination of men in movies including *Feminism and Film* (Humm, 1997) and *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (Tasker, 1998).

Top-rating movies which have been instanced as propagating negative representations of men include:

*The Colour Purple* (1985), based on Alice Walker’s best-selling novel, in which, according to Nathanson and Young (2001), “every male character, without exception, is either a hopelessly stupid buffoon, a fiendishly evil tyrant or both. And every female character, without exception, is a purely innocent victim, a quietly enduring hero, or both” (p. 13);

*Thelma and Louise* (1991) presents overriding negative messages about men. Early in the movie, Thelma is the victim of an attempted rape outside a bar. During their drive to escape a murder charge and their lives, Thelma meets JD, a young man who asks for a lift but who, after seducing her, runs off with her money. During their journey, another man they meet is a truck driver who makes lewd gestures at the two women. Feigning interest, they pull over then give him a lecture on sexist behaviour and, when he responds angrily, they blow up his truck and drive off laughing. In the final scene, the two women commit suicide by driving off a cliff rather than live in a world of men – Thelma with her boorish carpet salesman husband to whom she is unhappily married and Louise with her long-standing boyfriend Jim;
Silence of the Lambs (1991) is “a feminist discourse on male violence”, Nathanson and Young say (2001, p. 158). They note that it addresses gender in at least three ways. It tells the story of two killers. One, Buffalo Bill kills only women, skins them and clothes himself in their skin, carrying a clear sub-text of violence by men against women and appropriation of women’s identity. The second killer, Lecter, kills both men and women and eats them. While the sub-text is less overtly sexist, it also carries a clear message of male violence. The third gender dimension to the movie is portrayed in the relationship between the female lead and her male colleagues. Her male supervisor lacks confidence in her ability to do the job. The official in charge of Lecter in the asylum to which he is confined, Dr Chilton, is “openly lascivious”, Nathanson and Young note. In short, all the men in the film are evil;

In the contemporary version of Beauty and the Beast (1991), maleness is openly associated with bestialness. This movie was identified in Premiere magazine as one of the 10 movies that defined gender in the 1990s. The story of Beauty and the Beast is based on a translation of the 1756 text of Jeanne Marie (Madame le Prince) de Beaumont which, in turn, is believed to be based on earlier literary works and oral traditions (Nathanson & Young, 2001, p. 162). In the original version, the Beast is an educated and refined gentleman who gives Beauty every comfort she could want. However, in the 1991 Disney version, the prince was selfish and unkind and was punished by a good fairy. He is described overtly in voice-over as “spoiled, selfish and unkind”. Furthermore, the Disney version adds a character, Gaston who is a village bully and braggart. “Vain, ignorant, arrogant and preposterously macho, Gaston excels at hunting, brawling, drinking, and spitting”, Nathanson and Young note. Simultaneously, Beauty’s evil sisters have been eliminated from the story. So the story is one of two bad men and a flawless Beauty, Belle. She is compassionate towards the Beast despite his flaws, intelligent (a bookworm), ambitious and heroic in confronting the Beast. Beauty and the Beast informs study of representations of gender in modern mass media. Even though the Beast reforms at the end, the movie says positive things to girls and women and negative things to and about men – that maleness confers bestiality, inferiority and dependence (on a good woman to save him). All negativity in the film is projected on to men, Nathanson and Young conclude;
Sleeping With the Enemy (1991) also contains overt gender discourse which is negative towards men, according to Nathanson and Young (2001) in their study. The male character, Martin, is shown cinematically in a scene searching for his wife Laura at a carnival wearing a black cape with an upturned collar, against a noticeable hellish background of glowing, swirling flame-coloured lights – a clear metaphor for Satan, the Devil. Cape Cod is shown as an alienating world representing patriarchy, while Cedar Falls to which Laura travels is a beautiful little Iowa town of soft images and harmony representing matriarchy, where Laura meets two older women and forms an association. Nathanson and Young point out that sexual hierarchy is not eliminated, simply reversed. The movie demonises Martin instead of presenting him as a psychopath in need of treatment and manipulates viewers towards revenge and anger so they want Laura to pull the trigger and kill him (pp. 169-179;

Cape Fear is another 1991 movie in which men are represented in highly negative ways. Of the two male characters, one is a convicted rapist who went to prison and the other is his lawyer who buried evidence that could have won his case. On his release from prison, the former rapist sets out to take revenge on the lawyer and his family, killing his dog, raping his lover, and pursuing his teenage daughter. “All major female characters are good. They are victims … “men have only one thing on their minds. The central theme of Cape Fear is that violence against women is caused by a cultural order created by men obsessed with women,” say Nathanson and Young (2001, pp.186-187);

Little Women in its 1994 remake by Gillian Armstrong substantially altered the character of the father from a wise, mature figure of moral integrity who left a deep and positive impression on the young women in the novel, to a shadow character incidental to the story. While the story is ostensibly about women, women’s roles in the remake were enhanced, while men’s roles were reduced and male characters demonised;

First Wives Club (1996) is another film with clear anti-men overtones. In the story, three women who are allegedly treated badly by their respective husbands decide to get even. The movie is a humorous but vindictive story of how badly men act and how women are superior morally, politically and even professionally – as the women
succeed in a matter of months in taking over and/or running their husband’s businesses in which they have no prior experience.

Nathanson and Young (2001) identify negative representations of men not only in fictional mass media, but they cite distorted representations of men in a negative light in allegedly factual media representations. They give as a cinematic example *The Long Walk Home* (1990). The movie tells of the early days of the civil rights struggle by and for black Americans. While sophisticated and meritorious in many of its aspects, the film represents the civil rights movement as “initiated, led, and fought for by black women, not by black women and men” and portrays white women as supportive of black women, while “every white man, without exception, is both evil and inadequate” (p. 119). This is contrary to documented history which reports that black men played leading roles in the US civil rights movement and that many white men as well as some white women supported their position. Ann Douglas (1990) points out that, while some white women did support civil rights for black women, white American suffragists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were anything but eager to secure the vote for black women. In fact, she says “white women won the vote by playing to the nation’s anti-Negro sentiments” (p. 254). The film rewrites history from a particular political perspective – and, specifically, writes men out of positive roles as protagonists and into negative roles as antagonists.

Nathanson and Young note that media representation, as well as allegedly reflecting and informing societies today, also “projects the present – in this case, any notion of gender (or, even by implication, sex itself) that happens to be either fashionable or controversial right now – into the past as ‘history’ and [into] the future as ‘science fiction’ or ‘speculative fiction’” (p. 108). An effect of popular culture not well understood is this long-term reshaping of reality through revisionist history and projected agendas. They cite the movie *The Long Walk Home* as an example of mass media representations rewriting history.

Negative representations of men are similarly projected into the future. In the science fiction movie, *Outer Limits*, set in the year 2055, a Goddess rules a paradise called Lithia (Earth in the future), assisted by her wise women. In fact, there are no men at all on Lithia; they have been wiped out in a “great war”. Nathanson and Young note: “Little girls are told explicitly, in a stereotypically hushed and soothing female voice, that the old order
was destroyed because of men.” The narrative of the film states: “And when the males of the earth had vanished, so, too, did wickedness and war and hatred” (pp. 108-110). Never mind the contradiction that the Goddess, a symbol of female power of empathy and compassion, consigned seven billion men to death.

Nathanson and Young (2001) point out that recent series of *Star Trek* altered the famous program’s signature slogan from “To boldly go where no man has gone before” to “To go where no one has gone before”. Reasonable, it might be concluded. But, in comparison, they point out that *The Shadow* (1994) in its remake retained its slogan “Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men” (p. 234). The slogan could easily have been altered to “Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of people?” But it was not. Sexist language against women is removed or rewritten in the media. But sexist language denigrating or disparaging men remains, or is added, as evidenced by these analyses.

Nathanson and Young acknowledge: “Popular culture presents men in many roles, doing many desirable things. Men are often portrayed as heart surgeons, or crusading lawyers, for instance ...”. However, they go on: “… but so are women. And if women can do these things as well or better than men, how can these images function as indicators of a specifically masculine identity” (p. 145).

Craig (1993) observed “softer” male characters and so-called “reconstructed males” began appearing in prime time media in the 1990s and Newbold et al. (2002) note that “the media representations of men and masculinity(ies) have … changed over the years; they are more varied and include, for example, ‘softer’ images of masculinity. However, as discussed particularly in relation to sport and situation comedies, the representation of hegemonic masculinity … still prevails in many media texts.” Newbold et al. go on to note that “gay and lesbian media representations have, for a long while, been minimal and, in most cases, highly stereotypical” (p. 294).

From their studies, Newbold et al. (2002) conclude that “it emerges that non-hegemonic forms of masculinity are being marginalised” (p. 291). “Many studies show that the media still tend to reinforce the dominant ideology of masculinity and fail to portray the changing cultural norms of masculinity” (p. 289).
Where men are not being marginalised, demonised, or ridiculed, ‘new age’ representations of men suggest that they should become more feminine. Gauntlett (2002) cites *What Women Want* (2000) as an example of film which shows a man (played by Mel Gibson) initially as insensitive and sexist, undergoing an epiphany and learning to think like a woman. While the film also contains stereotypical images of women, it “nevertheless … assumes that women are emotionally articulate, and asserts that men should be too” – i.e. implying that normally they are not (p. 70).

Gauntlett also notes that analysis of men’s magazines reveals that the publications are “perpetually concerned with how to treat women, have a good relationship and live an enjoyable life.” But, rather than attempting to show men how to be men “the men’s magazines have an almost obsessive relationship with the socially constructed nature of manhood” (p. 250). They urge men to become more feminised – more like women – and more like what women want them to become. Mass media laud women to be women (themselves), but advocate the reconstruction of men.

At the same time as there are numerous negative representations of men in mass media, Nathanson and Young (2001) point to a proliferation of recent movies and TV series which portray women in hero roles dominating and often objectifying men, including:

*Wonder Woman;*
*Xena: Warrior Princess;*
*Buffy and the Vampire Slayer* (which became a cult series worldwide);
*Charlie’s Angels;*
*Ally McBeal* (a top-rating program in the US and worldwide);
*Sex and the City.* (a record-breaking TV program worldwide).

Some other media analyses which have examined gender issues over the past few decades (in date order) include:

*Goffman (1976) – study of gender in advertisements;*
*Allen (1985) – study of soap operas;*
*Stirling (1987) – study of language and gender in Australian newspapers;*
Lovdal (1989) – study of sex role messages in television commercials;
Geraghty (1991) – study of women in prime time soap operas;
McKay and Huber (1992) – study of media images of technology and sport;
Messner, Duncan and Jansen (1993) – study of the gendered language of televised sports;
Hawes and Thomas (1995) – study of language bias against women in British and Malaysian newspapers;
Hawthorne (1996) – study of soap opera and multiculturalism in Australia;

No study of mass media representations can hope to identify all the studies conducted in this field. But some of the main contemporary studies have been cited and their key findings identified in broad terms.

What is clear from these studies of mass media representations of women and men to date is:

1. While representations of women continues to remain a subject of debate, there has been a groundshift during the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s from stereotyped, marginalised, trivialised and objectified representations of women to portrayal of women as superwomen, heroes and in increasingly positive, powerful, autonomous roles and identities;

2. There is emergence of a double standard as, while it has become less acceptable or unacceptable to objectify, trivialise, marginalise or otherwise negatively represent women, it appears to be increasingly common and popular to negatively represent men.

Negative representations of women result in a storm of criticism, letters to editors and producers, and complaints to media regulatory bodies. But mocking, trivialising, objectifying and even demonising men have become common, studies suggest.
Nathanson and Young (2001) conclude from their formal analysis of mass media: “At a time when virtually all positive sources of masculine identity have been sexually desegregated, some boys and men will inevitably turn to the remaining negative ones. Because traditional sources of identity for men have been severely undermined or even attacked by a society preoccupied almost exclusively with the needs and problems of women, many men are left with whatever sources happen to be supplied by popular culture” (p. 144).

As noted in chapter one and shown by the research cited in this chapter, the majority of studies of media content have focussed on advertising, particularly on television, and on films, TV ‘sit-coms’ and other entertainment media. The findings of these studies are important as popular TV programs such as Sex and the City, Ally McBeal, Home Improvement, The Simpsons, and so on, are influential, with top-rating TV programs attracting audiences in the US alone of 20 to 30 million, and many more worldwide.

However, only one of the studies cited – the NBC Today show feature series, “He and She” reviewed by Nathanson & Young – focussed on news, current affairs, talk shows or lifestyle media to examine how men are treated in allegedly factual media representations. Excuses that can be made for, or latitude that can be claimed for TV sit-coms, films and comedy shows – such as ‘it’s just entertainment’ or ‘it’s only done in jest’ – do not apply to news, current affairs and other non-fiction media. News, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle programs allegedly tell ‘the truth’, how the world is, what is important and what is not, what is ‘in’ and what is not. In short, they represent ‘reality’ to millions of people every day.

Having established the importance of mass media in popular discourse, and what research says about gender representation in a number of mass media genre, this study examines representations of men in these key non-fiction media genre.
MASS MEDIA ANALYSIS – METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH OF THIS STUDY

As discussed in chapter one, “Introduction”, considerable effort was devoted in planning and undertaking the primary empirical research in this study to ensure it complied with the ‘scientific’ method in order to make its quantitative findings reliable and generalisable, as well as to gaining deeper insights through qualitative analysis. This chapter outlines the methodology and theoretical approach of this study.

4.1 Mass media research – the theoretical framework

Two weaknesses that undermine the value of a number of studies of mass media representations has been (a) assuming media representations lead to certain effects, and (b) drawing conclusions based on very small samples of media content. The former is a lack of rigor and indicative of a lack of understanding of media research. The latter can lead to erroneous conclusions in some cases, and even where small samples of media content analysis produce qualitatively significant findings, these can be easily questioned or rejected on the grounds of not being representative of media content broadly. The mass media themselves are quick to adopt defensive positions against any suggestion of influence one way or another and reject most or all allegations of bias.

“The conviction … that the media are important agencies of influence is broadly correct. However, the ways in which the media exert influence are complex and contingent,” Curran (2002) concludes, sounding a warning against simplistic media effects conclusions (p. 158). Other media researchers agree. Newbold et al. say “although representations most certainly do matter, their interaction with identity is very complex as indeed are all the relationships between media and reality” (p. 310).

A clear understanding of the role that mass media play and effects that they cause are vital to a study of media representations – particularly when drawing conclusions on likely implications. If mass media do not have a significant role and create significant effects in
societies, then identification of how they represent men and male identities is immaterial. If, on the other hand as can be shown, despite a number of important qualifications and clarifications, mass media have significant influence, analysis of their content is of major importance.

**Early direct injection and transmissional views of mass media**

Early media research assumed direct effects, adopting a ‘hypodermic’ injection concept of mass media, also described as the ‘transmissional’ model based on the well-known model of communication developed by Shannon and Weaver (1949) which described communication as transmitting a message to a receiver, with meaning being synonymous with content “delivered like a parcel” (Reddy, 1979). In this view, power was thought to reside in texts and their producers; audiences were perceived as passive receivers of information (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 25). Lull (2000) summarises: “The first stage of media audience research reflects … strong impressions of the … media as powerful, persuasive forces in society” (p. 98).

Views of mass media as powerful agents of persuasion (or propaganda) took hold in a mass view of society. This view proposed that society had become centralised and homogenised through urbanisation, industrialisation, globalisation and relativism and, therefore, was prone to mass media communications. ‘Mass communication’ became a ‘buzz phrase’ and communication and media research and practice hypothesised a unified mass audience. This view is in sharp contrast with more recent cultural studies perceptions of society as “a complex nexus of individuals acting on their own specific social forces and personal agency” (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 215).

The notion that mass media are powerful propaganda tools that are or can be unleashed on a hapless mass audience was central to the Mass Manipulative Model of the media and underpinned later cultural hegemony and political economy models. Marxist and neo-Marxists theories attributed enormous power to mass media and claimed direct attitudinal and even behavioural effects (eg. Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972; Adorno, 1991; Habermas, 1989; Marcuse, 1972; and McCombs’ (1977) ‘agenda setting’ theory. Marxists and neo-Marxists saw the media as “managers of opinion at the behest of the powerful” (Curran, 2002, p. 45).
Whereas Marxism believed that economic determinism centred around class struggle (proletariat versus the bourgeoisie) was the underlying cause of all class conflict and that this would lead to revolution, Gramsci in a 1937 thesis opposed Marx’s economic determinism and proposed that ideological hegemony was the basis of ruling class power. Gramsci saw the mass media as tools the ruling class used in this process of ideological hegemony to “perpetuate their power, wealth and status” (Barr, 2000, p. 17).

McQueen (1977), in a Marxist/neo-Marxist review of Australian media monopolies, states: “The media try to divide and demoralise the working class because a confident, united working class is one of the last things the capitalists want to face” (p. 43). Elsewhere in the same text, he refers to mass media as “capitalism’s control of ideas” (p. 6).

Adorno and Horkeimer saw the basis of media power as less political and more commercial, describing mass media as part of the ‘culture industry’ which manufactures information products and imposes them on audiences. But, like Marx and others subscribing to a Mass Manipulative Model of the media, Adorno and Horkeimer felt the power of the mass media over audiences was enormous and potentially damaging (Gauntlett, 2002, pp. 19-20). For example, Adorno and Horkeimer blamed the media for the rise of fascism (Adorno, 1991; Adorno & Horkeimer, 1972; Horkeimer, 1972).

The transmissional or hypodermic injection model of mass media dominated thinking during the first half of the 20th century.

**Minimal or ‘limited effects’ thinking on the media**

Landmark research in the late 1950s and 1960s refuted many claimed effects of the media and showed media power was over-estimated. Key studies were those of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) and Klapper (1960).

Klapper concluded that “mass communications ordinarily do not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects”. He concluded instead that mass media were more likely to reinforce existing attitudes than change them or create new attitudes (Curran, 2002, pp. 132, 159; Newbold et al., 2002, p. 31). His findings became known as Klapper’s ‘law of minimal consequences’ and triggered a ‘limited effects’ view of mass media (Curran, 2002, pp. 132-133; Newbold et al., 2002, p. 31).
Klapper drew on cognitive dissonance theory of the 1950s as espoused by psychologist Leon Festinger who found that people resisted messages that were dissonant with their existing attitudes and accepted information which was consonant with their existing views (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 123).

Research into media violence and pornography supported Klapper’s view. For instance, no conclusive causal links have been found between media violence and violent behaviour in 30 years of research. Studies of pornography in Denmark found no link to sex crimes and violence against women. In fact, following the repeal of Danish prohibitions against written pornography in 1967 and the ending of film censorship in 1969, the number of sex-related crimes in Denmark declined (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1971, p. 149). Even today, the link between TV and film violence and actual violence in society remains a site of debate.

However, even the ‘minimal’ view of media effects advanced by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) and Klapper (1960), which cited reinforcement of existing attitudes, opinions and behaviours rather than change or creation of new ones, is significant. Curran (2002) says:

… the media are powerful agencies of reinforcement. The effects tradition documents this extensively, yet makes little of it. This is because the absence of persuasion or change has been traditionally viewed as evidence of limited influence… The denial of reinforcement as a significant influence has persisted, despite some dissent, throughout the history of media effects research (p. 159).

Curran cites and criticises Perloff who “classifies any media effect that does not involve change consciously sought as a non-effect” (p. 159), arguing that reinforcement is a key effect as it contributes to maintenance of political and social status quos.

Another approach which considered the influence of mass media to be limited was a pluralist view of society which emerged in the 1940s and was popular through the 1960s. Proponents of pluralism considered that there are many centres of power in society and that natural checks and balances are achieved through “countervailing forces … under pluralistic views, the power of the media was seen as limited and conditional, a power that was ‘mediated’ by an ever-extending range of factors” (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 31).
Another strain of media research which also rejected the direct effects thinking of earlier media research and first introduced the notion of audience interpretation became known as the “uses and gratifications” perspective. Proponents of this theory claim that people use mass media to gratify human needs. “Instead of asking what the media do to people, uses and gratifications research turned the question around: what do people do with the media?” Katz says (as cited in Lull, 2000, p. 101).

Uses and gratifications thinking about mass media continues today, although it has lost some favour as it is linked to functionalist theory advanced by American political scientist Harold Lasswell which assumes people willingly engage with mass media and benefit from the experience. Lasswell claimed that the media perform four basic functions for society: surveying the environment to provide news and information; correlating response to this information (editorial function); entertaining (diversion function); and transmitting culture to future generations (socialisation function) (Lull, 2000, p. 111).

American sociologist Charles R. Wright took Lasswell’s view of media functions further by outlining manifest and latent (often not apparent or unintended) functions as well as dysfunctions of mass media communication. Wright proposed that when the media alerted the public to a health risk, for instance, it was serving its news and information function, but if a public panic was created, this was a dysfunction of the media (Lull, 2000, p. 112).

Political economy and cultural studies views of the media

Political economy thinking about mass media, rooted in structuralism, saw the dominant political, financial and industrial institutions of societies having a direct effect on the ideological forces maintaining control, including the mass media (Newbold, 2002, p. 219).

Mosco (1995) defined political economy as the “study of the social relations, particularly the power relations that influence the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources” (as cited in Newbold et al., 2002, p. 22). Like Marxist thinkers, “the radical political economy tradition continued to argue that the media were powerfully shaped by their political and economic organisation” (Curran, 2002, p. 113). This included media ownership, cross-ownership, monopolies, competition, public service broadcasting, and controls over quantity and content of advertising. Gramsci
emphasised the power of what he called “society’s superstructure” which he defined as its ideologyproducing institutions (Lull, 2000, p. 49).

In turn, political economy thinking argued that this political and economic structure influenced media audiences. Political economy views on the media saw the media as having a moral purpose and aiming at social action (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 49).

In this sense, political economy and later cultural studies views which came to dominate media theory from the 1970s reversed thinking that mass media had limited effects. However, they did not return to direct effects thinking. “Rather, political economy and cultural studies started from the premise that reinforcement was not neutral.” Moreover, they took the concept of reinforcement further arguing that “reinforcement was the inevitable and contrived outcome of a system whose very purpose was to maintain order and to prevent change in societies that were riven by manifest inequalities” (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 34). Political economy theory saw mass media involved in ‘the manufacture of consent’ – a concept made famous by Naom Chomsky.

Marshall McLuhan’s famous adage “The medium is the message” further focussed attention on mass media and their role in society (Lull, 2000, p. 37). However, McLuhan’s (1964) admonition pointed to the importance of the production and institutional processes of the mass media (eg. their internal news selection criteria and production techniques) in shaping media messages. Previously, focus had been on the suppliers of information and mass media had been viewed as a neutral channel.

‘Agenda-setting theory’ advanced by McCombs (1977), and later derivatives such as ‘agenda framing’ (Gurevitch, Blumler & Weaver, 1986) and ‘agenda priming’ (Blood, 1989, p. 12), shifted thinking further from viewing mass media as powerful propaganda instruments used by elites to manipulate public opinion and ‘manufacture consent’ towards a focus on mass media as the originators of messages. McCombs and others of this school stopped short of seeing media power as absolute, but argued that while mass media may not tell people “what to think” they set, framed or primed the agenda of “what they think about” (Blood, 1989, p. 12).
The weakness or Achilles Heel of political economy thinking about mass media was exposed by the emerging fields of content analysis and audience research (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 37). Whereas political economy theory focused only on quantitative (often crude) mass media content methodology, assuming quantitative repetition was equivalent to semiotic or affective significance, new methods of qualitative content analysis began to consider the subtleties of narrative structure, characterisation and semiotics to determine likely meanings that audiences might take from texts.

Cultural studies approaches to mass media borrowed from literary criticism and cinematic analysis and drew on linguistics and socio-linguistics. This approach shifted focus away from the structuralist politics of Marx and Engels and the structuralist linguistic theories of Saussure to introduce qualitative methods which examined how different readers interpreted texts differently. This concept is further discussed in the next section.

Even so, early neo-Marxist cultural studies saw mass media being used to influence or control audiences. However, they saw this as more subtle than direct control. Mass media, they argued, exerted influence through cultural hegemony. Hegemony is summarised by Lull (2000) as “the power or dominance that one social group holds over others” gained through “a tacit willingness by people to be governed by principles, rules and laws which they believe operate in their best interests, even though in actual practice they may not” (p. 51). He states further: “Hegemony is a process of convergence, consent, and subordination. Ideas, social institutions, industries, and ways of living are synthesised into a mosaic which serves to preserve the economic, political, and cultural advantages of the already powerful”. Lull adds, relevant to this study: “The mass media play an extraordinary role in the process” (p. 54). That people do not necessarily see the hegemonic power of the mass media is not surprising when the subtle process of hegemony is recognised. Lull points out: “The victims of hegemony don’t realise they are being repressed through ideology” (p. 73).

Habermas (1989) proposed a variation on political economy thinking with his concept of mass media as a “public sphere” of discussion which functions as a “forum of public communication: a forum in which individual citizens can come together as a public and confer freely about matters of general interest”. However, Habermas’ concept of mass media as a public sphere of debate where reason and logic would prevail has been widely
dismissed and seen as flawed because of its “idealisation of public reason” (Curran, 2002, p. 45).

In summary, with the advent of cultural studies, media effects thinking evolved from force, to coercion to consent (albeit an engineered consent).

The ‘ethnographic turn’ – ‘death of the author’; birth of the reader

‘The ethnographic turn’ in social and cultural studies research brought a major change in thinking about mass media effects. Cultural studies approaches to mass media drew on literary analysis, linguistics and socio-linguistics (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 307). A key influence was Barthes’ concept of the ‘death of the author’ which shifted emphasis from the author’s intentions to the reader (Barthes, 1977; Newbold et al., 2001, p. 37). This paradigm shift ushered in what Curran (2002) terms “a reconceptualisation of the audience as an active producer of meaning” (p. 115).

Socio-linguistic interpretations and semiological studies saw “meaning as mobile rather than fixed” and recognised “socially situated meaning systems” (Curran, 2002, p. 145). In simple terms, texts could mean different things to different people in different situations.

Post-Marxist cultural studies further turned attention to “human agency” (Lull, 2000, p. 9), drawing from anthropological and social research to specifically examine how audiences interpret media texts.

Building on Stuart Hall’s influential ‘encoding-decoding’ model (Hall, 1973; 1977; Hall, Hobson, Lowe & Willis, 1980; Hall, 1980; Morley & Chen, 1996), and his concept of the “critical reader” (Hall et al., 1980), sociologists and modern media scholars point out that audiences actively construct the meanings of (decode) media texts within a matrix of influences, rather than passively absorb pre-determined meanings imposed on them (Mumford, 1998, p. 121; Newbold et al., 2002, p. 307). Hall, supported by Morley and Chen, (1996), suggested that a media producer may ‘encode’ a certain meaning into a text, which would be based on a certain social context and understandings, but when another person comes to consume that text, their reading (‘decoding’) of it, based on their own social context and assumptions, is likely to be somewhat different.
McQuail (1984), in similar manner to ‘uses and gratifications’ theory proponents, reversed the classic question of media effect from ‘what effect do the media have on people’ to ‘how do people use the media’ and helped overturn previous assumptions of linearity and cause-effect in thinking about media and audiences.

Cultural studies’ main contribution to media studies was the identification of “intervening variables” that influence the relationship between text and audience (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 41). The ‘new audience research’ conducted in cultural studies of mass media found diversity of meanings drawn by people from the media they consume and revealed contradictions in how people consume mass media. For example, people were found in research to be “quite capable of conforming with prevalent social disapproval or depreciation of certain categories of text on one hand, while continuing to take pleasure from those same texts on the other” (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 38).

In cultural studies approaches to mass media, texts are viewed as “polysemic, which is to say that they offer the possibility of a diversity of reading, even if a ‘preferred reading’ is inscribed within the text by its producers”, Newbold et al. (2002, p. 45) conclude. Curran (2002) and others agree. Curran says “… the media have fractured meanings” (p. 144), while Lull (2000) uses the term “multisemic” (p. 162).

Audience reception analysis carried out by Morley advanced theory of audience power by focussing on textual meaning not as messages implanted by either media producers or influential institutions as proposed by earlier Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories, but in more sophisticated and complex ways drawing on semiology and ideology. New thinking proposed “interdiscursive processes in audience reception” (Curran, 2002, p. 119).

“The rediscovery of audience power in revisionist reception studies” (Curran, 2002, p. 145) was an important development in media effects theory and debunked media ideology leading to a “more cautious assessment of media influence” (Curran, 2002, p. 115).

Fiske (1989a), one of the most outspoken cultural studies theorists, argues that it is the audience, not the, media, which has the most power (p. 127). However, more recently many scholars put the view that Fiske “hopelessly romanticises the role of audience members” (Lull, 2000, p. 168). Tester (1994) says that “Fiske’s work confuses the
possibility that the audience might carry out oppositional readings of media texts with the claim that they actually do carry out such readings” (p. 70).

Also, reception analysis, while seen as a major advance in understanding how mass media and audiences inter-relate, relied heavily – some say over-relied – on group discussions and rather loose concepts of ‘decoding’ (Curran, 2002, p. 119). Ethnographic methods of research such as discussion groups and participant observation, while widely acclaimed as qualitative research methods allowing first-hand data gathering, also contain inherent dangers including (a) intervention by the researcher; (b) the researcher becoming too close to the audience (colloquially termed ‘going native’ from early ethnographic studies of tribal cultures); and (c) respondents ‘playing to the camera’ or, in this case, the researcher.

A number of other scholars also criticise cultural studies theory of mass media and its emphasis on the openness of texts which Windschuttle (1998) says leaves us “adrift in a sea of linguistic relativism” (p. 25). Windschuttle cites *The Media in Australia: Industries, Texts, Audiences* by Cunningham and Turner (1993), a history of textual analysis in media theory, which concludes:

> While textual analysis has had to relinquish any ambition to reveal the meaning through its consideration of media texts, it still insists that one cannot just wheel in any old meaning at all. Most agree that the text does have the power to limit the range of uses to which it is likely to be put. Exactly how much power, however, or how one might define the limits, is more difficult to decide. The balance of power between text and reader seems to vary from text to text, from reading to reading, from context to context, from audience member to audience member, and over time (p. 266).

**Contemporary theory of media effects – a synthesis of views**

Lull (2000) summarises what he calls “three zones of indeterminancy” of media effects which he identifies as (a) institutions which he claims are diverse; (b) technology which he holds is ultimately unmanageable (eg. a private video operator filming police beating black motorist Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1992); and (c) messages which he agrees are polysemic (open to multiple interpretations by different readers) and diverse (p. 217).
Modern thinking on mass media recognises that “identities cannot be viewed as being constructed by media representations alone” (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 311). As discussed by Barthes (1972), Hall (1973), Hall et al. (1980), Lovell (1980), Cook (1992), Woodward (1997), Mumford (1998) and a number of others, interpretations and perceptions are influenced by a multiplicity of factors such as race, nationality, ethnicity, social background, education, gender, sexuality, religion and inter-relationships such as family, peers and occupation or work groups, as well as media content. Curran (2002) adds that first-hand knowledge, word-of-mouth relaying others’ first-hand knowledge, sceptical dispositions towards the media, and internal processes of logic also influence audiences reading of media texts (p. 121).

However, there are flaws in ‘limited effects’ or ‘minimal impact’ theories of mass media. Mass media do have significant effects for a number of reasons. Bardikian (1997) notes that “throughout most of the 20th century the trend in culture industry ownership was toward concentration in the hands of fewer and fewer multinational corporations” (ie. monopolies and oligopolies). Lull (2000) says “the culture industries became part of a vast system of inter-related agencies” (p. 191).

At the same time, globalisation of mass media has led to this shrinking group of powerful, mainly western publishers and broadcasters distributing homogenised media content worldwide. Curran (2002) points out that audiences’ ability individually and collectively to make oppositional readings or interpretations of mass media content depends on their access to oppositional discourses (p. 158). The growth of global monopolies and oligopolies in mass media has reduced diversity and audience access to alternative and oppositional discourses.

In addition, a number of studies suggest that the influence of other traditional sources for interpretation and meaning such as the family, the Church and work have declined in recent times (Grossberg et al., 1998). A clear indication of the decline of the Church as an influential institution is shown in the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey, one of the largest studies of parish life ever undertaken in Australia, which reported that the number of Catholics attending mass weekly declined by 10% between 1991 and 1996 and that “less than half of 160,000 Catholics surveyed accepted without difficulty the Vatican’s authority to teach certain doctrines” (McGillion, 2003). International evidence of this trend was
found in a *Times Mirror* Center for the People and the Press (1994) survey which reported that the Church has declined as a source of influence in the US, Canada, Britain, France and Germany, and in all countries except the US it was rated lower than television and newspapers as a source of guiding and influential information.

“From the last quarter of the 19th century onwards, there was a cumulative process of de-Christianisation”, Curran (2002) notes. Also, he says “during the same period” there was “decline of the factory, trade union, church, local neighbourhood and extended family” (p. 23). The influence of traditional sources of identities such as religion, family and work have declined in modern times, leading to new influences to shape identities, Newbold et al. (2002, p. 306) agree.

Furthermore, Fiske’s view that popular culture was “serious social struggle” created by everyday people resisting and evading dominant ideological and cultural forces (Lull, 2000, p. 167) has been rejected by many social and media researchers as overly optimistic. “The obvious criticism of Fiske’s work is that it is far too optimistic about the challenging impact of mainstream texts – or, to be precise, the challenging consequences of people’s own unique readings of mainstream texts,” Gauntlett (2002, p. 28) says. As noted earlier, Lull (2000) says Fiske “hopelessly romanticises the role of audience members” (p. 168).

Also, as Fiske acknowledges, notwithstanding the cautionary ‘minimal consequences’ finding of media research by Klapper and others, there is an “overspill” of meaning whereby, even when readers interpret their own meanings from media texts, the meanings intended by the producers also get through (Fiske, 1989b, p. 70).

Accompanying the decline in sources of alternative or oppositional discourse to mass media, modern mass media use increasingly sophisticated methods including ‘docudrama’, ‘mockumentaries’ and ‘Reality TV’ in an attempt to increase their semiotic efficacy. These trends, combined with dominant and frequently occurring messages identified in this study, result in substantial impact on media audiences, it is concluded.

In summary, seven flaws can be identified in ‘limited effects’ thinking on mass media:
1. **Reinforcement is an effect**
   Media reinforcement is itself a powerful and significant effect. By reinforcing the status quo and/or selective discourses, mass media exert a major influence in society.

2. **‘Overspill’ of meaning**
   While audiences read their own meanings off media texts (including rejecting some media messages), researchers such as Fiske (1989b) propose that some media-produced meanings get through. In other words, mass media representations are not fully absorbed by audiences, but ‘seepage’ occurs.

3. **Lack of oppositional discourse**
   Social and economic changes in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have resulted in many audiences having lack of access to oppositional discourse. Studies shows that the influence of family, Church and work have declined in many developed western societies. At the same time, globalisation of mass media and media monopolies or oligopolies have homogenised media content and reduced the number of independent media that may represent alternative or opposing views.

4. **Intermediation – the ‘vicious circle’ of media influence**
   While audiences turn to other sources of information and discourse such as interpersonal relationships or institutions such as political parties, government bodies and organisations for interpretation and meaning, these too are media consumers often reacting to mass media representations. A simple example is friend or colleague telling an intending purchaser of a product that he/she has ‘heard’ that the product is good or not good, as the case may be, which appears to be personal communication or referral. In reality, the friend or colleague may have gained the information from a media report.

5. **Short-term versus long-term effects**
   Most media effects studies have examined only short-term impact of mass media content on audiences. Long-term cumulative effects have been little studied. Other fields of social and scientific research suggest that long-term exposure to influences results in cumulative effects. Long-term exposure to mass media representations,
particularly repeated and consistent messages, may have effects not detectable in short-term studies.

6. **The blurred boundaries of mediation**

   While TV drama, comedy and movies are prima facie identifiable by audiences as ‘not real’, news, current affairs, documentaries and radio and TV talk shows are presented by mass media as though they are real. The advent of ‘Reality TV’ is an extreme example of the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction in mass media. ‘Mockumentaries’ and ‘docu-drama’ are other media programming formats which present representations as fact or reality. The distinction between what is real and what are mediated representations blurs for many audiences. (This is further compounded by the next point.)

7. **Media self-promotion**

   Mass media widely promote themselves as providers of ‘truth’ and reality, with some programs and newspapers making specific claims to present ‘the truth’ in slogans such as “the way it is” and “the one you can trust”. This promotion further erodes audiences’ critical abilities.

Newbold et al. (2002) point out that “in the 1990s and into the new millennium it is becoming more common for studies to integrate political economy and cultural studies traditions… This has undermined any temptation to complacent acceptance of the polysemic openness of texts” (p. 40).

Most modern researchers accept that a synthesis of influences comprised of (a) the content mediated by the producers, (b) the semiotic complexity and efficacy of the medium, and (c) interpretations by the reader collectively shape meaning from media texts. The latter influence – the ‘ethnographic turn’ in research – recognises both internal factors in the reader such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, education level and socio-economic background, as well as external factors such as influence of family, peer groups, the Church, and so on.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the main developments and viewpoints on the effects of mass media.
Newbold et al. summarise:

… the tradition of media effects has undergone a number of transformations, above all in the past two decades. These transformations may be summarised as movements away from ‘transmissional’ models of effects towards a study of media within contexts of making of meaning, of culture, of texts and of literacy, in the interaction between media texts and media
readers. Those who have asked how people make meaning from texts have had to look both at
the ways in which texts are structured, and at the readers themselves (p. 46).

They conclude that “media texts, including representations, do not affect audiences in a
simple and direct way, but rather that this process is complex, ambiguous and at times even
contradictory” (p. 308).

McQuail (1997) summarises the evolution of mass media research as follows:

In the early days of mass communication research, the audience concept stood for the body of
actual or intended receivers of messages at the end of a linear process of information
transmission. This version has been gradually replaced by a view of the media receiver as
more or less active, resistant to influence, and guided by his or her own concerns, depending
on the particular social and cultural context (p. 142).

The answer to the age-old question of whether mass media create or reflect social reality is
“both” according to modern researchers such as Lull (2000, p. 165). Curran (2002) says:
“… the media are powerful ideological agencies, though not in the simplistic form of
brainwashing proposed by members of the Frankfurt school” (p.165). “Today, it is
commonly appreciated that the media do not simply mirror reality – even where that is
their stated aim. Every form of representation involves selection, exclusion and inclusion”
(Newbold et al., 2002, p. 16).

Electronic media in particular are seen has having considerable influence. Lull (2000)
comments: “… mass media, especially the electronic media, are unparalleled forms of
social power even in the most stable societies. Electronic media are among the modern
world’s most celebrated and effective conveyers of ideology and articulators of social
rules. Media stimulate short-term patterns and long-term conventions that can affect an
entire society.” He adds: “Despite concerns many people have about them, the mass media
are among the most potent of modern-day authorities. The vast majority of people in the
more developed countries all over the world say they trust television more than any other
source of information” (p. 93).
Theory developed in public relations which is a sector with a vested interest in understanding the power of the media also sheds light on the likely effects of mass communication. While studies by Stamm and Tichenor, Donohue, Olien and Bowers (as cited in Pavlik, 1987, p. 77) refute the ‘domino’ view of mass communication which suggests that messages lead to attitudes which, in turn, lead to behaviour, Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed what they call ‘situational theory’ of communication effects (pp. 147-158). Grunig and Hunt found that mass communication can have significant effects on audiences contingent on a number of situational factors. They present four important factors that determine the likelihood of mass communication having effects: (a) the level of problem recognition (does the audience understand and perceive there is a problem to be addressed); (b) the level of constraint recognition (does the audience feel empowered to do anything about it); (c) the presence of a referent criterion (previous experience or knowledge of the subject) and (d) level of involvement. If these situational factors are present, their research suggests that mass communication can have significant impact on audiences.

Chaffee (as cited in Grunig and Hunt, 1984) proposes that there are at least 18 kinds of media effects and he and other mass communication academics such as Grunig and Hunt suggest that social researchers have focused only on attitudinal or behavioural change, missing other important effects. Chaffee, and Grunig and Hunt, argue that media effects occur for two reasons – because of specific content, or simply because of the amount of time audiences spend with them, a factor taken up by social researcher Hugh Mackay (2002) who suggests that the main effect of media consumption is that it takes audiences away from other activities (eg. inter-personal relations) which might have affected them in other (arguably more constructive) ways. Then they argue that media effects occur at three levels: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes), and conative (behaviour), and propose that these can have effects in three spheres: on individuals, on interpersonal relations, and on larger social systems such as communities or societies. Thus, Chaffee, supported by Grunig and Hunt, calculates:

\[
2 \text{ ways of affecting} \times 3 \text{ levels of effects} \times 3 \text{ spheres of effect} = 18 \text{ possible areas of media effects (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 126).}
\]
CHAPTER 4 Mass Media Analysis – Methodology & Approach of This Study

Given significant impact of mass media in certain circumstances as described, it is then important to examine mass media representations of men and male identities to understand the position of men in society.

4.2 Media content analysis methodology overview

This study examined representations of men and male identities using content analysis of a substantial representative sample of mass media news, current affairs, talk shows and gender-orientated lifestyle media content.

Lasswell, Lerner and Pool (1952) said: “… content analysis operates on the view that verbal behaviour is a form of human behaviour, that the flow of symbols is a part of the flow of events, and that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process … content analysis is a technique which aims at describing, with optimum objectivity, precision, and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time (p. 34). Lasswell’s better known statement which succinctly encapsulates what media content analysis is about, published in 1948, (as cited in Shoemaker and Reese, 1996), describes it as:

Who
Says what
Through which channel
To whom
With what effect (p. 12).

A definition of content analysis illustrating the early focus on quantitative analysis was provided by Berelson (1952) who described it as a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (p. 18). While it remains oft-quoted, this definition has been found wanting in several respects. First, the word “objective” is disputed by researchers including Berger and Luckman (1966) in The Social Construction of Reality in which they point out that even the most scientific methods of social research cannot produce totally objective results. Specifically in relation to media content, they point out that media texts are open to varied interpretations and, as such, analysis of them cannot be objective. Also, some criticise the definition as restrictive, pointing out that latent as well as manifest content can be
analysed. But, mostly, the early approach to content analysis was criticised because of its focus on basic quantitative elements and an inherent assumption that quantitative factors indicated likely social impact.

Other definitions of media content analysis include:

“Content analysis is any research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within text” (Stone, Dunphy, Smith & Ogilvie, 1996, with credit given to Holsti, p. 5);

In more contemporary times, Weber (1990) says: “Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text” (p. 9);

Berger (1991) says: “Content analysis … is a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (violence, negative portrayals of women, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular form of art” (p. 25);

Neuman (1997) lists content analysis as a key non-reactive research methodology (ie. non-intrusive) and describes it as: “A technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The ‘content’ refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The ‘text’ is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication” (pp. 272-273);

Neuendorf (2002) is one of the most prominent contemporary researchers using, teaching (at Cleveland State University) and writing about media content analysis. She provides this definition: “Content analysis is a summarising, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method … and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented”. Noteworthy about Neuendorf’s definition is that she argues that media content analysis is quantitative research, not qualitative, and she strongly advocates use of scientific methods “including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalisability, replicability, and hypothesis testing” (p.
10). Neuendorf argues that qualitative analysis of texts is more appropriately described and categorised as rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, structuralist or semiotic analysis, interpretative analysis or critical analysis (pp. 5-7). However, she acknowledges that “with only minor adjustment, many are appropriate for use in content analysis as well”. In *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, Neuendorf discusses an “integrative” model of content analysis and notes that a range of methodologies can be used for text analysis, even though she maintains a narrow definition of content analysis (p. 41);

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) are other prominent authors on media content analysis. They do not fully support Neuendorf’s strict interpretation of content analysis as quantitative research only. Shoemaker and Reese categorise content analysis into two traditions – the behaviourist tradition and the humanist tradition. The behaviourist approach to content analysis is primarily concerned with the effects that content produces and this approach is the one pursued by social scientists. Whereas the behaviourist approach looks forwards from media content to try to identify future effects, the humanist approach looks backwards from media content to try to identify what is says about society and the culture producing it. Humanist scholars draw on psychoanalysis and cultural anthropology to analyse how media content such as film and television drama reveal ‘truths’ about a society – what Shoemaker and Reese term “The media’s symbolic environment” (pp. 31-32). This dual view of the media also helps explain the age-old debate over whether mass media *create* public opinion, attitudes and perceptions (effects) or *reflect* existing attitudes, perceptions and culture. Most researchers agree that, with limitations, mass media do both. Shoemaker and Reese say that social scientists taking a behaviourist approach to content analysis rely mostly on quantitative content analysis, while humanist approaches to media content tend towards qualitative analysis. They also note that social scientists may use both types of research as discussed in the following section.

**Quantitative v qualitative content analysis**

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) note that media content includes a wide range of phenomena including the medium, production techniques, messages, sources quoted or referred to and context, and they say that the task of content analysis is “to impose some sort of order on
these phenomena in order to grasp their meaning.” They continue: “Part of this ordering process consists of singling out the key features that we think are important and to which we want to pay attention. Researchers approach content in different ways, using different conceptual and methodological tools” (p. 31).

Quantitative content analysis collects data about media content such as topics or issues, volume of mentions, ‘messages’ determined by key words in context (KWIC), and circulation of the media and frequency (audience reach). Quantitative content analysis also should consider media form (eg. visual media such as television use more sophisticated semiotic systems than printed text and, thus, are generally regarded as having greater impact). Neuendorf (2002) says: “What’s important is that both content and form characteristics ought to be considered in every content analysis conducted. Form characteristics are often extremely important mediators of the content elements” (p. 24).

While Neuendorf argues that media content analysis is quantitative only, Shoemaker and Reese’s categorisation of content analysis into humanist and behaviourist traditions indicates that content analysis can be undertaken using both approaches. They say: “Behavioural content analysis is not always or necessarily conducted using quantitative or numerical techniques, but the two tend to go together. Similarly, humanistic content study naturally gravitates towards qualitative analysis.” Shoemaker and Reese further note: “Reducing large amounts of text to quantitative data … does not provide a complete picture of meaning and contextual codes, since texts may contain many other forms of emphasis besides sheer repetition” (p. 32).

Researchers who advocate analysing latent as well as manifest content as a way of understanding meanings of texts integrate qualitative and quantitative message analysis. Media researchers Newbold et al. (2002) note: “The problem [with quantitative content analysis] is the extent to which the quantitative indicators are interpreted as intensity of meaning, social impact and the like. There is no simple relationship between media texts and their impact, and it would be too simplistic to base decisions in this regard on mere figures obtained from a statistical content analysis” (p. 80).
In simple terms, it is not valid to assume that quantitative factors such as size and frequency of media messages equate to impact. Nor is it valid to assume that these quantitative factors are the only or even the main determinants of media impact.

Neuman (1997), in a widely used text on social research methodology, comments on the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy in content analysis: “In content analysis, a researcher uses objective and systematic counting and recording procedures to produce a quantitative description of the symbolic content in a text” but he adds “there are qualitative or interpretative versions of content analysis”. Neuman notes: “Qualitative content analysis is not highly respected by most positivist researchers. Nonetheless, feminist researchers and others adopting more critical and interpretative approaches favour it” (p. 273).

Newbold et al. (2002) say that quantitative content analysis “has not been able to capture the context within which a media text becomes meaningful” (p. 84). Proponents of qualitative text analysis point out that qualitative factors that have a major bearing on audience interpretation and likely effects, include:

- Prevailing perceptions of media credibility (eg. a report in a specialist scientific or medical journal which will have greater credibility than a report on the same subject in popular press);

- Context (eg. a health article published or broadcast during a disease outbreak will be read differently than at other times;

- Audience characteristics such as age, sex, race, ethnicity, education levels and socio-economic position which will all affect ‘reading’ of media content.

Qualitative content analysis examines the relationship between the text and its likely audience-derived meaning, recognising that media texts are polyseomic – ie. open to multiple different meanings to different readers – and tries to determine the likely meaning of texts to audiences. It pays attention to audience, media and contextual factors – not simply the text.
Accordingly, qualitative content analysis relies heavily on researcher ‘readings’ and interpretation of media texts. This intensive and time-consuming focus is one of the reasons that much qualitative content analysis has involved small samples of media content and been criticised by some researchers as unscientific and unreliable.

In other words, qualitative content analysis is difficult and maybe impossible to do with scientific reliability. Quantitative content analysis can conform to the scientific method and produce reliable findings. On the other hand, qualitative analysis of texts is necessary to understand their deeper meanings and likely interpretations by audiences – surely the ultimate goal of analysing media content.

Neuendorf (2002) acknowledges: “A number of researchers have criticised any dependence on the manifest-latent dichotomy, noting the often fuzzy distinction between the two (eg. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, pp. 258-284; Shapiro & Markoff, 1997, pp. 9-34). It is perhaps more useful to think of a continuum from ‘highly manifest’ to ‘highly latent’ and to address issues of subtlety of measurement for those messages that are very latent …”, although she notes that the latter poses a challenge for objective and reliable measurement (p. 23).

Within mass media and communication studies, most media researchers do not draw the sharp definitional distinctions that Neuendorf does between text, content and discourse analysis and researchers and academics such as Bryman (1988), Curran (2002), Gauntlett (2002), Hammersley (1992), Newbold et al. (2002) and Silverman (2000) refer to both quantitative and qualitative content analysis describing the methodologies as complementary and part of a continuum of analysing texts to try to determine their likely meanings to and impact on audiences.

While noting its benefits in going beyond sheer numbers to identify likely meanings using tools of semiotics, some researchers are critical of studies that rely on qualitative content analysis alone, pointing to lack of systematic method and rigor, and urge a combination of “qualitative insight and a rigorous controlled model” (Jackson, 1998).

Hansen et al. (1998) comment: “… rather than emphasising its alleged incompatibility with other more qualitative approaches (such as semiotics, structuralist analysis, discourse
analysis) we wish to stress … that content analysis is and should be enriched by the theoretical framework offered by other more qualitative approaches, while bringing to these a methodological rigor, prescriptions for use, and systematicity rarely found in many of the more qualitative approaches” (p. 91).

In reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of classical content analysis, Jackson (1998) cites Curran (1976) who supports the integration or complementary use of quantitative and qualitative content analysis, noting that introducing quantitative techniques to qualitative analysis can reveal them “for what they are – beguiling but ultimately tawdry tapestries woven together with partial comment and selective quotations”. Jackson concludes: “A beneficial synthesis of quantitative and qualitative methodologies can then be achieved that allows a wide range and quantity of communications and their contexts to be analysed and compared with rigor and structure”.

Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) categorisation of a humanist approach which studies media content as a reflection of society and culture, and a behaviourist approach which analyses media content with a view to its likely effects, is also useful in understanding how media content analysis should be conducted. This study is interested in examining mass media representations of men and male identities both to identify possible effects on society and as a ‘window’ to view reflections of popular culture and contemporary societies – ie. it seeks to employ both behaviourist and humanist traditions identified by Shoemaker and Reese.

It can be concluded from the research cited, that a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis offers the best of both worlds and, further, that a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis methodologies is necessary to fully understand the meanings and possible impacts of media texts.

Therefore, this study employed both types of media content analysis. Quantitative media content analysis was undertaken in the first phase, conforming to Lasswell et al.’s and Neuendorf’s standards for scientific research. In a second stage, qualitative analysis was conducted of a sample of texts – what Neuendorf may term discourse analysis or simply text analysis – to explore their latent as well as manifest meanings and likely interpretation by audiences.
Some audience studies researchers reject altogether the view that the meanings of texts can be accessed through analysis of the texts (Newbold, et al., 2002, p. 16). Certainly, researchers using media content analysis need to be cautious in making predictions of likely audience effects, as already noted. However, while audience research remains a primary approach to gain direct insights into audience perceptions, it too faces methodological problems. Respondents forget where they received information from (eg. many respondents in interviews and group discussions say “someone told me” when, in fact, they received the information through mass media). Others lie – perhaps not intentionally, but often people do not want to admit that they read some ‘trash’ magazine or watched daytime television. Furthermore, respondents talking directly to a researcher sometimes say what they think the researcher wants to hear (ie. interviews and ethnographic research methods are reactionary and affected by researcher intrusion). Audience studies also have their own problematic issues with sample, question construction and interpretation of responses.

Media content analysis is an unobtrusive research method that allows examination of a wide range of media content over an extensive period to identify popular discourses and begin to explore their social effects. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) propose that “media content and media effects research can be combined to help our understanding of the role that the mass media play in society”, and also to understand societal attitudes (p. 256). A combination of both quantitative and qualitative content analysis offers the most useful approach when looking at broad representations by the mass media. The combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis conducted in this study provides descriptive and, within the limitations outlined, inferential and predictive information about public and individual attitudes on gender generally and men specifically.

**Human v computer coding**

Media content analysis increasingly uses computer programs. Computer software is applied at two levels in media content analysis:

1. For storing, analysing and reporting data such as coding and notations by researchers (including constructing tables, charts and graphs); and
2. In some cases, for automatic scanning of texts and identification and coding of words and phrases. This stage can lead to automation of the entire process of coding and analysis, or provide partial automation with a combination of computer scanning and coding along with human notations manually entered into the program.

In the first level, texts are read and coded by humans (usually trained researchers) and computer software programs are used as tools to assist in the analysis in the same way they are used to analyse the results of surveys and other research. Programs commonly used at this level are databases for data storage; SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for statistical analysis; Excel for tabulation of data and calculations such as pivot tables; and Excel or graphics programs for generation of charts. Also, a range of specialist commercial media content analysis systems are used for storing, analysing and reporting media analysis data such as CARMA® (Computer Aided Research and Media Analysis), Precis™, Echo® Research, IMPACT™ and the Delahaye Medialink system. Most are database programs with customised data entry screens and fields created for the specialised needs of media content analysis. Many of these proprietary programs have specialised features such as inbuilt media databases providing circulation and audience statistics and audience demographic data which enriches and speeds up media content analysis.

At the second level, computer software automatically conducts either all or a large part of content analysis including scanning texts using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology and matching words and phrases in texts with ‘dictionaries’ of key words and phrases previously set up in the software program. Some programs do all coding automatically, while others allow the researcher to enter notations and comments and tag or link these to relevant articles. Software programs such as General Inquirer developed at Harvard University in the 1960s; NUD*IST; NVivo; Ethnograph, TextSmart by SPSS; INTExT; TextAnalyst; TEXTPACK 7.0, CATPAC, DICTION 5.0, DIMAP and VBPro perform a variety of content analysis functions. Mayring (2003) also cites experience using two German software programs for qualitative text analysis, MAXqda (MAX Qualitative Data Analysis for Windows) and ATLASTi.

A number of social researchers claim that computers are not relevant to media content analysis, suggesting that it must be done manually by detailed human study (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 84). This claim, per se, is Luddite, or more likely confuses the two levels of
computerisation in media content analysis. Few would argue that using a computer database, spreadsheet, or a specialised program to store and analyse data entered by researchers is inconsistent with the scientific method. Use of computers enhances rigour, as well as speeds up analysis and facilities team research (Silverman, 2000, p. 155).

However, Neuendorf (2002) says that “the notion of the completely ‘automatic’ content analysis via computer is a chimera … The human contribution to content analysis is still paramount” (p. 40).

This researcher supports with this viewpoint based on professional experience working in commercial media content analysis. Automated (fully computerised) content analysis makes mostly arbitrary associations between words and phrases. While neurolinguistic software programming and Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems in which computers are purported to ‘learn’ to understand and interpret the way humans do are developing, such programs remain unreliable for subtle and sophisticated interpretational work and their analysis is simplistic. Neuman (1997) gives the example of the word ‘red’ and how it can be used with multiple meanings that are not visible to a computer. Neuman cites:

> I read a book with a red cover that is real red herring. Unfortunately, its publisher drowned in red ink because the editor couldn’t deal with the red tape that occurs when a book is red hot. The book has a story about a red fire truck that stops at red lights only after the leaves turn red. There is also a group of Reds who carry red flags to the little red schoolhouse. They are opposed by red-blooded rednecks who eat red meat and honor the red, white and blue …. (p. 275).

Machine coding of the above text would be unlikely to identify the range of meanings of the word ‘red’.

A further disadvantage of automated computer systems for coding media content is that they result in what Neuendorf (2002) terms “black box measurement”. Most software programs do not reveal the precise nature of their measures or how they construct their scales and indices. The researcher enters text into “a veritable black box from which output emerges” (p. 129). This form of research is inconsistent with the scientific method which requires that full information is disclosed on how results were obtained. It also limits
replicability, as other researchers cannot conduct similar studies unless they use the same software program and, even then, many of the key functions and calculations are hidden within the software.

However, computers can clearly support quantitative and qualitative content analysis by serving as a repository for coding data, notes and researcher comments and provide powerful tools for analysing and reporting research data. In addition, specialist media content analysis systems provide access to media circulation and audience statistics which can be quickly correlated with messages to assist in analysis.

When human coding is used, the software employed for data storage and analysis is not materially significant to the research, provided a reliable program is used. The methodology is primarily the responsibility of the human coders who need to conduct the analysis in accordance with strict criteria established in the Coding List.

4.3 Stage 1: Quantitative content analysis

Quantitative media content analysis in this study was planned and conducted in accordance with ‘the scientific method’ as espoused by Neuendorf (2002).

Objectivity-intersubjectivity

A major goal of any scientific investigation must be to provide a description or explanation of a phenomenon in a way that avoids or minimises the biases of the investigator and, while true objectivity may not be possible, it should strive for consistency and what scholars term intersubjectivity (Babbie, 1986, p. 27; Lindlof, 1995 as cited in Neuendorf, 2002, p. 11).

Objectivity, or intersubjectivity, is maximised by several techniques, most notably selection of a representative sample. The sampling method and sample used in this study is outlined in detail under “Media sample” later in this chapter.

A priori design

Media content analyses often fail the test of objectivity/intersubjectivity because researchers construct the list of issues and messages being studied as they go, adding
issues and messages as they find them in articles, arguing that they need to begin media content analysis before they can accurately identify the issues and messages contained in the content.

A deductive scientific approach to research design requires that “all decisions on variables, their measurement, and coding rules must be made before the observation begins” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 11). An inductive approach which measures variables after they have been observed leads to major biases and invalidity in a study. In effect, it allows issues, topics and messages to be added to the list of those tracked at the whim of the researcher, and those added during a study may have been present from the outset but not observed, leading to inaccuracies in data.

Kuhn’s (1970) observation in his seminal work on paradigms that the scientific requirement for deduction to be based on past research, theories and bodies of evidence is self-limiting and does not foster innovation is noted. Equally, the view of some media researchers that it is difficult to identify the variables for study (issues and messages in media content analysis) before they begin analysis of media content has some basis. However, this apparent dichotomy can be overcome. Exploratory work can and should be done before a final coding scheme is established for content analysis to identify the issues and messages appropriate for study. Neuendorf (2002) says: “Much as a survey researcher will use focus groups or in-depth interviewing (qualitative techniques) to inform his or her questionnaire construction, so may the content analyst use in-depth, often contemplative and incisive observations from the literature of critical scholars.” Furthermore, Neuendorf suggests that media content analysts can “immerse himself or herself in the world of the message pool” by conducting “a qualitative scrutiny of a representative subset of the content to be examined” – ie. conduct preliminary reading of texts within the field (pp. 102-103).

This grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was taken in a priori design of this research – ie. identifying the categories, issues and messages for study. As part of this research, extensive reading of previous media content analyses on representations of men such as that conducted by Nathanson and Young (2001) and other studies of men was undertaken. For example, Kimmel and Messner’s *Men’s Lives* (1995, reprinted 2003) identified and devoted chapters to
boyhood, men and work, men and health (body and mind), men in relationships, male sexualities and men in families, among other topics.

A preliminary reading of media within the sampling frame for this study was undertaken during the period January to June 2003 (six months), which afforded considerable “immersion in the world of the message pool” in a contemporary context. Crime, work and work/life conflict, relationships including divorce, fatherhood/family, power and violence, body image and sexuality were prominent issues identified in preliminary mass media reading. These, combined with reading of other texts concerning the representation of men and men’s issues, allowed a priori design of a list of categories, issues and messages for tracking and analysis.

All messages identified for analysis in the study were paired in positive and negative forms. This is one of the research strategies to ensure balance. For instance, if “men are violent/commit violence” is analysed, the alternative positive message “men are not violent / men are peaceful/seek peaceful solutions” should equally be analysed.

In media content analysis, a priori design is established and operationalised in a Coding System. A key component of a Coding System is a comprehensive written Code Book or Coding List. This contains the list of variables to be researched and provides researchers involved in the project (see “Intercoder reliability” following) with a consistent framework for research. The Coding List developed for this study, based on reading of previous media content analyses of gender issues and a sample of media coverage on men and men’s issues, is attached as Appendix A.

**Intercoder reliability**

A rigorous ‘scientific’ approach to media content analysis to gain maximum reliability requires that two or more coders are used – at least for a sample of content (called the reliability sub-sample). Even when a primary researcher conducts most of the research (as in this case) a reliability sub-sample coded by a second or third coder is important to ensure that, in the words of Tinsley and Weiss (1975), “obtained ratings are not the idiosyncratic results of one rater’s subjective judgement” (p. 359).
Neuendorf (2002) says: “There is growing acknowledgement in the research literature that the establishment of intercoder reliability is essential, a necessary criterion for valid and useful research when human coding is employed.” Neuendorf adds: “This has followed a period during which many researchers were less than rigorous in their reliability assessment” (p. 142). Reporting on an analysis of 486 content analysis studies published in Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly from 1971 through 1995, Riffe and Freitag (1997) found that only 56% of these reported intercoder reliability figures and that most failed to report reliability variable by variable. Even as recently as 2001, a study of 200 content analyses by Lombard, Synder-Duch and Bracken (2003; 2004) found that only 69% discussed intercoder reliability and only 41% reported reliability for specific variables.

A number of statistical formulae have been developed for measuring intercoder reliability. Researchers argue that coding of coder pairs and multiple coders should be compared at two levels: (a) agreement and (b) co-variation (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 144). Agreement is a simple comparison of the level of agreement between the coders’ scores and ratings. Co-variation assesses whether, when scores do vary as they no doubt will in human coding, they go up and down together – ie. whether there is consistency or a high level of variance. Bartko and Carpenter (1976) note that in clinical and other psychological research, researchers report co-variation and not simple agreement, while in communication and business research simple agreement only is reported. Neuendorf (2002), citing Tinsley and Weiss (1975), concludes: “The best situation, of course, would be one in which coded scores are shown to have both high agreement and high co-variation” (p. 144).

This study used a number of recommended measures of both agreement and co-variance in a sub-sample to assess intercoder reliability. A further principle of sound research is that agreement and co-variation rates between coders, along with details of the intercoder reliability sample, are reported in the research (Snyder-Duch et al., 2001; Neuendorf, 2002). The statistical formulae used to measure intercoder reliability for this study, and details of the intercoder reliability sub-sample, are reported later in this chapter and in detailed tables in Appendix C.
Strategies to maximise agreement and co-variation and, if necessary, address low agreement or high variation between coders are:

1. Training to fully familiarise all coders with the variables such as issues and messages being analysed and guidelines for classifications and coding;
2. Pilot coding (doing a test first);
3. Review of the Code Book/List to ensure descriptions and instructions are clear, and revise to provide better defined categories and criteria if required;
4. Retraining if required.

If a satisfactory level of intercoder reliability cannot be achieved in analysis of one or more variables despite training and revisions, those variables should be dropped from the analysis (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 160).

**Validity**
Validity of this research was optimised by extensive literature review including reading latest texts on media content analysis methodology, reviewing previous media analysis studies in relation to gender as outlined in chapter three, and careful selection of the sample of media content to be analysed as outlined in the next section.

**Generalisability**
Generalisability refers to the extent to which the research findings can be applied to and taken as a measure of the target population generally (in the case of content analysis, the target population is the total mass media message pool). Generalisability is largely determined by selection of a representative and sufficiently large sample.

This study is considered to have a high level of generalisability due to the large and long period of the sample as outlined in the next section and the prominence of the national and international media studied.

**Replicability**
Replicability, the ability and degree of difficulty or otherwise for other researchers to replicate the research to confirm or challenge the results, is a key criteria for all
scientific research. Replicability is determined by open disclosure of full information on research methodology and procedures. In the case of content analysis, this should include the Code Book/Coding List; coding guidelines and instructions issued to coders; method of coding used in the case of human coding; details of any software programs used; and all data supporting conclusions. As Neuman (1997) notes, a researcher undertaking content analysis “carefully designs and documents procedures for coding to make replication possible” (p. 274).

Details of how each of these criteria was addressed are provided in sections 4.4 to 4.7 in this chapter and in Appendices A, B and C.

### 4.4 Media content sample

Sampling for media content analysis comprises three steps, Newbold et al. (2002) propose:

1. Selection of media forms (ie. newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, film) and genre (news, current affairs, drama, soap opera, documentary, and so on);
2. Selection of issues or dates (the period); and
3. Sampling of relevant content from within those media (pp. 80-81).

#### Media forms and genre

Based on the argument presented in chapter one that entertainment media such as movies, sport and advertising have been extensively studied, whereas mass media content that is allegedly factual and represents reality such as news, current affairs and talk shows have received comparably little attention, this study focussed on these genres. News was defined, for the purposes of this study, as all general news in selected newspapers and news programs including features, opinion columns, editorials and letters to the editor (excluding specialist sections such as business, finance, sport and entertainment).

In addition, a sample of major lifestyle media including men’s and women’s magazines was included because these media directly address gender and identity issues such as body image and sexuality. Several leading TV talk and lifestyle programs were also selected because of their large audiences and relevant content.
CHAPTER 4  
Mass Media Analysis – Methodology & Approach of This Study

Three media forms were studied to gain wide representation of content:

- Newspapers;
- Magazines; and
- Television.

**Media selection**

Given the complexity of identifying media effects as outlined – and if there are no effects, there is no point in studying media content – a substantial sample of media content was examined. This is held to be important because small samples can produce inconclusive results at best, or questionable and misleading findings at worst.

The sampling frame of this study was the wide range of newspapers, magazines, radio, TV programs, and online media in Australia where this study was conducted. Noteworthy is that mass media consumed in Australia include many international programs and publications and a substantial number of these were included in the study to provide relevance and applicability of the research to a range of contemporary western societies. The media sample used and rationale is as follows:

**Newspapers (news, current affairs and lifestyle)  
Readership (weekday/weekend)**

- *The Australian* (national daily newspaper) (453,000/910,000)
- *Sydney Morning Herald* (daily newspaper - Sydney) * (879,000/1,333,000)
- *The Age* (daily newspaper - Melbourne) * (689,000/1,022,000)
- *The Telegraph* (daily tabloid newspaper - Sydney) (991,000/1,216,000)
- *Sunday Telegraph* (Sunday newspaper - Sydney) * (1,958,000)
- *Sunday Age* (Sunday newspaper - Melbourne) * (648,000)

* Included colour insert magazines Good Weekend in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* (1,906,000); *The Australian Magazine* in the *Weekend Australian* (924,000) and *Sunday Magazine* in the *Sunday Telegraph* (2,130,000).

**Basis of selection of sample (newspapers):** *The Australian, The Morning Herald* and *The Age* have been identified as the three highest rated ‘quality’ press in Australia, according to a University of Queensland Journalism Department survey (1992). Further, one is the leading national newspaper; one is the leading daily newspaper in Australia’s largest city (Sydney);
and one is the leading daily newspaper in Australia’s second-largest city (Melbourne). *The Daily Telegraph* was identified as the leading tabloid in the UQ survey (with a more working class and ‘popular’ market). The *Sunday Age* (Melbourne) was identified as the leading weekend newspaper in Australia. *The Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney) is the highest readership Sunday newspaper in Australia. This sample was constructed to include the most influential newspapers and provide a balance geographically, between week day and weekend, and between major publishers. (Source: University of Queensland Journalism Department survey conducted by Quadrant Research, 1992 and Roy Morgan Research readership data, 12 months to March, 2003 published in *The Australian*, May 23, 2003, p. 18.)

**Figure 2.** The best quality newspapers in Australia as identified by a survey of 1,068 journalists by the University of Queensland Journalism Department, 1992, Quadrant Research Services, funded by the Australian Research Council.

**Magazines** (current affairs, men’s, women’s and lifestyle) **Audited Circulation**

- *Australian Women’s Weekly* (national monthly women’s magazine) (2,735,000)
- *Ralph* (international monthly men’s magazine) (545,000)
- *FHM* (international monthly men’s magazine) (462,000)
- *Cosmopolitan* (international monthly women’s magazine) (956,000)
- *The Bulletin* (national weekly current affairs magazine) (293,000)
- *Australian Family Circle* (national monthly family magazine) (489,000)
Basis of selection of sample (magazines): These comprise the highest circulation current affairs magazine in Australia (The Bulletin); the highest circulation magazine overall in Australia and the highest circulation women’s magazine (Australian Women’s Weekly); the highest circulation young women’s magazine (Cosmopolitan); the two highest circulation men’s magazines (FHM and Ralph); and the highest circulation specialist family magazine (Family Circle). (Source: Roy Morgan Research published in B&T Weekly, May 30, 2003.)

TV news, current affairs, talk shows, ‘docu-drama’ Audience (Weekday/Weekend)

- Nine News (national TV news) (1.49 m / 2.1 m)
- A Current Affair (national TV current affairs) (1.4 m)
- 60 Minutes (international TV current affairs) (Australia only – 1.79 m)
- Oprah (international TV talk show) (Australia only – 1.0 m approx)
- Frasier (international TV drama) (Australia only – 1.1m approx)
- Queer Eye for the Straight Guy ¹ (Australia only – 1.528 m)

Basis of selection of sample (TV programs): Based on 2002 and March-April 2003 ratings data, Nine News was, at the time, the highest rating TV news in Australia; A Current Affair and 60 Minutes were the two highest rated current affairs shows in Australia (and 60 Minutes is a highly influential program internationally). Oprah has been consistently one of the highest rating talk show dealing with social issues and problems (and also a popular and credible international TV program). Friends, Frasier and Everybody Loves Raymond were the top-rating TV drama shows in 2002-2003 (not including home renovation and sports programs) as well as popular internationally. Frasier was selected as it features gender-related themes with Frasier being a male psychiatrist hosting a radio show advising callers on relationships and personal matters. It was originally intended to analyse Sex and the City because of its specific gender themes, but this program was not on air during the study period. Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, launched in Australia September 29, 2003, was the highest-ever rated show on NBC cable channel Bravo in the US with 7 million viewers and has a specific male gender focus. Hence it was included in the study. (Source: OZTAM ratings data from ratings weeks March 30-April 5, 2003 and November 2-8, 2003 and US TV Ratings, 2002).

Sampling was also informed by the work of Riffe, Lacy and Drager (1996) and Riffe, Lacy, Nagovan and Burkum (1996) who reviewed various content analysis samples sizes and methods.

¹ From September 29, 2003 when it started on air in Australia.


**Period**

Selected media were monitored and analysed over a period of 25 weeks from July 1 to December 24, 2003 (six months).

**Content selection**

Selection of articles for analysis was based on any use of the words “man”, “men”, “boys”, “male” (human), “masculinity”, “manliness”, “manhood” and/or any text or visual that identified human subjects as male-gendered, including photographs, names, or references such as masculine pronouns like ‘he’ and male words such as “father”, “blokes” and “lads”.

Neuman (1997) notes that the units of analysis can “vary a great deal in content analysis”. They can be “a word, a phrase, a theme, a plot, a newspaper article, a character, and so forth” (p. 274). Neuendorf (2002) summarises that the primary units of analysis in content analysis are ‘messages’ which may be expressed as key words, phrases or particular representations such as the number of male characters appearing or the position, rank or role of various characters. The primary units of analysis (messages) tracked and analysed in this study in relation to men are identified in key words, phrases and representations recorded in the Coding List provided in Appendix A.

Articles were also coded under a number of issues categories (topics or themes) and issues (specific subjects). Categories and issues for analysis were identified as part of a priori design of the research study identified through reading and ‘immersion in the message pool’. The list of issues categories and issues is also listed in the Coding List attached in Appendix A.

A census of content published and broadcast by the media sample in relation to men during the 25 week period was analysed in the quantitative stage of media analysis.

All media content analysed was archived for access if required (eg. for verification of findings or for replication studies).
4.5 Data collection

Media content was collected using two methods:

1. Clipping relevant articles from newspapers and magazines obtained by subscription;
2. Video recording of selected TV programs.

From the sample, this study collected and analysed relevant content from a total of 650 newspapers (450 broadsheets and 200 tabloids), 130 magazines, and 332.5 hours of television news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle programming. By any sampling criteria, this was a large study, designed to produce statistically reliable and valid findings as well as in-depth understanding from a secondary stage of qualitative analysis. A summary of media titles and hours of TV programming analysed is provided in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIA</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>1 Jul - 24 Dec 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers:</td>
<td>Editions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian</td>
<td>Daily Mon-Sat (6 per week)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sydney Morning Herald</td>
<td>Daily Mon-Sat (6 per week)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Age</td>
<td>Daily Mon-Sat (6 per week)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>Daily Mon-Sat (6 per week)</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday Telegraph</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Age</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Newspapers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Editions</strong></td>
<td><strong>650</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines:</td>
<td>Editions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bulletin</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Women's Weekly</td>
<td>Monthly (despite title)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Circle</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Weekend Magazine</td>
<td>In Sat SM Herald &amp; Age</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian Magazine</td>
<td>In Sat Australian</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Magazine</td>
<td>In Sunday Telegraph</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Magazines</strong></td>
<td><strong>Editions</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television:</td>
<td>Hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine News</td>
<td>Mon-Fri (5 x 30 mins pw)</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Current Affair</td>
<td>Mon-Fri (5 x 30 mins pw)</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Minutes</td>
<td>Sunday (1 hour per week)</td>
<td>Off air 1st week Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oprah</td>
<td>Mon-Fri (5 x 1 hour pw)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasier</td>
<td>Mon-Fri (5 x 30 mins pw)</td>
<td>Off air end Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Eye … Straight Guy</td>
<td>Monday (1 hour per week)</td>
<td>(29 Sep - 30 Nov)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total TV (Hours)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hours</strong></td>
<td><strong>332.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Summary of media content collected for this study.*
In total, print media collected for analysis comprised 780 newspapers and magazines.

Television content monitored totalling 332.5 hours included:

- 125 TV news bulletins;
- 147 TV current affairs programs;
- 125 talk show episodes; and
- 108 TV lifestyle program episodes with gender and men’s themes.

4.6 Data analysis and reporting

As noted by Neuman (1997), “measurement in content analysis uses structured observation: systematic, careful observation based on written rules. The rules explain how to categorise and classify observations” (p. 275). The written rules are the list of key words, phrases and related guidelines or instructions established in the Coding List.

Quantitative content analysis was conducted using human coding. Automated computer coding programs such NVIVO were not used for the reasons outlined earlier. Reading and coding was a time-intensive process and produced a veritable ‘data mountain’. However, coding allowed key data about media articles and programs rather than the full text to be entered into a computer database, providing data reduction and focus on key issues for study. The full text of articles and tapes of programs were retained for revisiting during the second stage of qualitative content analysis and for archiving.

Two coders were used in accordance with Best Practice content analysis guidelines outlined by Neuendorf (2002) and others to minimise subjectivity and comprised one man and one woman to further achieve balance. This researcher was the primary coder and both coders had prior professional training in media content analysis.

A Coding Form was used by coders to standardise the method of coding and ensure the Coding List was followed. The Coding Form was designed based on studying a number of samples of Coding Forms published on a Cleveland State University Ohio Web site as an adjunct to The Content Analysis Guidebook authored by Neuendorf (2002). Examples examined included a Film Analysis Codebook (Smith, 1999) and a Code Book for analysis.
of TV commercials by Putinuch (1984). A copy of the Coding Form developed for this content analysis is provided in Appendix B.

Coding data was entered into a professional media analysis system, CARMA® (Computer Aided Research and Media Analysis) for the first stage of quantitative content analysis. CARMA® is an Oracle-based database program and a benefit of this system was that it contains circulation and audience data for media in Australia and internationally. Data was then queried using Business Query™ and analysed using Business Objects™ and Microsoft Excel®, the latter being used for generating pivot tables and charts of key data. The author is employed as a media analyst by CARMA International (Asia Pacific), fully trained in the system, and was afforded access to the CARMA database and to professionally trained media analysts to act as multiple (paired) coders for reliability testing. However, this researcher was the primary coder and data analyst throughout. Information on the CARMA® system is provided in Appendix D.

4.7 Intercoder reliability assessment

Intercoder reliability was assessed between the two coders using an intercoder reliability sub-sample. In terms of the criteria and method of measurement, Lombard et al. (2003) report:

[T]here are few standard and accessible guidelines available regarding the appropriate procedures to use to assess and report intercoder reliability, or software tools to calculate it. As a result, it seems likely that there is little consistency in how this critical element of content analysis is assessed and reported in published mass communication studies. Following a review of relevant concepts, indices, and tools, a content analysis of 200 studies utilising content analysis published in the communication literature between 1994 and 1998 is used to characterise practices in the field. The results demonstrate that mass communication researchers often fail to assess (or at least report) intercoder reliability and often rely on percent agreement, an overly liberal index. Based on the review and these results, concrete guidelines are offered regarding procedures for assessment and reporting of this important aspect of content analysis.

Lombard et al. (2004) note that there are “literally dozens” of different measures or indices of intercoder reliability. Popping (1988) reported 39 different “agreement indices”.
However, Lombard et al., Neuendorf (2002) and a number of other researchers agree that the following indices are the most reliable and important:

**Assumed Level of Measurement**

- Per cent agreement (a basic assessment) (Nominal)
- Scott’s *pi* ( ) (Nominal)
- Cohen’s *kappa* ( ) (Nominal)
- Holst’s co-efficient of reliability (Nominal)
- Spearman’s *rho* (Ordinal – rank order)
- Pearson’s correlation coefficient (*r*) (Internal or ratio)
- Lin’s concordance correlation coefficient (*r_c*) (Interval or ratio)

The relatively complex formulae for calculating these reliability indices are provided in Neuendorf (2002). Manual calculation requires familiarity with statistics and considerable time – no doubt the reason that most content analyses do little more than assess percent agreement, if that, as reported by Riffe and Freitag (1997 and Lombard et al. (2003).

A number of software programs help calculate intercoder reliability assessment, including statistics programs such as SPSS which can assess Cohen’s *kappa* ( ) and Simstat from Provalis Research which can calculate a number of intercoder reliability statistics. Also, specialist software programs have been and are being developed for this purpose including Popping’s AGREE (1984) and Krippendorf’s Alpha 3.12a, although the latter is a beta (test) program and not available widely (Lombard et al., 2004). A US company, SkyMeg Software, in consultation with academics from Cleveland State University, has developed PRAM (Program for Reliability Assessment of Multiple Coders) which can calculate reliability statistics for each of the most recommended indices. PRAM is still in development and an academic version alpha release 0.4.4 available as at January 2004 was found to contain some minor ‘bugs’ and ‘clunky’ features. However, release notes on the program state that all coefficients have been tested and verified by Neuendorf’s students at Cleveland State University.

In this study, intercoder reliability was assessed using a sub-sample before further coding was undertaken using PRAM (Program for Reliability Assessment with Multiple Coders) (SkyMeg Software, 2003). The program, which analyses coding data exported to Microsoft Excel® templates, provides reliability statistics for each variable assessed on a scale of 0 –
CHAPTER 4  Mass Media Analysis – Methodology & Approach of This Study

1 where one is 100% agreement or co-variation. Intercoder reliability testing was conducted on 41 variables analysed (20 positive messages; 20 corresponding negative messages; and overall favourability rating of articles).

An intercoder reliability sub-sample of 100 articles was selected with 10 drawn randomly from each of 10 categories (crime, work, sexuality, health, etc) and coded by the two coders (the primary coder and secondary coder). Sub-sample size was informed by Neuendorf (2002) who states: “… the reliability sub-sample should probably never be smaller than 50 and should rarely need to be larger than about 300” (p. 159).

‘Blind coding’ of the intercoder reliability sub-sample was conducted by the two coders (ie. neither coder saw the coding of the other prior to completion) to minimise what researchers term ‘demand characteristic’ – a tendency of participants in a study to try to give what the primary researcher wants or to skew results to meet a desired goal.

Intercoder reliability was assessed for:

1. Messages – the primary unit of analysis (20 positive messages and 20 corresponding negative messages) coded as present or not in articles. (Messages analysed are listed in the Coding list shown in Appendix A); and

2. The overall ‘favourability/unfavourability’ rating of articles towards men calculated using the CARMA® cumulative scoring method as outlined in Appendix D.

Neuendorf (2002) says that “most basic textbooks on research methods in the social sciences do not offer a specific criterion or cut-off figure and those that do report a criterion vary somewhat in their recommendations” (p. 143). However, Neuendorf cites Ellis (1994) as offering a “widely accepted rule of thumb”. Ellis states that correlation coefficients exceeding 0.75 to 0.80 indicate high reliability (p. 91). In relation to specific statistics, Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000) declare 70% agreement (0.70) is considered reliable. Popping (1988) suggests 0.80 or greater is required for Cohen’s kappa which he cites as the optimal (ie. strictest) measure, while Banerjee, Capozzoli, McSweeney and Sinha (1999) propose that a 0.75 score for Cohen’s kappa indicates excellent agreement beyond chance. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998), without specifying the type of reliability
coefficient, recommend high standards and report that content analysis studies typically report reliability in the 0.80 to 0.90 range.

Neuendorf (2002) notes that it is clear from a review of work on reliability of content analysis that reliability coefficients of 0.90 or greater are acceptable to all and 0.80 is acceptable in most situations. Furthermore, Neuendorf notes that the ‘beyond chance’ statistics such as Scott’s $pi$ and Cohen’s $kappa$ are afforded a more liberal criterion.

Table 3 shows a summary of the average intercoder reliability score generated by PRAM for the 40 messages tracked and analysed in this study (20 positive messages and their 20 corresponding negative forms) across the 100 articles in the sub-sample. This shows reliability ratings in the high to very high range, with the lowest being 0.861 (where 1.0 is 100% agreement or covariance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Messages 1-20 (Positive and Negative)</th>
<th>Reliability Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Agreement</td>
<td>0.997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holsti’s co-efficient of reliability</td>
<td>0.997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott’s $pi$</td>
<td>0.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen’s $kappa$</td>
<td>0.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s $rho$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson’s Correlations Co-efficient ($r$)</td>
<td>0.966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin’s Concordance Correlations Co-efficient ($r_c$)</td>
<td>0.894</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3. Summary of average intercoder reliability assessment of coding of 20 positive messages and 20 negative messages analysed in sub-sample of 100 articles using PRAM (Program for Reliability Assessment of Multiple coders).*

Table 4 shows intercoder reliability for the overall favourability/unfavourability rating of articles in this study generated by PRAM. This shows reliability ratings between 0.797 and 0.999 – equal to or well in excess of the acceptable reliability rates proposed by media researchers.
Overall Rating of Articles | Reliability Score
---|---
Percent Agreement | 0.860
Holsti’s co-efficient of reliability | 0.860
Scott’s \(\pi\) | 0.797
Cohen’s \(\kappa\) | 0.798
Spearman’s \(\rho\) | 0.944
Pearson’s Correlations Co-efficient (\(r\)) | 0.975
Lin’s Concordance Correlations Co-efficient (\(r_c\)) | 0.999

Table 4. Summary of intercoder reliability assessment of overall ‘favourability/unfavourability’ rating of 100 articles in the sub-sample using PRAM (Program for Reliability Assessment of Multiple coders).

In an independent review of PRAM, Lombard (Temple University), Synder-Duch (Carlow College, Pittsburgh) and Campanella Bracken (Cleve State University, Ohio) state that they found PRAM results for Holst’s coefficient of reliability “not trustworthy”. However, they confirm that, with other indices, coefficients of 0.90 or greater are “nearly always acceptable” and 0.80 or greater is acceptable in most situations. Furthermore, they confirm that higher criteria can be used for indices known to be liberal (ie. per cent agreement) and lower criteria can be used for indices know to be more conservative such as Cohen’s \(\kappa\), Scott’s \(\pi\) and Krippendorff’s \(\alpha\) (Lombard et al., 2003 and 2004).

Full reports of intercoder reliability assessments generated by PRAM for each of the 40 messages analysed (20 positive and 20 negative) and overall article ratings are reported in Appendix C.

Appendix C shows that reliability scores below the above recommendations were recorded for two messages, 14 Negative and 17 Positive. In post-intercoder reliability assessment debriefing, one coder was found to have not understood the criteria for these messages and these were clarified. Coding proceeded as the intercoder reliability of the other 39 variables and overall reliability were high and the cause of the two variances was identified and rectified.
This analysis fully met the three key criteria for content analysis put forward by Snyder-Duch, Bracken and Lombard (2001), namely:

- A standard of a minimum of two coders;
- Calculation of appropriate reliability statistics for each key variable measured; and
- Clear reportage of the reliability sample size and its relation to the overall sample.

An overview of the process of quantitative content analysis taken from Neuendorf’s (2002) *Content Analysis Guidebook* which was followed in this study is shown in Figure 3.

### 4.8 Stage 2: Qualitative content analysis

Following quantitative analysis of a broad sample of mass media content as outlined, a sub-sample was selected for in-depth qualitative content analysis.

#### Methodology of qualitative content analysis

Qualitative message analysis methods applicable to analysis of media content include text analysis, narrative analysis, rhetorical analysis, discourse analysis, interpretative analysis and semiotic analysis, as well as some of the techniques such as critical analysis used in literary studies, according to Hijams (1996).

However, the precise methodology best used for qualitative message or text analysis is poorly defined. McKee (2004) notes that “we have a very odd lacuna at the heart of cultural studies of the media. Textual analysis is the central methodology, and yet we do not have a straightforward published guide as to what it is and how we do it”. He explains this as partly:

... the ambivalence of cultural studies practitioners towards disciplinarity and institutionalisation [which] lead (sic) to an odd interpretation of our axioms that knowledge is power, that discourses define reality and that there is no such thing as ‘objective’ knowledge. We know that every methodology is partial, producing particular kinds of information. Linked with an anti-displinarian trend, this seems to have led us to refuse to think seriously about our own methodologies. Instead, we tend towards a kind of ‘transgressive’ methodological approach, where we do whatever takes our fancy.
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Media content analysis flowchart

1) **Theory and rationale**  What content will be examined, and why? Are there certain theories or perspectives that indicate that this particular message content is important to study? (e.g., Studies on violent television have shown that children may be affected; hence, we analyze the amount and type of aggression shown on TV.) Library work is needed here. Will you be using an integrative model, linking content analysis with other data to show relationships with source or receiver characteristics? Do you have research questions? Hypotheses?

2) **Conceptualization decisions**  (Remember, you are the boss! There is no one right way). What variables will be used in the study, and how do you define them conceptually? You may want to screen some examples of the content you’re going to analyze, in order to make sure you’ve covered everything you want.

3) **Operationalization measures**  Your measures should match your conceptualizations (this is called internal validity). What unit of data collection will you use? You may have more than one unit (e.g., a by-utterance coding scheme and a by-speaker coding scheme). Are the variables measured well (i.e., at a high level of measurement, with categories that are exhaustive and mutually exclusive)? An “a priori” coding scheme describing all measures must be created. Both face validity and content validity may also be assessed at this point.

   ![Flowchart diagram]

   - Human Coding
   - Computer Coding

4a) **Coding schemes**  You need to create the following materials:

1. **Codebook**  (with all variable measures fully explained)

2. **Coding form**

4b) **Coding schemes**  With computer text content analysis, you still need a codebook of some—a full explanation of your dictionaries and method of applying them. You may use standard dictionaries (e.g., those in Hart’s program Diction) or originally created dictionaries. When creating original dictionaries, be sure to first generate a frequencies list from your text sample, and examine for key words and phrases.

Continued over:
5) **Sampling.** Is a census of the content possible? (If yes, go to #6). How will you randomly sample a subset of the content? This could be by time period, by issue, by page, by channel, etc.

6) **Training and initial reliability.** During a training session in which coders work together, find out whether they can agree on the coding of variables. Then, in an independent coding test, note the reliability on each variable. At each stage, revise the codebook/coding form as needed.

7a) **Coding.** Use at least two coders in order to establish intercoder reliability. Coding should be done independently, with at least 10% overlap for the reliability test.

7b) **Coding.** Apply dictionaries to the sample text to generate per-unit (e.g., per-news story) frequencies for each dictionary. Do some spot checking for validation.

8) **Final reliability.** Calculate a reliability figure (percent agreement, Scott’s p, Spearman’s rho, or Pearson’s r, for example) for each variable.

9) **Tabulation and reporting.** See various examples of C.A. results to see the ways in which results can be reported. Figures and statistics may be reported one variable at a time (univariate), or variables may be cross-tabulated in different ways (bivariate and multivariate techniques). Over-time trends are also a common reporting method. In the long run, relationships between C.A. variables and other measures may establish criterion and construct validity.

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*Figure 3.* A Flowchart for the Typical Process of Content Analysis Research. Neuendorf, K. A. (2002).
McKee adds “we insist that the specificity of any methodology must be investigated to reveal the limits to the kinds of knowledge it can produce, and yet our own central methodology is woefully under investigated, and still largely intuitive”.

Despite this lack of specific guidelines for qualitative text analysis, research procedures for qualitative text and message analysis are informed by the work of Denzin and Lincoln (1994); Hijams (1996); Mayring (2000; 2003); Patton (1990; 2002); Robson (1993); and Silverman (1993) and these can be drawn on to frame a study with reasonable chances of reliability and validity.

Within the broad hermeneutic tradition concerned with text analysis, there are two main strands particularly relevant to qualitative content analysis. The first, narratology, focuses on the narrative or story-telling within a text with emphasis on meaning that may be produced by its structure and choice of words. The second draws on semiotics and focuses attention on signs and sign systems in texts and how readers might interpret (decode) those signs (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 84).

Semiotics utilises a number of different approaches, description of which is outside the scope of this study other than a broad recognition of their essential elements that will be applied in this qualitative analysis. Two main streams of semiotics, sometimes referred to as semiology and semiotics, have evolved from the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American Charles Sanders Peirce respectively.

While quantitative content analysis has its complexities and requires considerable statistical rigor to comply with the requirements of scientific research as outlined earlier in this chapter, the coding task is predominantly “one of clerical recording”, according to Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999, p. 265). In comparison, they note “objectivity is a much tougher criterion to achieve with latent than with manifest variables” as studied in qualitative content analysis. Newbold et al. (2002) warn:

The logic of deconstructing latent meanings, and privileging them over the more obvious ‘manifest’ ones, is questionable, for the audience may not see this latest dimension; the analysis may be longer than the text. The task is time-consuming, and often tells us what we already know in a language we don’t understand (p. 249).
Newbold et al. go further in warning of the inherent challenges in semiology, the tradition of semiotics based on theories developed by de Saussure, in the following terms:

The scientific validity of semiology is questionable – in comparison with traditional positivistic science, at least – for it is not replicable (it is impossible to repeat with exactly the same results). It is not easy to show that semiology examines the subject it sets out to study … (p. 249).

However, like others, Newbold et al. acknowledge that there are advantages of using semiology as a tool. “It exposes the ideological, latent meaning behind the surface of texts, allowing us to grasp the power relations within them” (p. 249).

The essential concepts of semiotics and semiology are that words and images are signs that ‘stand for’ or ‘signify’ something else beyond their obvious manifest meaning and relate to one another to form codes or code systems – collectives of signs that produce certain meanings (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 87; Selby & Cowdery, 1995, p. 47).

Early semiotics took a structuralist approach, seeing the meaning of signs as largely fixed and interpreted according to a system, whereas later post-structuralist influenced semiotics theory saw signs as interpreted by audiences – often differently to the intentions of the author and differently between audiences.

Jensen (1995) brought together what he terms an integrated social semiotics theory of mass communication which draws on structuralist semiotic research as well as more modern post-structuralist theories of active audience participation in interpretation of mediated meanings. In other words, elements of both de Saussure influenced semiology and Peirce influenced semiotics can be applied and each has something to offer to a comprehensive study of mass media representations.

Newbold et al. (2002) observe: “So in studying media texts … we can use these ideas as they can provide a way of assessing the meaning production in a text” (p. 87). They cite Van Zoonen (1994) who explains that semiotic analysis of a media text can begin by identifying the signs in the text and their dominant characteristics. Then, citing Selby and
Cowdery (1995), they say “these signs can be analysed as a result of selection and combination” (Newbold et al., 2002, p. 87).

Images such as photographs and icons are key signs. For instance, a photograph of a man holding a baby suggests fatherhood, family commitment and, depending on how it is composed, gentleness and caring. For instance, a photograph may contain several signs such as the man cradling the baby’s head in his hand and or gazing at the baby with a kind and caring expression (signifying love and protection), or holding the baby with outstretched arms away from his body and peering quizzically at the infant (signifying confusion and aversion). Road signs and international symbols such as $ representing dollar or money, © for copyright and for ‘No’ (as in No Entry or No Smoking) are examples of icons and symbols that signify meanings beyond themselves. Similarly, audiences routinely interpret the sign + as denoting the mathematical function of addition and × as multiplication, while the slightly different † is symbolic of the cross on which Christ was crucified and today indicates a church or Christian artefact.

In terms of language, Campbell and Pennebaker (2003) and others identify pronouns as key signifiers of meaning in texts and a focus of qualitative text analysis. Campbell and Pennebaker investigated the relationship between linguistic style and physical health using latent semantic analysis to analyse writing samples provided by students and prison inmates. The participants also gave permission for tracking of their illness-related visits to the student-health centre or the prison infirmary. Campbell and Pennebaker reported that change in the frequency with which participants used pronouns (eg., I, me, he, she) is the linguistic feature that best predicts improvement in physical health. The data did not show that pronoun use rises or falls as health improves; rather, flexibility in pronoun use is associated with improved physical health (pp. 60-65). Over-use of personal pronouns such as I, me and my can also indicate self-centredness and egotism.

Other key text elements commonly studied in qualitative content analysis are:

- Adjectives used in descriptions (positive and negative) which give strong indications of a speaker’s and writer’s attitude (eg. it was a disgusting thing to do);
- Whether verbs are active or passive voice;
Viewpoint of the narrator (first person, second person, third person);
Tonal qualities such as aggressiveness, sarcasm, flippancy and emotional language;
Binaries established in texts and how these are positioned and used;
Visual imagery in text;
Metaphors and similes used; and
Context factors such as the position and credibility of spokespersons or sources quoted which affects meaning taken from the text (eg. if one message is presented by a high profile expert it will outweigh a non-expert opinion).

Mayring (2000) developed a number of procedures for qualitative text analysis, among which he says two are central: inductive category development and deductive category application. Inductive category development formulates a criterion of definition derived from theoretical background and the research question which determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. Deductive category application “works with prior formulated theoretically derived aspects of analysis, bringing them in connection with the text. The qualitative step of analysis consists in a methodological controlled assignment of the category to the passage of text” (Mayring, 2003).

Mayring’s procedures bring some systematic approach to qualitative text analysis. In essence, his method involves a priori design of the categories – they cannot be created as the analyst goes along. And, importantly, this method requires matching of a category to a passage of text; not matching of the text to a category. By starting with pre-determined categories, which by their nature are specific, this increases the systematicity of qualitative analysis.

Intercoder reliability assessment also should be used with qualitative analysis to assist reliability and validity, Mayring (2003) recommends, although he notes that more flexible measures need to be applied. His studies maximised reliability and validity by using “only trained members of the project team” and he reduced the standard of coder agreement stating that Cohen’s $kappa$ of 0.7 would be sufficient.
Mayring (2003) also notes that several computer programs have been developed for qualitative analysis, but he stresses that these are to “support (not to replace) steps of text interpretation”.

In this study, manual (human) qualitative text analysis of a sample of texts was conducted conforming to the guidelines and procedures cited, supported by additional analysis using MAXqda (MAX Qualitative Data Analysis for Windows) (dressing&pehl GbR & Verbi GmbH, 2004).

All qualitative analysis was undertaken by the author and, therefore, no intercoder reliability testing was conducted in this phase of research. However, this approach met Mayring’s criteria for using only trained researchers for qualitative analysis. Furthermore, high intercoder reliability achieved in quantitative analysis, from which qualitative analysis was conducted on a sub-sample in relation to the same issues and messages, suggests that reliability and validity would be highly likely to meet the 0.7 kappa level recommended by Mayring.

**Media sample for qualitative content analysis**

Sampling for qualitative analysis is not required to meet the statistically valid formulae of quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, sampling for in-depth qualitative study should not be simply drawn at the researcher’s whim, and even random methods may not yield useful data, as the purpose of qualitative research is to investigate certain issues or themes in detail. Random or even representative methods of sampling may not capture the issues or themes which are the subject of qualitative analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that sampling strategies for qualitative research should be driven by a conceptual question, not by concern for “representativeness” (p. 29). They suggest instead, three techniques which can be used together to yield rich results in qualitative analysis:

1. Selecting apparently typical/representative examples;
2. Selecting negative/disconfirming examples; and
3. Selecting exceptional or discrepant examples (p. 34).
By choosing a combination of typical, disconfirming and exceptional examples for study, qualitative analysis can explore the boundaries of the data field and identify the range of views including discordant ones and extremes in various directions, as well as the typical. While quantitative research has the benefit of yielding empirical data that is generalisable and representative with a high probability, it reduces research findings to the average or median position on key questions. Qualitative analysis using the sampling approach identified by Miles and Huberman allows exploration of discourse at various points within the range.

These theories and procedures were drawn on in undertaking the second stage of qualitative analysis of media representations of men and male identities.
MEN IN THE MEDIA TODAY – FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

In this analysis of 650 newspaper editions (450 broadsheets and 200 tabloids); 130 magazines; 125 TV news bulletins; 147 TV current affairs programs; 125 talk show episodes; and 108 TV lifestyle program episodes over a period of 25 weeks, representations of men and male identities appeared in 1,799 media reports, comprising:

1,568 newspaper and magazine articles; and
231 television reports or program segments.

The breakdown by article type of the media content analysed is shown in Figure 4.

![Article Type Breakdown](image)

**Figure 4. Breakdown of media content analysed by article type.**

As could be expected in this sample, the greatest proportion of editorial media content was news articles (63%). Significantly, this was followed by 232 opinion columns discussing men and male identity issues (13% of total coverage) – a sign of substantial focus on men
and men’s issues in topical debate. TV news and feature articles each comprised 7% of media content analysed; letters to the editor 4%; TV current affairs reports 3%, while 43 TV talk show and lifestyle program segments comprised 2% and editorials 1%.

The most significant findings of this analysis are illustrated in Figures 5-23.

5.1 **Mass media representations of men and male identities – quantitative findings**

Figure 5 shows that men are overwhelmingly represented negatively in mass media news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle media. Content analysis found that 69% of mass media reporting and commentary on men was unfavourable, compared with just 12% favourable and 19% neutral or balanced.

![Media Overview](image)

*Figure 5. Overview of proportions of favourable, unfavourable and neutral media coverage of men and men’s issues.*

**Leading male profiles**

Media representations of men were categorised into profiles or overall themes. This provides a useful overview of the dominant images or portrayals of men and male identities. A total of 1,776 of the 1,799 media articles and program segments analysed contained an identifiable profile or theme. The leading profiles of men and themes in media portrayals of men are shown in Figure 6.
Men are predominately portrayed in mass media as villains, aggressors, perverts and philanderers. More than 75% of all mass media representations of men and male identities categorised into profiles and themes showed men in one of these four ways.

More than 80% of media profiles of men, in total, were negative, compared with 18.4% of content which showed positive profiles or themes. A full breakdown of the positive and negative profiles or themes of men and male identities are shown in the following tables.

**Table 5. Leading positive profiles/themes concerning men in mass media representations.**
Chapter 5

Men in the Media Today – Findings of This Study

Negative Profiles/Themes (–) | Number of Articles | % of Total Articles | Average Favourability |
---|---|---|---|
Villain | 670 | 37.7% | 40.8 |
Aggressor | 422 | 23.8% | 38.1 |
Pervert | 148 | 8.3% | 37.1 |
Philanderer | 107 | 6.0% | 41.8 |
Power abuser | 33 | 1.9% | 37.9 |
Incompetent fool or lazy | 25 | 1.4% | 40.2 |
Deadbeat dad | 24 | 1.4% | 45.2 |
Workaholic | 21 | 1.2% | 46.4 |
Total | 1,450 | 81.6% | 40.9 |

Table 6. Leading negative profiles/themes concerning men in mass media representations.

The proportion of unfavourable reporting of men in relation to the leading profiles or themes was very high (ie. they were represented with few if any redeeming qualities) and the proportion of neutral/balanced reporting was low, suggestive of media bias. This bias may not be intentional and, to some extent, is understandable as criminal charges and court proceedings in relation to violent crime and sexual abuse are, by their nature, predominantly negative. However, a distinct lack of media reporting of defence against charges is evident. As discussed later in this study, many allegations of sexual abuse, harassment and domestic violence were promiently reported, but acquittals and findings of innocence were comparatively little reported.

For instance, when Olympic gold medal shooting champion, Michael Diamond, was charged with assault of his girlfriend, the ‘story’ gained national headlines and prominent media coverage in major newspapers, on television news and was featured in TV current affairs reports. A total of 12 media stories reporting the charges against Diamond were identified in this study. However, when Diamond was subsequently acquitted, only five media stories in the same media reported this and all did so much less prominently than their initial reports. Current affairs TV did not report his acquittal at all, even though the leading current affairs program, A Current Affair, had nationally broadcast the unsavoury and unproven allegations against him.

The main issues categories (topics) reported in relation to men that contributed to these profiles or themes are shown in Figure 7.
Men are mostly reported in mass media news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle media in relation to violence and aggression. A total of 1,178 articles out of 1,799 analysed (65%) reported men in connection with violence and aggression. A further breakdown of the types of violence and aggression reported in relation to men is provided in Figure 8.

Most issue categories (the main topics of coverage) identified in Figure 7 were reported unfavourably, as shown by the average favourability line and average ratings for each issue category (See ‘Methodology’ in Appendix D for an explanation of favourability ratings). Only ‘commitment and responsibility’ was reported slightly favourably overall. Second to ‘violence and aggression’ which was overwhelmingly unfavourable, ‘fatherhood and family’ was reported with an equal mix of unfavourable and favourable content, while male ‘sexuality’, ‘work and career’, men’s ‘social behaviour’ and men’s ‘physical and mental health’ were all reported more unfavourably than favourably.

Figures 8-20 and associated discussion provide analysis of the various categories of media coverage overviewed in Figure 7.
Men and violence

Figure 8. Leading issues in mass media reporting of violence and aggression by men.

As shown in Figure 8 and supporting Table 7, violent crime, including murder, assault, armed robberies and attacks such as bashings, accounted for almost 40% of all media reporting of male violence and aggression. This was followed by sexual abuse (20.5%); general crime (18.6%) and domestic violence (7.3%).

Table 7. Leading issues in mass media reporting of violence and aggression by men broken down by favourable, unfavourable and neutral articles.
Crime statistics show that many incidents of violence are perpetrated by men and, understandably, are reported by mass media. During the period of this study, a number of major violent crimes drew national headlines and extensive media reporting including:

Two tragic cases of fathers “slaughtering their children” were reported by national TV news, A Current Affair and leading newspapers in one month. Media reported that both followed disputes over child custody and access and that “warning signs had been ignored” (A Current Affair, October 1, 2003). In one case at Wilberforce outside Sydney, a father had made threats against his former partner over some time and exhibited clear signs of severe depression. Documents obtained and quoted by The Daily Telegraph reported that the man, Phithak Kongson, “started crying hysterically and walked to the kitchen and picked up a knife” when his former partner came to pick up their four-year-old daughter after a visit (The Daily Telegraph, September 17, 2003). Tragically, after the murders, the mother urged viewers on national television to “Hold your babies tight” (A Current Affair, October 1, 2003). While there can be no excuse for such violent behaviour, perhaps she held them too tight, with the father’s loss of regular contact with his children at the root of his rage. The man stabbed himself in the chest after killing his two children and their grandfather (The Australian, September 16, 2003, p. 1);

A short time later, another father in Sydney killed his three children who were living with his estranged wife, as well as their grandfather, and then took his own life. The man sedated his children before suffocating them and left love messages written in felt pen on their faces including “I love you Ryan, RIP OX” and “I love you Jarrod, RIP, MXXXO” (National Nine News, October 20, 2003; The Daily Telegraph, October 21, 2003 p. 5 and October 22, 2003, p. 11);

A baby boy, Jordan Anderson, was beaten to death by his step-father. National media reported: “His body was beaten; his lips split; his toes clamped. Jordan Anderson suffered a death so terrible … his injuries were quite extraordinary” (National Nine News, December 9, 2003). The Daily Telegraph reported: “The seven-month-old’s torture and suffering ended only when he choked to death on his own vomit” (December 12, 2003, p. 11);
A high profile case involved charges against a man for murdering a 14-month old boy Jaidyn Leskie, at Moe in Victoria in 1998. The boy’s body was found in a dam with a crushed skull and a broken arm, allegedly inflicted by Greg Domaszewicz while he was baby-sitting the toddler who was the son of his girlfriend (The Age, November 25, 2003, p. 1; The Australian, November 26, 2003, p. 3);

The US sniper trial involving 10 random murders in the Washington DC area by two men was widely reported internationally (National Nine News, October 21, 2003) and the guilty verdict and death sentence for the main perpetrator, John Allen Muhammad was accompanied by graphic reports of how he and his accomplice cold-bloodedly shot their victims (The Australian, November 19, 2003, p. 11 and November 26, 2003, p. 9; The Age, November 19, 2003, p. 14);

Also, US reports of the discovery and release of home video footage of the Columbine school killers practising shooting at targets and boasting of the power of using automatic weapons were broadcast internationally and presented shocking images of male violence (National Nine News, October 23, 2003). A press report quoted high school killer Dylan Klebold saying to the camera: “Imagine that in someone’s f…… brain” as he practising firing the automatic weapons. The paper added: “At one point, the gunmen show their bloodied hands from the high-power weapons” (The Australian, October 24, 2003, p. 12);

Yet another US case which drew international headlines was the trial of 54-year old Gary Leon Ridgway for the murder of 48 women between 1982 and 2003 in the Seattle area. Ridgway, who preyed mainly on prostitutes, confessed to the crimes. The case was widely reported and analysed in the media including full-page features in The Daily Telegraph (November 7, 2003, p. 31) and The Australian (November 7, 2003, p. 11) and in major news stories (eg. The Age, November 7, 2003, p. 9);

The disappearance and eventual gory discovery of murdered British schoolgirls, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, brought wide publicity to another violent man, Ian Huntley. Photographs of the two girls in their red Vodafone-branded soccer shirts and
reports of Huntley’s cold-blooded murder of the girls appeared in all major media, as did his life sentence (eg. The Australian, December 18, 2003, p. 10);

In Australia, the man accused of murdering British tourist, Peter Falconio, in the Northern Territory, Bradley John Murdoch, was brought to trial with headlines and photos of a grimacing and snarling Murdoch on front pages including The Age (November 11, 2003, p. 1) headlined “Man held over Falconio case”. The case was also prominently reported in The Weekend Australian (November 15-16, 2003, p. 3) and The Daily Telegraph (November 15, 2003, p. 5). Murdoch was later found guilty of the killing.

Mass media also report violence by women. In this study, all media reports on violent crime were collected for analysis (ie. by men and women perpetrators) to gain a comparison and identify any differences in treatment of men and women on this most prominent issue. This produced 112 additional media reports of female violence (bringing the total media articles analysed to 1,911). Examples of reports of female violence included:

An elderly male shopkeeper was bashed and stabbed by a 21-year-old female ex-employee. The young woman alleged that the man had sexually harassed her, but the man was shown on television to be elderly and frail, making the girl’s claims seem unlikely (National Nine News, August 22, 2003);

A Sydney woman was arrested, accused of murdering her 10-year-old autistic son (National Nine News, August 25, 2003);

A woman appeared in court in Sydney for the murder of her 11-year-old daughter (National Nine News, October 8, 2003);

A mother and her de facto partner were charged with putting the woman’s eight-month old baby girl into a scalding bath. The girl died slowly from serious burns (National Nine News, November 4, 2003);
A US report of girls “hazing” was broadcast on *Oprah*, showing an incident of school girls savagely beating and kicking juniors at Glenbrook North school at Northrock outside Chicago (*Oprah*, July 30, 2003);

An even more serious case of sustained female violence was also the subject of a lengthy *Oprah* interview. Dave Pelzer was reportedly described by US authorities as “the third most abused child out of 38,000 cases in California”. For more than a decade of his childhood, Pelzer was made by his mother to sit on the floor to eat, lie in a bath tub of ice cold water, and be tied up for long periods without food. On several occasions, he almost died and was only rescued when his teachers at school noted his emaciated condition and caught him stealing food. His mother called him “It” because she did not want to recognise him as human, Pelzer recounted on the show from his book, *A Child Called It* (*Oprah*, November 18, 2003);

One of Australia’s best-known TV personalities, Mike Munro, former *60 Minutes* reporter and host of *This is Your Life*, was the subject of a four-page feature article following publication of his biography, *A Patsy Faced Nothing* (Munro, 2003). Like *A Child Called It*, Munro’s title came from what his mother, Beryl, an alcoholic and child-beater, called him throughout his childhood, according to Munro. The article reported that, as a child, Munro was beaten by his mother with “belts and ironing cords” (*Australian Women’s Weekly*, October, 2003, pp. 106-112).

Significant research on female violence presented at a Monash University forum was reported in only one Australian media outlet. Child psychologist Peter Smith from the University of London reported that bullies are just as likely to be girls as boys, but because females mostly use verbal attacks instead of physical violence, they often escape punishment. Smith said “where girls are involved … they bully by spreading rumours or excluding others from a peer group” (*The Australian*, November 21, 2003, p. 5).

The most significant case of female violent crime during the period of this study provides an important comparison with representations of male violence. Kathleen Folbigg was arrested, found guilty and sentenced for the murder of all four of her children. The children’s deaths all occurred during infancy and Folbigg claimed all were victims of
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). As incredulous as the claim was, a case was made that Folbigg should not stand trial for murder or go to prison. It was alleged during the trial that Folbigg herself had been the victim of abuse by her father and that this had caused a mental disorder that rendered her not responsible for her actions (National Nine News, August 29, 2003 and numerous press reports).

Folbigg was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment with no parole, after much heated debate in the court and the media (National Nine News, October 24, 2003). But the case illustrates a significant difference in media treatment and discourse concerning male violence and crime and female violence and crime. The view was widely expressed that Folbigg could not, as a mother, be capable of killing her children unless she was in a deranged state. In the hearing to determine her sentencing, calls for leniency were made on the grounds that her father had caused her to be the way she was. In summary, it was argued that a woman was not capable of such a thing and, if she did it, it was indirectly caused by a man.

Conversely, the case of Stephen Pate, a former Olympian cyclist who was accused and charged for domestic violence, shows a different representation of male violence and crime. In a *60 Minutes* feature story, reporter Tara Brown set the scene by stating that “one in every four women are victims of domestic violence. Millions of Australians are suffering physical and emotional abuse.” The program then presented Pate’s wife stating that he systematically “pulled the curtains, making sure there was no witnesses” to the beatings. Then, in the following sentence, she said: “He chased me out of the front and he’s grabbed me by the hair and I was screaming and he’s pulled me to the ground and he’s kneeling on me with his knee, hitting me, and I’m screaming in the middle of the front yard.” The claims contained a degree of inconsistency which was not investigated by the journalist – for example, after claiming that the husband regularly pulled the curtains and this was the reason his domestic violence was not known, the report described an incident that was clearly public and likely to be observed and heard by neighbours.

The most contentious element of the *60 Minutes* story on Stephen Pate was an interview with Christine Nixon, Chief Commissioner of the Victorian Police. Speaking about men who commit domestic violence, *60 Minutes* reporter, Tara Brown asked: “Do you see them

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1 An appeal was subsequently lodged against Folbigg’s sentence (*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 27-28, 2004, p 9).
as criminals, or someone who has a problem?” Chief Commissioner Nixon replied: “No. I see them as criminals. What I think it’s about is power” (60 Minutes, August 31, 2003).

Nixon’s statement has two important implications. First, it is in conflict with international research on domestic violence such as that cited on the next page. Secondly, it illustrates an attitude towards male crime of ‘lock them up and throw away the key’. This stands in marked contrast to the Kathleen Folbigg case in which considerable discourse was directed towards understanding why she committed the crimes and recognising extenuating circumstances. Significantly, the same claims by Christine Nixon were repeated on national television on September 7, 2003 – Fathers Day.

In the follow up story on Fathers Day, 60 Minutes reporter Peter Harvey described wife bashers as “gutless bastards” and stated “sentencing must get fair dinkum”. There was no mention of treatment or counselling aimed at prevention or rehabilitation (60 Minutes, September 7, 2003).

As cited previously, another prominent sportsman accused of domestic violence during the period was Olympic gold medal shooter Michael Diamond who was charged with assault of his then girlfriend during a drunken argument outside the Queanbeyan Bowling Club near Canberra. The case resulted in Diamond’s shotguns being seized and him missing the 2004 Olympic trials. After much publicity to the allegations, the case was dismissed (The Sydney Morning Herald, September 30, 2003, p. 2; The Age, November 7, 2003, p. 7 and numerous other media articles).

While Oprah (formerly called The Oprah Winfrey Show) features many programs reporting on women’s fashion, shoes, food and other light topics and is part of the genre of daytime television, a major media report on the issue of domestic violence was presented by Oprah during the period of study. “When families turn violent” and a follow-up one-hour special on the theme of “Teach people how to treat you to break the cycle of violence” broadcast in October 2003 presented breakthrough research and thinking on this important issue and are worthy of special comment. In the first program, Oprah interviewed a spokesperson from the Tubman Family Alliance Centre and Linda Mills, a professor from New York University. Mills is the author of Insult to Injury: Rethinking Our Responses to Intimate Abuse and a proponent of different approaches to domestic
violence than previously cited ‘lock them up and throw away the key’ methods of dealing with the problem.

The Tubman Centre advocates that the traditional method of dealing with domestic violence which “tells the woman to leave and goes and arrests the abuser” is not working and advocates an approach to “heal the whole problem”. Mills presented evidence including that around 1,000 women are killed or seriously injured by intimate partners each year in the US. While tragic, this is a relatively small number compared with other victims of crime and in proportion to the total incidences of domestic violence. Significantly, she pointed out that 450 men are also killed or seriously injured each year by intimate partners. “Only one to three per cent of violent relationships end in injury” Mills reported, arguing that, based on the statistics, use of policing to address the problem is inappropriate. Mills argued strongly, based on research, that domestic violence was perpetrated by “men with no ties to the community; men who are unemployed; men who are most likely to get arrested; men who are economically disadvantaged” and pointed out that “these men, when they are arrested, it actually increases the incidence of violence”. Mandatory arrest does not reduce violence, she said, calling instead for a treatment approach to address the underlying causes of domestic violence (Oprah, October 21, 2003).

Oprah Winfrey initially expressed reluctance to accept this concept, seeing it as a ‘go soft’ approach to combating domestic violence. But she visited the Tubman Centre and interviewed men undergoing counselling and treatment for domestic violence. Her experiences led to the follow up program.

In the second Oprah program, Winfrey broadcast extracts from her interviews with men who were abusers. In direct opposition to traditional feminist arguments that male violence against women is caused by a desire for power and control, men in frank discussions aided by counselling reported being driven to rage by fear of losing their relationship, insecurity and feelings of hopelessness. Unable to express these emotions appropriately “men often feel at a disadvantage verbally” and they lash out in anger – what experts on the program termed “the anger blanket”.

Linda Mills and Tubman Centre specialists argued strongly that it was necessary to “help people heal”. “After arrest, he’s just madder,” Mills explained. She said passionately: “It’s
not a he’s to blame, she’s the victim and if we do not get there (to a holistic treatment solution), we will not solve this problem.” Mills also attacked the notion that domestic violence is a ‘man problem’, pointing out that women are just as violent against children as men are. This claim is supported by statistics from the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Oprah Winfrey described her experience in producing the two in-depth reports as “a big moment”, openly admitting it had changed her mind on the issue of domestic violence (Oprah, October 28, 2003).

A constructive treatment and preventative approach to domestic violence addressing the causes, rather than a punitive approach to the manifested symptoms, is gaining ground among professionals. In Australia, the first graduates of a tertiary course in running men’s programs for the prevention of family violence were reported leaving Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne in late 2003 (The Age, November 10, 2003, p. 5).

However, negative attitudes towards men dominate public discourse on domestic violence. As well as Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon’s comment that “… I see them as criminals … I think what is it’s about is power” (60 Minutes, August 31, 2003), Richard Fletcher, reported considerable resistance when he attempted to start a men’s group in Newcastle to work with violent men in 1983. He reported that female colleagues said “you’re wasting your time. Men love bashing their wives” (Arndt, 2003, p. 7).

Sexual abuse also figures prominently in portrayals of violence and aggression by men, with a large number of allegations headlined in mass media. Noteworthy cases which made headlines during the six months period of this study in 2003 included:

Sensational claims, and subsequently charges, against singer Michael Jackson for alleged sexual assault of and “lewd acts” with boys;

Allegations of ‘groping’ against movie star and California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger;
Alleged sexual assault of a teenage girl by American basketballer Kobe Bryant, including allegations that a bodybuilder allegedly offered to kill the 19-year old woman making the allegations to “solve the problem” (The Age, September 20, 2003);

Gang-rape allegations against eight English premiership soccer stars brought by a 17-year old girl (The Daily Telegraph, September 30, 2003, p. 21 and October 6, 2003, p. 9; The Sydney Morning Herald, October 6, 2003, p. 9);

Allegations of “text sex” against high profile Australian cricket star, Shane Warne by a South African woman, Helen Cohen Alon who alleged he sent a series of sexually explicit text messages to her. This case was interesting for a number of reasons including that it showed sexual assault could occur in cyberspace (The Australian, August 11, 2003, p. 1; The Daily Telegraph, August 11, 2003, pp. 1, 4);

In a series of scandals, Shane Warne was also accused by a 16-year old girl of “tongue kissing” her during a Gold Coast night out (The Age, August 14, 2003, p. 1);

Stalking and harassment claims were made against Australian Olympic swimming coach, Greg Hodge, by a former pupil, Emma Louise Fuller;

In the US, 1989 winner of the race to climb the New York Empire State building, Robin Rishworth, was charged with stalking a woman athlete and sentenced to prison (The Age, September 30, 2003, p. 3; The Daily Telegraph, July 31, 2003, p. 24).

Also a number of allegations and charges against less well-known men were reported during the period, including charges against four brothers in Sydney and their subsequent imprisonment for “aggravated sexual assault” (pack rape) of two girls aged 16 and 17 respectively (The Daily Telegraph, November 28, 2003, p. 2).

The claims and subsequent charges against Michael Jackson were reported worldwide including in most of the media sampled in this study. Coverage included front pages such as The Daily Telegraph (November 22, 2003, p. 1) under the headline “Fallen Star”. While outside the sample of this study, and therefore not included in the data, the international
current affairs journal *Newsweek* devoted four pages to the Michael Jackson case under the headline “From Moonwalk to Perp walk” (*Newsweek*, December 2, 2003, pp. 90-92).

Complaints against Schwarzenegger by six women attracted seven newspaper stories from the sample studied including page one headlines (eg. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 3, 2003, p. 1); television news (eg. National Nine News, October 2, 2003); three major feature articles; two opinion columns; and eight letters to the editor. Headlines included “Predator Arnie admits I’ve been a bad boy” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition, October 4-5, 2003, p. 1). The allegations were for “groping” rather than more aggravated sexual assault and Schwarzenegger made an unreserved apology and appeared to show genuine contrition (eg. *The Age*, October 4, 2003, p. 13). Subsequently, he gained an election victory and the allegations disappeared off the front pages quickly.

A number of the claims against cricketer Shane Warne have been shown to lack substance. For instance, in December 2003, a Gold Coast man was charged with and pleaded guilty to blackmail over the alleged tongue kissing of a 16-year old girl. The man admitted calling the Australian Cricket Board with an “exaggerated version of the story and threatened to sell the story to media outlets” (*The Age*, December 17, 2003, p. 11). Warne had a number of colleagues come to his defence against allegations by Helen Cohen-Alon and her appearance on *A Current Affair* stimulated speculation over her motives. But, as the TV program reported in its headline: “Shane Warne back in the headlines – for all the wrong reasons” and his reputation was further damaged irrespective of whether he was guilty or not (National Nine News, August 11, 2003; *A Current Affair*, August 11, 2003). Significantly, neither of these media reported the outcome which was dismissal of the claims and charges against Cohen-Alon for extortion as cited later.

The most widely reported case for alleged sexual assault or harassment involved Australia’s Olympic swimming coach, Greg Hodge. On the night of October 13, 2003, *A Current Affair* broadcast an interview with former swimmer, Emma Louise Fuller, who claimed that Hodge had touched her inappropriately when she was training under his tutelage and had stalked her since she left his team. Fuller told 1.5 million viewers: “He’s a creep. He had a sick obsession with me” (*A Current Affair*, October 13, 2003). Hodge was not advised of the allegations prior to the program going to air and given no opportunity to
prepare a response. He was confronted on camera and asked for a response without knowing the details of the allegations.

The allegations appeared in most national newspapers the following morning (eg. The Age, October 14, 2003, p. 3) and the following night national news reported “Accused swim coach denies stalking his student”. But, as often happens in such cases, the damage was already done. Hodge was suspended as Australia’s national swimming coach and banned from having contact with swimmers (National Nine News, October 14, 2003).

A Current Affair broadcast a follow-up story the night after its initial allegations. The program repeated the claims and reported that it had offered Hodge an opportunity to give his side of the story, but he declined. The second story was even more damning of Hodge, including an interview with Emma Louise Fuller and her mother and father who, understandably, expressed great concern.

For the third night in succession, national news reported yet another allegation against Hodge (National Nine News, October 15, 2003). However, curiously, the second claim was not reported in any other media and was not cited in any subsequent court actions.

On October 16, 2003, A Current Affair reported on the issue for the fourth day in succession. The story, “Swim coach banned from contact with swimmers and coaches”, was mostly a repeat of previous claims.

The media went into a ‘feeding frenzy’ with each trying to outdo the other. On October 16, 2003 The Daily Telegraph (p. 7) reported two other swimmers had alleged Hodge’s coaching methods were “touchy-feely and sleazy”. The next day, on October 17, 2003, The Daily Telegraph (p. 13) reported a fourth swimmer had made allegations of sexual misconduct against Hodge.

In a full-page article in The Daily Telegraph (October 19, 2003, p. 11), family and friends rallied to Hodge’s support and labelled the claims a “witch-hunt” (an interesting metaphor from a gender perspective). The story was reported in all other major newspapers, radio and TV bulletins, as were the claims of his primary accuser, Emma Fuller. In all, the
allegations were reported in 24 newspaper articles within the sample studied, including three front pages, and in more than a dozen TV news and current affairs report.

A number of newspaper features investigated the longer-term and wider ramifications of claims such as those against Hodge. A feature article in *The Daily Telegraph* (October 15, 2003, p. 31) under the headline “Hands-on coaches in male minefield” reported veteran swimming coach Forbes Carlile saying “It’s gone so far that coaches refuse to drive children back to their homes … coaches will not be seen alone with their pupils”. Another major weekend feature headed “Too close for comfort” said “allegations against swim coach Greg Hodge highlight the increasing vulnerability of teachers in a wide range of sports” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 18-19, 2003, p. 36).

The allegations were again aired on National Nine News on October 22, 2003, the day of the first court hearing. However, the matter was adjourned to a later date to allow preparation of cases by lawyers representing Fuller and Hodge. On a ratings roll, *A Current Affair* also reported on October 22, 2003 on “Legal action against swim coach Greg Hodge”.

The final outcome of this case was not known at the time of writing, but what has occurred is salutary. Hodge filed a defamation suit against the Channel Nine TV network over the *A Current Affair* claims and won the case (*The Weekend Australian*, February 29-29, 2004, p. 10). Furthermore, as the alleged sexual harassment case dragged on, the legal process slipped from media and public attention. While comment on the legal merit of the case is not appropriate, according to claims made by Fuller publicly on national television, the extent of Hodge’s alleged sexual harassment amounted to “rubbing Vaseline around and under the top of her swimming costume and pulling her swimming costume out of her buttocks” during training, and his alleged stalking comprised driving his car down her street and sending her an e-mail. Hodge admitted to sending one e-mail in an attempt to repair a breakdown of the relationship that had occurred and claimed that he drove down her street because the service workshop for his wife’s car was in the area.

Should the case against Hodge be proved, the full weight of the law should be used to protect Fuller and analysis of the case is not intended to circumvent proper legal process. But questioning is a permitted and important part of any legal process and inquiry.
Unfortunately, questioning of allegations is rarely conducted by mass media interested in ratings and knowing that sensational allegations against national figures will ensure commercial success. When those national figures are men, they are all the more vulnerable in contemporary societies as a plethora of cases show.

Prominent men can at least afford top lawyers, and some allege that this is why many get off charges. But, for ordinary men, the damage is equally severe and they are less equipped to defend themselves against the charges and the media. Two other cases are cited to demonstrate ‘trial by media’ that occurs and the injustices that can be done to men by allegations of sexual abuse or assault. The first involved a man in Cooktown in North Queensland being run out of town following accusations of paedophilia and sexual assault. To be fair to the media, A Current Affair questioned the justice of what it called “hounding a man out of town without proof of guilt” (A Current Affair, August 27, 2003).

The second case involved allegations of sexual assault against an elderly piano teacher in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia. In a story Headlined “The naming and shaming of Stanley Brown”, A Current Affair reported that the organisation, MAKO, dedicated to the ‘outing’ of paedophiles, had distributed pamphlets stating that Brown had been convicted of the assault of a 13-year old girl in 1995. Brown was the recipient of a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) and was voted ‘Goldfields Citizen of the Year’ before the claims were made against him. He was in fact convicted of the offence in 1995, but he continues to claim his innocence of the charges. He claimed he pleaded guilty because he could not afford to defend the case and wanted to get it over and done with. In any case, he served his sentence and returned to his community to live with his wife and get on with his life. But eight years later, national television turned the spotlight of attention on Stanley Brown (A Current Affair, September 18, 2003).

Claims of sexual assault by men are reported frequently and extend across all levels of society. A series of allegations of sexual assault have been made against priests in the Catholic Church along with allegations of a cover-up of priest paedophilia. Claims that a priest, Phillip Green, sexually molested boys in his care were aired on A Current Affair and Archbishop Doyle of Tasmania was interviewed. The program alleged that the Archbishop lied and covered up facts to protect the priest (A Current Affair, October 31, 2003). Former Catholic priest, Michael Glennon, was described by a judge as “wantonly evil” in
sentencing him to 15 years in jail for sexually abusing four Aboriginal boys between 1984 and 1991. The media reported that, in total, Glennon, has been convicted five times of paedophilia against 15 children since 1978 (*The Age*, October 23, 2003, p. 3). Another former Catholic priest, Michael Joseph McAradhle pleaded guilty and was sentenced in Brisbane on 56 charges of indecently dealing with boys under 14 and six charges of indecently dealing with girls under 14 (*The Australian*, October 9, 2003, p. 4).

Also, in the period immediately preceding this study, the Governor General of Australia, Peter Hollingworth, was forced to resign over allegations that he covered up, or at least did not do enough about, sexual abuse by ministers of his church while he was Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane.

An end of year ‘schoolies’ cruise resulted in five young men being arrested for “brawling, harassment of girls on the cruise and rape of one young girl” (National Nine News, December 17, 2003).

Some of the many other media stories on sexual abuse during the period of this study, implicating many fields and professions, included:

“Five men appeal rape convictions” (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 21, 2003, p. 9);

“No bail for paedophile” (*The Weekend Australian*, September 27-28, 2003, p. 8);

“Child porn arrest” (*The Australian*, October 22, 2003, p. 5);

“Ex-Labor identity in court over child sex” (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 10, 2003, p. 11);

“Ballet teacher in grope claim” (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 1, 2003, p. 15);

“Teacher faces sex charges” (*The Daily Telegraph*, September 26, 2003, p. 8);

“Ten sacked over abuse in schools” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 31, 2003, p. 5);

“Army rape culture denied’ (*The Australian*, October 16, 2003, p. 11);

“Sex case magistrate arraigned” (*The Weekend Australian*, November 15-16, 2003, p. 10);

“Harassment at work rife” (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 13, 2003, p. 26);


Reading mass media, any woman or girl could be excused for believing men are marauding monsters. Some women state as much, not only privately, but in mass media contributing to a highly negative and inflammatory discourse on men and supporting a generalisation that male sexual aggression is pervasive. For instance, in an opinion column, Sian Prior discussed crime statistics which show that, in reality, the incidence of many types of crime are falling or stable. Under the sub-heading “Crime statistics are cold comfort when one is confronted by male violence” Prior reported a man kicking her car door and shouting at her in traffic in the following terms:

Suddenly I was remembering all those other times I’ve been afraid. Fending off a gang of aggressive young men on a train station late at night. Walking home from a bus stop, being followed by a strange man in an overcoat. Backing away from a man who is smiling at me and masturbating in broad daylight in my local park. Locking my car doors while a man shakes his fist at me for taking the last parking spot outside the supermarket. This month the newspapers have been full of stories about men shooting their wives, murdering their fathers-in-law, men strangling prostitutes, men taking their own lives. I’ve been lucky. This kind of extreme violence has never touched me personally. Most of the men I know are gentle, talkative types. (And yes, I know women can be killers too.) But at the back of nearly every woman’s mind lurks a fear of that naked masculine aggression … (*The Age* (September 29, 2003, A3, p. 2).

Sexual abuse and assault are sensitive issues. Clearly, from the statistics, these offences occur and all rational men and women equally abhor such behaviour. But abhorrence of offences that do occur should not incite generalisations or be used to shortcut the processes of justice, including the important presumption of innocent until proven guilty.

It is not only men saying this. In a major feature article headed “In the name of justice”, Bettina Arndt noted: “Seemingly every week some new accusation of sexual misconduct captures public attention” and reported that, when a man is accused of rape, “even if he is innocent, his reputation is forever smeared”. The article quoted a Purdue University study which found more than 40% of rape cases were classified as false by police and FBI
studies using DNA testing exonerated 30-35% of 4,000 sexual assault cases examined over a four-year period (The Sydney Morning Herald, December 2, 2003, p. 15).

A number of court cases have found that women do make false allegations against men. During the period of this research three prominent cases of alleged rape were found to be concocted. In the first, a university lecturer falsely accused her husband of rape and coerced their two teenage children to lie that they had witnessed the assault. Testimony from a friend of the couple’s daughter and surveillance tape revealed that the daughter was shopping at the time of allegedly witnessing the assault (The Age, July 11, 2003, p. 3 and September 4, 2003, p. 8).

In the second case, a young woman law student made six separate false rape allegations including two against a senior political figure. It was reported that the young woman pulled the politician’s name at random from a parliamentary book. In dismissing the charges, the judge described the allegations as “vile and false” (The Age, September 6, 2003, p. 7).

An internationally reported claim alleged that captured American Army private, Jessica Lynch, had been raped by her Iraqi captors. The allegations, on this occasion, were made by a man, Rick Bragg, a former New York Times reporter and author of a biography on Lynch, I am a Soldier Too (The Daily Telegraph, November 7, 2003, p. 33). To her credit, Lynch denied she had been raped and confirmed that Iraqi doctors had cared for her and aided her rescue on April 1, 2003.

The woman who accused cricketer Shane Warne of harassment through explicit text messages was, following the period of this media content analysis, convicted of and jailed for extortion (The Sydney Morning Herald, September 9, 2004, p. 3).

Also, shortly after the period of this media analysis, Sydney football club, The Canterbury Bulldogs, became embroiled in a sensational case in which a number of its players were accused of raping a young woman in Coffs Harbour. The case captured national headlines for several months, during which time media reports alleged that “gang banging” was endemic in football club culture, public signs were erected calling for a number of players to be charged (even before police had completed their investigations), and $1.3 million of sponsorship was withdrawn. After an extensive police investigation, no charges were laid.
due to lack of evidence and conflicting evidence. Police revealed that the young woman making the allegations had lied in some aspects of her evidence and eye witnesses reported that she had willingly gone to the players’ hotel and had been seen in the swimming pool willingly engaging in sex with at least one player in the early hours of the morning shortly before the alleged rape. While lack of evidence supporting some allegations, inconsistencies and conflicts in evidence, and even the woman’s willing participation in sex on some occasions, do not prove that sexual offences did not occur, nor do allegations prove guilt. The Canterbury Bulldogs case illustrates a double tragedy common in sexual assault allegations: a woman may be wronged by the arduous processes of the law to prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt but, on the other hand, men are often assumed to be guilty and their reputations smeared forever solely on the basis of allegations, even when no charges have been laid or they have been acquitted.

**Men and fatherhood**

The headline “Fatherhood is in fashion” was flashed around the world by international news agency Reuters-Associated Press reporting on an international fashion show in Milan in January 2004 and published in leading national newspapers including *The Australian* (January 15, 2004, p. 3). A photo showed a male model on the catwalk clutching the hand of a small boy.

Analysis of mass media content undertaken in this study shows that, indeed, fatherhood is in fashion and a focus of public discourse. The second leading category of media reporting on men was ‘Fatherhood and family’. Some 361 media reports, 20% of the total sample of media articles analysed in this study, discussed men and fatherhood, including many opinion columns and feature articles.

Renewed focus on fatherhood is occurring internationally. In Britain, so-called “fatherhood expert” Adrienne Burgess has been a policy adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair on family issues and she claims “fathers are on the agenda”. Interviewed by Bettina Arndt, Burgess said “there has been a shift in public discourse”. She cited as examples Prime Minister Blair taking time off for the birth of his fourth child in 2000 and Chancellor of the British Treasury, Gordon Brown, taking a month’s paternity leave in 2003 (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 14, 2003, p. 9).
Figure 9. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to fatherhood and family.

In Australia, a sign of fatherhood reaching the political agenda was a National Strategic Conference on Fatherhood held in Canberra in August 2003. Speakers included Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, and “fatherhood consultant” Adrienne Burgess. More will be said on these speakers and their views later. Also, a National Fatherhood Forum has been established and, following the period of this study, the Australian Prime Minister and the Leader of the Labor Opposition both announced policy initiatives directed at fostering involvement by fathers and male role models in children’s lives, echoing similar social and political initiatives in the UK and other countries.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies was reported claiming that one in three children under the age of 18 has little or no contact with his or her father (The Sunday Age, December 21, 2003, p. 11). Researcher Michael Flood from the institute was quoted saying “there is an epidemic of fatherlessness in Australia” with close to one million children living with one parent, usually mothers. Flood said that, after divorce, “more than one third of children do not see their fathers”. In an opinion column in a leading newspaper, he cited author Steve Biddulph who, in Raising Boys, says “boys with absent fathers are more
likely to be violent, do poorly in schools, and join gangs (The Sydney Morning Herald, December 5, 2003, p. 15).

Most media coverage of men in relation to fatherhood and family discussed the level of involvement and role of fathers with children. This is one area where considerable favourable discussion is emerging in contemporary discourse on men, with increasing recognition of the importance of fathers in children’s lives. Under a headline, “Memo feminists: fathers have a role in families too”, Angela Shanahan wrote: “During and after birth, in all the fuss over the mother, one sometimes forgets that babies belong as much to their fathers as to their mothers” (The Age, August 27, 2003, p. 13).

Flood was reported saying: “Fathers are important to the wellbeing of children and families, and supporting fathers positive involvement is a worthy goal” (The Sydney Morning Herald, December 5, 2003, p. 15). The media did not elaborate in any detail on why fathers are important or what role they should play.

A number of celebrity and well-known fathers were profiled in mass media. These included:

A five page feature on actor Russell Crowe talking about the importance of his family and his new-born son (Australian Women’s Weekly, December, 2003, pp. 49-54);

A feature article on a group of well-known musicians including Paul Kelly, Neil Murray and Colin George who combined to produce a CD entitled “Fatherhood” and talked about the importance of their children to them (The Australian, November 20, 2003, p. 12);

A feature entitled “Football’s battle of the dads” profiling fathers in opposing teams playing in a match on Fathers Day (The Sunday Telegraph, September 7, 2003, p. 20);

A major feature in men’s magazine Ralph entitled “Sons of guns” profiling three young sports stars talking about their famous fathers (Ralph, October, 2003, pp. 126-133).
Oprah also featured a series of interviews with famous fathers including John Travolta, Will Smith and Arnold Schwarzenegger talking about their experiences of fatherhood. Of John Travolta, she commented: “His eyes always light up when he talks about his children” (Oprah, September 5, 2003).

In an in-depth special entitled “Secret thoughts children have about their fathers”, Oprah interviewed children about their relationship with their fathers and then interviewed the fathers to discuss their children’s comments. The program presented emotional scenes, with some men crying as they discussed their emotional connections to their children even though they admitted not communicating this adequately. One father reported “a brick wall holding us back from communicating with each other” while another reported that when his ex-wife took his son away it “crushed his heart” (Oprah, July 2, 2003).

In another program Oprah interviewed Roland Warren of the National Fatherhood Initiative in the US and a group of fathers who spoke of their innermost fears and desires, many of which revolved around their children. One of the fathers explained that “every dad has a dream”. Oprah picked up on the comment stating: “I thought dads were just working all the time. Every dad has dream – that’s good” (Oprah, October 7, 2003).

The relationship between fathers and their children was positively portrayed in a major newspaper feature based on an interview with the father of Iran’s Bijani twins, joined at the head and upper body from birth, who died during an operation to try to separate them. Alireza Safaian was the adoptive father of the twins who helped raise them. The article began: “Alireza Safaian is filled with pain. For almost 27 years he cared for the Bijani twins … today they are gone and Mr Safaian wrestles with his emotions”. The headline read: “A father feels the pain of separation” and a sub-heading described how the twins’ father was “devastated by their deaths” (The Sunday Age, July 13, 2003, p. 6).

Australia’s Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, stated in a leading newspaper column: “For too long, fatherhood has been ignored, taken for granted, seen as just about earning the money or laying down the law.” Goward acknowledged: “Men, too, have been disadvantaged by the imposition of gender roles on their lives … for men, the onerous task of being the breadwinner, working in an often thankless job – perhaps ill-paid, long hours, bad conditions – have always been considered proof of their love for their
family” (The Age, August 26, 2003, p. 11). Goward argued that more flexible work arrangements are necessary to allow fathers time off work to spend with their children.

However, along with recognition of the importance of father involvement and the depth of many men’s emotional connection with their children, discussion also contained an almost equal number of criticisms of men for lack of involvement with and commitment to their children. Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, is among the most prolific commentators on the subject with both support for and criticisms of men as fathers. In a number of opinion columns and speeches, Goward blamed lack of father involvement with children on lack of family-friendly workplaces. But she also said men have to be prepared to take time off and proposed the solution required changing work culture as much as changing laws and regulations such as providing paid paternity leave. In one opinion column, Goward said: “Fathers will do their share of parenting when the mood at the office encourages them to” (The Sydney Morning Herald, August 12, 2003, p. 11).

Australia Institute researcher Michael Flood agreed with Goward, writing in an opinion column:

> Fathers’ positive involvement in families after divorce is being hindered, but not by selfish mothers, nor by the Family Court. Fathers face the same obstacles to involvement they did before divorce: the excessive demands of family-hostile workplaces, the economic disadvantages of involved parenting (which many mothers already suffer), and policy barriers to shared care (The Sydney Morning Herald, December 5, 2003, p. 15).

A discussion paper, “Fatherhood and fatherlessness”, produced by the Australia Institute and written by Michael Flood, was widely reported in mass media saying that Government policies encouraging fathers to be breadwinners and mothers to be home-makers, work culture, and “long hours and inflexibility” limit fathers’ involvement with their children. Flood was reported criticising men’s groups for “focussing on men as victims of injustices in family law” as a primary cause of fathers’ separation from their children and for blaming women (The Sydney Morning Herald, December 1, 2003, p. 3).

In a controversial statement that drew wide media debate, Goward said fathers should be denied equal time with their children after divorce unless they share child-care
responsibilities during the marriage (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum, August 16-17, 2003, p. 9). How this could be monitored was not discussed.

Under a headline “Dads who care and share are a small minority”, Flood’s Australia Institute discussion paper was reported by Farah Farouque and Adele Horin as saying that fathers are involved in the day-to-day care of their children in only 5-10% of Australian families and share the physical care of their children in only 1-2% of families (*The Age*, December 1, 2003, p. 8).

An extreme example of public criticism of men over fatherhood and child access was an opinion article by Trish Bolton (credited as a tutor in media and communications at Swinburne and Monash Universities\(^2\)) under the headline “When it comes to child access, many men just don’t want to know”. Bolton reported that, after she ended her marriage, the father of her two children kept in contact for “a year or so”. She wrote:

> … but after less than three months, I knew it wouldn’t last. Somehow, in that short time, his love for them just seemed to evaporate. I would watch helplessly as my little boy sat on top of his suitcase waiting for his daddy to arrive, legs kicking back and forth with anticipation, for a father who often did not keep his promise … There’s a backlash against single mothers. It is being fuelled by commentators such as Arndt who never miss an opportunity to portray single mothers as manipulative and self-serving, a men’s movement that is deeply misogynous, and a Prime Minister who wants to drag women back into the kitchen where he thinks they belong (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 4, 2003, p. 15).

Bolton’s tirade against fathers who do not maintain contact with children after separation drew letters to the editor from men, including Colin Andersen of Lapstone who wrote:

> It doesn’t seem to have occurred to her that it is precisely these fathers and children who need the legislative back-up of a rebuttable presumption of joint custody, given that it is the present family law system that enables mothers who make access difficult to get away with their destructive and bitter combat by routinely awarding them sole custody (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Letter to the Editor, September 5, 2003, p. 10).

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\(^2\) This is cited because the writer was published with her academic position listed, not as a reporter or a simply a member of the public, a factor which affects the semiotic efficacy of the article and shows mass media reflecting societal, in this case, academic discourse.
Bolton’s claims are in conflict with research data such as that of Hawthorne (2002) which shows that 56% of non-resident fathers want more time with their children. Media also reported positively on fathers wanting greater access, such as a feature headed “Fathers get a raw custody deal” by Janet Albrechtsen who claimed 72% of non-resident fathers want more contact with their children (The Australian, December 24, 2003, p. 11).

In the case of divorced and separated parents, some researchers do not agree with Goward and Flood that it is family-unfriendly workplaces and work culture that keep fathers out in their children’s lives. Bruce Smyth, a research fellow at the Melbourne Institute of Family Studies, was reported saying the Institute’s findings suggest “three Rs – re-partnering, relocation, and residual bad feeling” are responsible for lack of father involvement with their children. In other words, mothers remarrying or finding a new boyfriend, moving away, and tensions between the parents keep fathers from their children after divorce. Quoted by Muriel Reddy in a weekend opinion column, Smyth said further: “You could add to this relative economic disadvantage and rotten behaviour in the form of abuse” (The Sunday Age, December 21, 2003, p. 11).

Research investigating the difficulties faced by Australian men in accessing family-friendly policies including paid paternity leave by University of New South Wales sociologist, Michael Bittman, was also reported. According to columnist, Bettina Arndt, Bittman found “many men working in small teams felt they would be letting their workmates down if they took leave … but the crunch issue proved to be economic. Bittman found men don’t take leave because it is not economically feasible”. Arndt cited research showing less than 5% of Australian men take paid paternity leave when it is available (The Sydney Morning Herald, November 14, 2003, p. 9).

A less savoury picture of fatherhood involved international tennis star Boris Becker who was forced to pay out $48 million in a divorce settlement and child support after getting a young women pregnant in a “five minute romp in a broom closet” of a London restaurant. One headline reported: “Boom boom, 5 minutes, $48m” (The Daily Telegraph, November 5, 2003, p. 36).

Another controversial element of fatherhood gaining headlines in mass media is a number of men forced to raise and, in some cases, pay child support for children who recently
introduced DNA testing show are not theirs. In one case that made front page news, a man was reported suing for refund of $75,000 in child support after learning in the Federal Magistrates Court that he was not the father. In another case, a man was awarded $70,000 damages after finding he had paid child support as a result of being misled by his former wife (The Age, October 29, 2003, p. 1).

DNA tests to prove paternity have emerged as a hotly-debated topic. A number of men were reported to be arranging paternity tests without permission or knowledge of the mother or child. The men claimed that permission would be unlikely to be given and, therefore, they had no choice. A Current Affair reported that “secret DNA tests prove men are tricked into supporting children who are not theirs”, citing research which allegedly showed that 20% of men tested are not the biological fathers of their wives and partners’ children. Basil Wainwright of the Men and Legal Equity Group was quoted saying that, in one study of 35 men obtaining paternity tests, 13 (40%) were not the biological father. Interviews with fathers who had found they were supporting children who were not theirs reported “men are being cheated and deceived by wives and partners for emotional and financial gain”. However, women’s groups and mothers were reported to be strongly opposing paternity tests. Elspith McGinnis of the National Council for Single Mothers and their Children called for the banning of fathers secretly testing their children (A Current Affair, August 18, 2003).

An interesting conclusion from this analysis is that the most prolific and most prominent editorial and opinion writers on fatherhood in the extensive media sample studied were:

Bettina Arndt;
Pru Goward;
Michael Flood;
Adrienne Burgess;
Adele Horin;
Julie Szego;
Angela Shanahan;
Muriel Reddy;
Georgina Safe;
As can be seen from the first names, all but one of the most prominent commentators on fatherhood in the wide sample studied are women. Male researchers Bittman and Smyth only appeared in mass media when quoted by women columnists, Bettina Arndt and Muriel Reddy. The writers cited are opinion columnists and commentators who contributed ‘expert’ views and personal comment. News reporters, who are ostensibly assigned irrespective of gender, were excluded from this list. While not suggesting that women should not have views on fatherhood, Deleuze’s warning that “only those directly concerned can speak in a practical way on their own behalf” (Foucault, 1977, p. 209) and feminist claims to the superiority of “self-validating” rather than “other-validating” in objectivity/subjectivity debates (Hearn, 1993) are salutory. For whatever reason, men are largely absent in discourse on one of the topics which research suggests is most important to them.

Even more ironic and questionable on the grounds of subjectivity and experience is that Adrienne Burgess was quoted in several media articles as a “fatherhood expert” and a “fatherhood consultant”. She is author of *Fatherhood Reclaimed: The Making of the Modern Father* (Burgess, 1997), a book that was written before she and her husband, Martin Cochrane, became parents. Following publication of the book, she became a policy adviser on fatherhood and child support issues to the Blair Government in Britain before returning to her native Australia. Her gender (and childlessness at the time of writing the book) do not invalidate Burgess’ views on fatherhood nor her ability to contribute to debate through research, but the dominance of female perspectives on key men’s issues such as fatherhood, including describing men’s feelings, concerns and level of interest, is evident from this analysis of mass media discourse and, one can argue, contributes gender bias. A man writing in the same way on motherhood would be greeted with some incredulity.

Inter-related with fatherhood and child involvement by fathers, the next most discussed issues in connection with men and fatherhood were child custody, the Family Court and child support. Discussion of single/lone parent families and ‘deadbeat dads’ (a term commonly used for non-resident dads and even enshrined in a 1998 US child support bill.
as cited by Hawthorne 2000) also featured prominently in mass media reporting of men as fathers, some of which have already been cited.

A number of men and men’s organisations are outspoken in criticisms of child custody laws, Family Court procedures and child support arrangements. However, despite men’s complaints that child custody arrangements deny fathers adequate access to their children and strong criticisms by men of child support arrangements which they say cause them financial hardship and give them little say in how their payments are applied, the majority of mass media discussion of these issues comprised criticisms of men. Some – again mostly made by women writers – contained vitriolic attacks on men. For example, Catharine Lumby, in a full-page column in a national current affairs magazine said:

Family law – or, more accurately, the law regulating marriage and divorce – is one of the most contentious areas of law on the books. But it’s critical to remember that the intense controversy surrounding it is fuelled by the vocal criticisms of a tiny minority of the millions of Australians who’ve been through a relationship breakdown. And it’s a tiny minority overwhelmingly made up of men … *(The Bulletin, July 8, 2003, p. 31).*

Lumby is contradicted by a report that a record 1,500 submissions were received by the Australian Federal Government Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs which examined child custody issues and also by reports that “angry groups representing divorced mothers and fathers have joined with Labor MPs calling on John Howard to extend the controversial inquiry” *(The Weekend Australian, September 13-14, 2003, p. 3).*

As a postscript, *The Australian* reported that, by April 2004, the inquiry had received almost 2,000 submissions and conducted 26 public hearings *(The Australian, April 27, 2004, p. 1)*. That is hardly a “tiny minority” fuelling the controversy. Lumby continued in her column to attack men’s groups in the following terms:

Fathers rights groups … have been tremendously successful in gaining the ear of senior politicians. And yet their major claims have no empirical support … the real agenda is about reasserting a patriarchal model of the family … *(The Bulletin, July 8, 2003, p. 31).*

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3 This article is cited for pertinent background information. It was not included in the data as it was published outside the period of the study.
A number of writers were scathing of the Australian Family Court. Janet Albrechtsen described the court as “a graveyard of reform” and pointed to a feminist bias in the court’s approach. She said:

The social experiment began with the best intention. The Family Court, established in 1976, promised a revolutionary system for dealing with family breakdown – one that sought outcomes in ‘the best interests of the child’. But the 1970s were feminism’s heyday. And so that message – the best interest of the child – was filtered through a feminist prism where the denigration of men refracted into the belittling of fathers (The Australian, December 24, 2003, p. 11).

Federal MP, Kay Hull who was appointed chair of the Standing Committee inquiry into child custody arrangements, interviewed by Diana Bagnall in a national current affairs magazine said:

There is not one person who has come in front of us, even those who have been successful in the Family Court, [or] who have shared-parenting arrangements, [who have not been] scathing and hateful about the processes that they went through … It’s the cost and trauma of the adversarial process being fingered here, as well as a perceived bias against the parenting skills of breadwinners (usually male), but more and more working mothers find themselves fighting to prove their caring cred (sic) (The Bulletin, September 16, 2003, p. 12).

Letters to the editor also showed major dissatisfaction, particularly among men, with their experiences of the Family Court. Two examples were:

I can testify to the benefits of shared-care after divorce. But I can also confirm the horrific battle that men encounter in the Family Court when they attempt to fight for their rights and the rights of their children to have equal access to their fathers. If [this proposal for shared access] is not supported, we will face a culture in which fatherhood is relegated to history, the epidemic of male suicide will continue to escalate, and men will face child rearing with fear rather than joy (Name withheld, Queensland, The Bulletin, July 15, 2003, p. 8).

… spare a thought for those of us who have been, and are, in court fighting for the right to have our children on an equal basis. My ex-wife left me for another man, taking my children,
and I have been fighting for them ever since (Name withheld, ACT, The Bulletin, July 15, 2003, p. 8).

The same issue of The Bulletin reported that proposals for rebuttable joint custody opposed and described as “unworkable” by a number of women’s groups and agencies (eg. The Sole Parents Union whose president, Kathleen Swinbourne, said overseas evidence showed the move was “terrible for children, treating them as divisible pieces of property”) was already law in eight US states (The Bulletin, July 8, 2003, p. 22).

Barry Williams, president of the Lone Fathers Association, was reported saying of existing child custody arrangements “the system is so stacked against men that it is fuelling a massive rise in the number of male suicides …we are dealing every night with people threatening suicide” (The Daily Telegraph, July 7, 2003, p. 2).

The problem appears to exist internationally in major western societies. A New Zealand father whose ex-wife moved to Australia with their daughter highlighted the problems many separated fathers face. In an article entitled “One man’s desperate appeal to get his daughter back” Steven Petty reported spending $10,000 trying to find his daughter, but had not been able to locate her and had not seen her for many months (National Nine News, September 10, 2003). A newspaper headline also reported “Family tug-of-war across the Tasman” (The Daily Telegraph, September 11, 2003, p. 20).

While the Australian Federal Government’s appointment of an inquiry into child custody arrangements provided men’s groups and individual men, as well as women, a chance to communicate their concerns for and commitment to their children, negative stories of fathers not meeting their responsibilities were frequent in mass media. Under the headline “Child support scandal”, current affairs TV reported the case of Roger Miller who had not paid his former wife any child support over several years. The program reported that there were 66,000 cases of fathers “refusing” to pay child support, amounting to $617 million in unpaid child support (A Current Affair, July 18, 2003). The same program followed up the issue the next week under the headline “Sorry track record on child support”, again profiling Roger Miller as a “serial deadbeat dad” (A Current Affair, July 23, 2003). Then the program followed up again on the issue a few months later presenting more cases of fathers who had not paid child support. No fathers who paid child support were
interviewed in any of the three nationally televised peak-viewing time programs (A Current Affair, September 1, 2003).

As reported under ‘Men and violence’, a number of media articles reported fathers abusing and even killing their children, particularly following child custody disputes. For instance, a full page feature in The Daily Telegraph examined male-perpetrated infanticide under the headline “When a father’s love takes an evil turn” (September 17, 2003, p. 27). The national daily, The Australian, also published a full-page feature the same day headlined “When dads get deadly” (p. 13). It reported that 25 children are killed by their parents each year in Australia and fathers are responsible for 63% of these murders. However, buried in the long feature article were statements by research analyst from the Australian Institute of Criminology, Jenny Mouzos, that even though fathers were responsible for most filicide, “the numbers are inflated by non-biological fathers (step-fathers) who kill children”. While not making these deaths any less tragic, Mouzos pointed out that the figures on the distribution of parents who killed children by gender and biological ties shows “mothers posed a more lethal risk to their own”. Biological mothers account for about 35% of all filicides, while biological fathers account for 29%, Mouzos reported (The Australian, September 17, 2003, p. 13).

A difference in societal attitudes towards men and women committing filicide is evident in media discourse. Most filicides committed by mothers involves infants, and post-natal depression is commonly cited in such cases (eg. Kathleen Fogbigg), leading to an increasing focus on a treatment approach rather than a punitive approach. However, despite reports and data showing that most men who kill their children do so in a state of severe depression (eg. Australian Institute of Criminology statistics show most fathers killing their children also kill themselves), often linked to divorce and separation from their children, a punitive approach continues to be taken towards fathers who kill their children. Responses reported in mass media include calls for more AVOs (Apprehended Violence Orders) and refuges for women, with little discussion on help for men in distress. The two Oprah programs previously cited were the only two examples of the latter.

A major front page story in The Age headlined “The Family Court: how it can push men over the edge” reported that the court was investigating the extent to which its decisions contributed to male suicides. The article reported: “Little research has been conducted in
the area, but the most recent, published in the *Journal of Family Studies* seven years ago, found that separated men were six times more likely to commit suicide than married men”. The article noted “nearly 2,000 men kill themselves every year in Australia and the number is rising” (*The Age*, August 19, 2003, p. 1).

Following this study, the Australian Federal government announced a review of child custody laws and a review of gender equity in schools including proposed incentives to encourage more men teachers (*The Australian*, March 10, 2004, p. 1). Also, the Federal Opposition Leader spoke of a “crisis in masculinity” and proposed mentoring programs for boys and involving fathers more (*The Australian*, February 18, 2003, p. 1).

**Men and sexuality**

As in many issue categories (subject areas) studied, male sexuality was predominantly negatively portrayed. One third (33%) of all discussion of male sexuality was in relation to paedophilia, as shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10.** Leading issues in mass media reporting of male sexuality.

Worldwide, mass media headlines followed the Michael Jackson case leading up to and including his arrest for alleged sexual offences against children (National Nine News,
November 21, 2003 and numerous newspaper and magazines articles already cited under ‘Men and violence’). In Australia, claims of extensive paedophilia rocked both the Catholic and Anglican churches.

Male homosexuality has become prominent in media representations of men, highlighted in TV shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and numerous press reviews that followed its international launch. One headline described the program as “the queering of popular culture” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 13, 2003, p. 15). Homosexuality is lightly and positively portrayed in *Queer Eye*. However, media coverage continues to reflect gay stereotypes, and homosexuality was negatively portrayed in other media content with criticisms of gay marriages and social commentary reflecting homophobia.

Significantly, however, heterosexuality was equally negatively portrayed. Male heterosexuality was often associated with traditional (hegemonic) masculinity and seen as violent, aggressive and dominating. Often homosexual men were portrayed as more sophisticated and sensitive than heterosexual men.

International controversy was created by Germaine Greer (2003) with her book, *The Beautiful Boy*, which was cited as paedophiliac in tone. The arch-feminist defended her pictorial collection of pre-pubescent boys, claiming the beauty of the male as an object of female desire has been repressed and that the images, mainly from Western art, explored the shifting meanings and presentations of masculinity. But most reviewers and social commentators found it voyeuristic and sexual objectification. Greer received some criticism, although it was muted. Columnist for *The Telegraph* in London, Sarah Sands, republished in *The Age*, said “the photographs of ‘ravishing’ young men with slightly paedophiliac picture captions, struck me first as amusing waywardness from the great maverick feminist. But on consideration, I think this may be the logic of Greer’s feminism. No equality, but straightforward role reversal” (*The Age*, September 4, 2003, p. 15).

It is beyond this analysis to compare reaction to a man publishing a book of photos of pre-pubescent girls, but Greer’s text raises a number of questions including whether her approach is reverse sexism and whether it is objectification to which women have long objected.
Male sexuality faces a growing trend towards objectification in mass media strikingly similar or parallel to the objectification of women which has been widely documented. The top-rating TV show *Sex and the City* has been an exemplar in objectification of men as sex objects for the gratification of women. In a major feature published in *The Observer* in London and reprinted in *The Age, Sex and the City* scriptwriter, Cindy Chupack advises women to pass on boyfriends after they have finished with them which she terms “man-me-downs” (*The Age*, August 9, 2003, A2, p. 2).

A TV current affairs segment entitled “Love in Australia” reported that 75% of 30-year olds have never married and featured an interview with a young woman and a young man commenting on what they wanted in the opposite sex. The woman stated: “I don’t like short men, or men with hairy chests. They have to look good in a singlet … have a six-pack” (*A Current Affair*, October 6, 2003). Such body focus is increasingly being turned on men after several decades of trying to free women from its constraining grip.

Women’s magazines take objectification of men to extremes in much the same way as men’s magazines have treated women. Men in women’s magazines are either young, virile, waxed ‘hunks’ with ‘six-pack’ stomach muscles and model looks, or figures of ridicule. For example, with no apparent editorial rationale other than voyeurism, *Cosmopolitan* presents its “Guy without a shirt” section, featuring a young man in a swimming costume or underwear only. Soccer star, David Beckham was featured in the October 2003 issue with the sub-heading “Want to see Becks take a free kick – naked?” Under the heading in the November 2003 issue the magazine unashamedly urged readers “Check out this month’s half-naked spunk”.

*Cosmopolitan* (November 2003) published a sealed section entitled “The Penis Monologues” with a sub-title “What his willy wants to know”. While the section contained informative advice on giving sexual pleasure to a man, it was full of machismo claims (allegedly made by men) presented with more than a touch of sarcasm and ridicule such as:

I have the most manly penis in the world. Erect, he’s as strong as a battle ram and has more throbbing veins than a heart … (Big John, 35)” and “My biggest asset, literally, is my penis. When erect, it’s 20 centimetres long. And I can stay erect for nearly four hours. Women stare
speechlessly at me when I cycle through town wearing my Lycra pants. No doubt they all want to ride me (Freddy, 25) (Cosmopolitan, November 2003).

Reflecting other prominent portrayals of men as sexually promiscuous, commitment phobic and not as smart as women, other features in the same edition included “Cheatproof your relationship”; “Find out if your relationship can handle a baby” and “Remember that idiot who dumped you out of the blue” (Cosmopolitan, November 2003).

Men’s magazines such as FHM and Ralph were equally focussed on sexuality, sexual activity and men’s sex drive, mostly with a performative focus. Examples from men’s magazines are further cited in qualitative content analysis.

Traditional objectification of men as potential husbands also continues in mass media. Typical of ‘man chasing’ stories was a feature article on “husband hunting hot spots” in Sydney. The article reported that “Sydney’s pubs are going through a … revival as women map out a city-wide husband-hunting guide”. It continued: “Women, particularly those in their 30s, were very focussed in terms of dating and it was not surprising they had mapped out the city’s bars for particular types of men” (The Daily Telegraph, August 8, 2003, p. 16). The article was not an isolated instance of representing men as ‘prey’. Cosmopolitan presented a major three-page feature entitled “Romeo, Romeo, where the hell are you Romeo?” The feature cited a Harlequin North American Study which claimed “50% of single women are in active search of Mr Right” (Cosmopolitan, October 2003, pp. 96-100).

A notable feature of positive representations of men as sensitive and emotional is that these traits are referred to frequently as men’s “feminine side”. In Figure 10 this issue was categorised as unfavourable as it suggests that sensitivity and emotional depth are not male characteristics and that men can only attain these positive characteristics by being or becoming female. For instance, while referring more to fashion than sexuality, a page three feature in Australia’s leading national newspaper was headlined “Femininity rules … and that’s just for the blokes”. The article reported that “so far this season two words sum up the menswear collections: camp and effeminate” (The Australian, July 2, 2003, p. 3).
Men and work

Another prominent category of mass media reporting of men is in relation to work and career. This period of this study (2003) was one of relative economic stability and growth in a number of western economies, particularly Australia. Therefore, job losses and redundancy were not as prominent in mass media reporting as they have been in periods of economic recession.

A number of researchers have noted the centrality of work in men’s lives (eg. O’Connor, 1981, p. 51; Segal, 1990, p. 297; Tacey, 1997, p. 124; and Webb, 1998, p.129). However, the leading issues discussed in mass media in relation to men’s work and career indicate a significant transition is occurring. While career success was the most prominently reported issue, Figure 11 shows that career success received as much criticism as positive reporting and, overall, career success was seen as only slightly favourable. Work versus family and lifestyle was extensively discussed, particularly in opinion columns and feature articles. This suggests that a major social shift is underway with increased recognition (or at least discussion) of the importance of family and lifestyle outside of work and career success.

![Leading Issues](image)

**Figure 11.** Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to work and career.
One media report headlined “Working yourself to death” suggested that the Japanese phenomenon of karoshi (death from overwork) had arrived in Australia. The article reported that stress claims had increased, deaths at work had risen 30% from 2001 to 2002 and the number of Australians working long hours (50 hours per week or more) had doubled in the past 20 years (The Daily Telegraph, August 21, 2003, p. 22).

Another media report cited a 2003 Relationships Australia survey which found 90% of Australian couples say that finding a balance between their work and lifestyle is straining their relationship (The Sunday Telegraph, December 14, 2003, p. 51).

A number of books on work and its effects were reported and reviewed during the period of this study, including Barbara Pocock’s The Work/Life Collision (Pocock, 2003) and a book written by academics from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology who traced workplace transformations over the past 20 years. The book, Fragmented Futures – New Challenges in Work Life, reported that workers are putting in more hours than ever before and since the late 1980s more than 1.2 million women have entered the workforce compared with 700,000 men – although it noted that around half of the new jobs for women were in low-skilled fields (Watson, Buchanan, Campbell & Briggs, 2003).

A full-page health and science feature headlined “White collar blues” reported that “a life based on career success, materialism and dodging social ties is making some men miserable” (The Sydney Morning Herald, September 11, 2003, pp. 1-2).

A Sydney Morning Herald feature in its My Career section reported of men and work: “They also want to be part of their children’s lives. Inside the office, however, it can be another story.” The article stated: “There’s a tension between what companies want productivity-wise and what an employee needs to do to be a good father, and they’re often at odds with each other. The difficulty is that just as males are getting into their peak career mode, they’re also getting into family mode” (The Sydney Morning Herald, My Career, May 4-5, 2003, p. 1).

Another My Career supplement reported that 88% of Australians claim they are not valued, feel demoralised, suffer from stress and anxiety, and their work encroaches on their private lives” (The Sydney Morning Herald, My Career, September 13-14, 2003, p. 1).
Columnists have focussed on the issue. For instance, Emma Tom contributed an opinion article to *The Australian*’s The Wry Side section entitled “Workaholics willing to be bled dry for the corporate cause”, reporting on corporate office workers spending long hours at work. The trend is international, with Tom reporting UK research by a London-based market research company which found more than 40% of men and 23% of women would welcome spending evenings or the entire night at the office (*The Australian*, October 22, 2003, p. 15).

Angela Shanahan suggested that “maybe there is no balance in the work-family juggle” and argued that feminism has replaced the model of male breadwinner with a new model where both men and women work and “reinforces the idea that a mother is worth something only if she works” (*The Age*, August 5, 2003, p. 11).

However, one positive example that things are changing headlined “New generation of men who share the load” noted “fewer and fewer modern young women are prepared to tolerate what their baby-boomer mothers took for granted – a bread-winning husband who kept his nose out of the child-rearing and home-making” and claimed that there has been “a generational shift which is invisible to many commentators about the way child care and domestic duties are split”. The author, James Woodford, argued that “many young couples are trying out new ways of sharing the work, simply because it makes more sense to do so, and are waiting for government and employer policies to catch up”. Woodford cites his own personal experience after his wife and he had a child, saying “I found myself forced to wind back my hours at the office and then cut down to four days, then three days before finally deciding to work from home and care for our three-year-old daughter” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 29, 2003, p. 11). However, most men report that they do not have the flexibility or the financial capacity to cut back to part-time work or work from home and many of their wives either cannot earn enough to replace their husband’s income or do not want to work, as US study cited in the next few pages has found.

The high volume and conflicting nature of mass media messages on men and work suggest that today’s men and women are living on the cusp of major social and industrial change.
Reports of discrimination against women and workplaces being a “boy’s club” were also reported frequently and unfavourably. The ‘glass ceiling’ was cited in 17 articles, particularly in relation to the law and senior management positions in large corporations. For instance, in a major feature headed “The feminine effect on the law”, then newly appointed Chief Justice of the State of Victoria, Marilyn Warren, argued that “women who break through the glass ceiling have an obligation to help those below” and claimed that more women should be promoted to senior positions in the law because:

… women are adaptive and flexible … women bring to the law a strong sense of method … women bring a combination of typically feminine characteristics to the law: energy, patience, humour and insight … My list is not exhaustive. It is intended to highlight the difference that women bring to the law (The Sydney Morning Herald, November 15, 2003, p. 11).

Warren’s comments not only position her as a ‘difference’ feminist, but are another example of what Nathanson and Young (2001) call superiority feminism, containing a generalisation that method, energy, patience, humour and insight are characteristics which women are better able to provide than men.

A full page feature in The Age headlined “Engendering a legal minefield” reported “the good news for women lawyers: more are getting plum jobs. The bad news: a male backlash”. The article claimed: “… despite the Government’s recent efforts, women remain only a small fraction of those in senior positions in the law; women barristers continue to be denied an equal share of senior briefs; and female lawyers generally earn on average $20,000 a year less than men” (The Age, Insight, December 6, 2003, p. 8).

Anne Summers’ (2003) book The End of Equality, which was widely reviewed and reported, identified the law as an example of a field in which women’s advancement has “ground to a halt in the face of male opposition” and attacked institutionalised forces in workplaces which she claimed can only be addressed by government regulation and support for women such as child care.

Claims of a “boys’ club” discriminating against women and a “backlash” seeking to undermine women’s efforts are rife in mass media – often without supporting evidence. In a review of Summers’ book, columnist, Emma-Kate Symons wrote: “As Summers shows,
some powerful men are trying to take back women’s hard-earned gains of the 1970s and ’80s through legal, political and social means” (*The Weekend Australian*, Books Extra, November 29-30, 2003, p. 6).

Columnist Jane Albrechtsen has earned the ire of many feminists and has been branded a conservative by disagreeing with generalised claims of discrimination at work. Rejecting Summers’ views in *The End of Equality*, Albrechtsen said “nuance is still nowhere to be seen”. She wrote:

> Well-educated middle class women like to tell us that women want a leg up, a short cut, and they want power. They want to run the show, sit in the nation’s boardrooms, in its courtrooms and in parliament … Undoubtedly, discrimination may still be part of the answer. Yet there is also so much more to it than one-word slogans. Add some nuance and what looks like discrimination and regression starts to look a lot like a reflection of women’s choices. Some women prefer the playground to the boardroom. Some women use the professions as a marriage market. Some women like to be kept. Nuance like this may be unpalatable, but that does not make it untruthful … Feminism has some growing up to do (*The Australian*, December 3, 2003, p. 15).

But Albrechtsen is one of very few voices raised in defence of men in any way and, as noted in analysis of sources quoted in mass media, it is interesting that this defence is mounted by a woman columnist and not men. This gender imbalance in authors writing on men’s issues and sources quoted raises important questions worthy of further investigation. Do media editorial policies in relation to social and gender issues favour women? Or are men unconcerned or disinterested? Or have men been silenced in some way?

Research in the US showing that many women are choosing home and children instead of paid employment was reported. Media quoted US Census Bureau data showing the number of stay at home mums has increased by 13% in less than a decade. And it is not only women with limited or no opportunities who are staying at home, according to media reports. Research conducted among women graduates from leading US universities has found “high achievers are ditching the hard-fought-for privileges to be stay-at-home mums” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 12-13, 2003, p. 32). A report by Lisa Belkin entitled “The Opt Out Revolution” published in *The New York Times Magazine* and cited
in Australian media reported that only 38% of women graduates from Harvard Business School work full-time and half of Princeton University graduates interviewed by Belkin had left their top-rating jobs (The Sydney Morning Herald, December 9, 2003, p. 11). In another feature it was reported: “The stalwart feminists of the 1970s might be horrified, but it seems that their daughters – highly educated and driven since birth to be professional high achievers – are reaching their late 20s or early 30s and finding that a career is not all that it was cracked up to be” (The Australian, September 15, 2003, p. 10).

Men bearing the brunt of industrial rationalisation and corporate restructuring, suffering career burn-out, and living alienated from their families are likely to feel that it was feminist generalisations about so-called male power and privilege that eulogised paid work over personal life and family and, in so doing, did a disservice to men and women.

Some argue that women leaving the paid workforce is simply a sign of workplaces failing women through inflexibility and working to male rules. However, Belkin disagrees saying that women are also rejecting the workplace even when it is tailored to their needs. “They are redefining the meaning of success in their lives” she was quoted as saying in a major feature entitled “Reclaimed by biology” (The Weekend Australian, November 1-2, 2003, p. 24).

An example of a positive media report showing many men do not discriminate against female workers featured ‘Muddy Mary’ – South Australia’s first official apprentice brick layer. Con, Mary’s father, her mother Angela, and work mates on the building site where she worked were interviewed and, in response to the interviewer’s question about whether it mattered if bricklayers were girls, one co-worker stated: “As long as they do the job, it doesn’t matter. Male, female, or space men” (A Current Affair, August 5, 2003).

It is significant that only career success, promotion and achievement were reported favourably overall in relation to men’s work and careers – and even these aspects of work were subject to considerable criticism and negative comment. All other issues were unfavourable, including working hours and pay and earnings.

Melbourne’s and one of Australia’s leading daily newspapers, The Age devoted a major series to “Suicide: Men at risk” and, as part of the series, interviewed seven prominent
educated professional men on their experiences and the “trials of manhood”. One of the recurrent themes in the men’s comments was the importance of work in their lives and in providing their identities. A school teacher and former priest commented: “We tossed this around, we (men) define ourselves primarily through work. Once our work begins to take on a meaninglessness, everything else goes with that. We are Industrial Revolution people. We have been defined primarily by what we can output, not by what we can take in.” A school principal stated: “I’m a school principal. If I’m not a school principal any more, what am I?” (The Age, August 20, 2003, p. 13)

Despite relative economic stability and low unemployment during the period of this study, Professor Sue Richardson from the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University warned that Australia is creating a “dangerous” underclass of young unemployed unmarried men. Adele Horin reported Richardson speaking at a conference in Canberra where she said “35 per cent of Australian men aged 35-44 in 2003 were not married and did not have a full-time job. This compared with 20 per cent in 1978.” The headline of Horin’s report summarised young males’ plight as “Jobless, single and male: society’s forgotten outcasts” (The Sydney Morning Herald, October 2, 2003, p. 11).

Interestingly, as with fatherhood, the most prominent writers on men in relation to work in the mass media studied were women including:

Pru Goward;
Bettina Arndt;
Angela Shanahan;
Susan Mitchell;
Emma Tom;
Barbara Pocock;
Adrienne Burgess;
Adele Horin;
Judy Adamson;
Julie-Anne O’Hagan;
Brigid Delaney;
Sherrill Nixon; and
Male bylines writing about this subject were far fewer. They were, most notably, Michael Flood, Michael Bachelard, Tim Colebatch and Tom Morton.

**Men’s social behaviour and body image – representations of masculinities**

Mass media representations of male social behaviour are widely varied, but again portrayals of men are predominantly negative as shown in Figure 12.

‘Metrosexuals’ is a new buzz word in mass media in relation to men. The term has emerged as the most prominent male identity portrayed in mass media in relation to men’s social behaviour. Reportedly coined by British author Mark Simpson in 1994 and allegedly made popular by New York trend-spotter Marian Salzman (Barker, 2004), the term refers to men who are fashion-conscious and well-groomed, often to the point of wearing make-up and waxing to remove body hair.

![Figure 12. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to social behaviour.](image-url)
Related to social behaviour, men are increasingly portrayed in mass media as body conscious, users of make-up and beauty products and, to a lesser extent, devotees of waxing for hair removal and body building. Traditional masculinity in the sense of strong, muscular, rugged and hirsute appearance is also represented in mass media, but less so than metrosexual images and in negative as well as positive ways. Traditional masculine appearance is increasingly criticised in favour of David Beckham and Ian Thorpe type images of hairless, coiffured gymnasium-sculpted male bodies and Botox-injecting metrosexuals.

![Leading Issues](image)

**Figure 13.** Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to body image.

Top-rating international current affairs show, *60 Minutes*, devoted a major segment to “Metro Man”. International soccer star and “sex symbol”, David Beckham, was cited as the ideal metrosexual. Australian examples cited were Olympic swimmers Ian Thorpe and Geoff Heugill, resplendent with their hairless bodies, along with singer, David Campbell. Reporter Charles Woolley reported: “They’re into makeovers, make-up and moisturisers, know everything there is to know about shirts and shoes and, for what it’s worth, they’re straight” (*60 Minutes*, August 24, 2003).
Australia’s other national current affairs TV show was not far behind in reporting on this major issue. At least A Current Affair recognised the commercial motives behind the metrosexual trend with its report entitled “The boom industry that allows men to lie back and think of make-up” (A Current Affair, September 19, 2003).

Not to be outdone by 60 Minutes’s rhetoric, A Current Affair did a follow-up program on Botox treatments being used by men as well as women. Reporter Brady Hall matched Charles Woolley’s alliteration describing “the body beautiful Botox world” (A Current Affair, December 2, 2003).

A major feature in The Sunday Telegraph titled “Metro Man” featured Olympic swimmer, Ian Thorpe; soccer star David Beckham; actor Hugh Jackman; fashion guru Wayne Cooper; actor George Clooney; Australian TV personality and former male stripper Jamie Durie; and cricketer Brett Lee among others as examples of “Metro Man” (The Sunday Telegraph, July 20, 2003, pp. 10-11).

Men’s magazine Ralph, published a quiz headed “Are you a metrosexual” in a tongue-in-cheek tone. But the underlying message was that, if a man was not a metrosexual, he was a sexist, football-loving, beer-drinking slob – ie. traditional heterosexual men are ‘out’ and metrosexuals are ‘in’ (Ralph, October 2003, p. 125).

Despite the levity of Ralph magazine’s approach, there are signs that men are concerned and conflicted by the shifting kaleidoscope of identities paraded in mass media. A letter to the editor from a young man summarised concerns expressed by many men. Under a headline “Men in need of direction” the writer stated: “The increasing trend towards this portrayal of men in advertising is a representation of the indeterminate role of males in modern society … men are less secure in the part they have to play in the social structure … for the young male, there is a great deal of confusion about the contribution they have to make to society and in relationships…” The letter concluded by appealing against “lauding one gender and denigrating the other” (The Daily Telegraph, July 7, 2003, p. 10).

A Sunday magazine feature was sub-headlined “Some modern males don’t know whether they’re Arthur or Martha (Stewart that is)” and commented of modern men that “his generation is fighting a battle for masculinity on multiple fronts: personal grooming;
housework, childcare, communication and general touch-feely-ness. It’s no wonder many are floundering. Experts are calling this new male plight ‘Atlas syndrome’” (*Sunday Life* magazine in *The Age*, November 9, 2003, p. 12).

Janet Albrechtsen came out in strong opposition to the so-called metrosexual revolution. In a national column headed “Stop tampering with the male” and with an overline stating “Metrosexual Man, representing the temporary triumph of androgyny over biology, is feminism’s Frankenstein”, she asked “what would liberated assertive, independent women find attractive about girly boys who hog the mirror?” Albrechtsen also questioned a study which defined a metrosexual as having “little interest in military hardware or heroism, he prefers salmon pink shirts and loves to share his shopping with his friends. His most common vice is – brace yourself – being passive” (*The Australian*, August 6, 2003, p. 11).

Some commentators have cited mass media reporting of this alleged new trend as nothing more than a cynical marketing ploy designed to sell products through exploiting men’s ego and insecurity in the same way as women have been induced to buy make-up, hair care products and stay abreast of fashion. Miranda Devine, in a large opinion feature under the headline “The pain of the modern male eunuch” commented: “The new masculine metrosexual ideal seems to be imposing the same tyranny of lookism on men which women have long endured (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 18, 2003, p. 17).

The concept of Sensitive New Age Guys (SNAGS) is closely related to metrosexuals, although SNAGS are so described more in relation to emotions than fashion. Mass media portrayals of SNAGS were also mostly unfavourable due to inferences that SNAGS are ‘wimps’. Even many women writers express a preference for “real men” – whatever that term means. Columnist Muriel Reddy commented in a major Sunday opinion column: “There is a whole rethink of just what it is … to be a man. The images include the ‘sensitive new age guy’, the gay, the bisexual and the queer man, the ‘new lad’ and the metrosexual. It’s a brave new world out there for men” (*The Sunday Age*, December 21, 2003, p. 11).

‘Family man’ is a traditional social role favourably reported in mass media, but portrayals of family men were less frequent than metrosexuals. ‘Gentleman’ was the other favourable social image of men, but more often men were portrayed as chauvinists and as ‘blokes’ or
‘blokey’ – terms that are mostly used as unfavourable descriptions. It is significant that in Australia and the UK ‘blokes’, the most common colloquial expression for men, once positive (such as in ‘a good bloke’) has become a negative, while the equivalent North American term ‘guys’ has largely become androgynous.

Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, blames “the blokey culture” of certain industries for the lack of women in senior positions. Without citing specific issues that define a “blokey culture”, Goward claimed finance industry research shows that most women left because of the “blokey culture” (The Age, December 4, 2003, pp. 1, 4).

Male mateship has been identified in much social literature as an important source of support and identity for men. In Australia, in particular, mateship has been celebrated in songs, poetry, films (eg. Gallipoli) and novels. But mateship also has come in for attack. A number of media articles criticised male mateship as the root of many evils including excessive drinking and drunkenness often leading to aggression, sexual abuse, domestic violence and risk-taking behaviour such as dangerous driving. A summit on alcohol abuse in Sydney was reported under a page one headline “Casting a sober eye on grog and mateship” and opened with the sentence: “Australians’ very notion of mateship may need to be rewritten …” (The Sydney Morning Herald, August 27, 2003, p. 1).

Machismo was unfavourably cited in relation to men frequently and was closely linked with mateship and ‘lads’ (a term for immature males and, particularly in the UK, denoting men who reject gender equality and regress to political incorrectness and chauvinism).

**Men and commitment and responsibility**

Analysis of men in relation to commitment and responsibility reveals an interesting contradiction in discourse. Women’s magazines and opinion columns frequently report that men lack commitment and even that they are “commitment phobic”. Yet, alongside criticism of men as lacking commitment is extensive reporting of men working long hours and even being workaholics, serving in the military, fire brigades and other national commitments, and regularly carrying out heroic rescues to save lives (community commitment). Considerable evidence shows men have consistently demonstrated commitment and responsibility in work, as protectors and as soldiers. Risking their lives as
volunteers in war, as many Australian men have done, is an evocative example of commitment and sense of responsibility.

What emerges from analysis of discourse is that commitment and responsibility have been redefined selectively and narrowly. Commitment and responsibility to work has become a site of conflict and is mostly viewed as negative. Military commitment and responsibility is now shared with women – albeit it too has been denigrated at various times such as during the Vietnam War and claims are made that there would be no war if women were in charge. Commitment in sport (not analysed but cited in some discussions of men) is mostly portrayed as frivolous or a refuge for hegemonic masculinity. In almost all cases, claims of lack of commitment by men relate to individual men postponing or avoiding marriage and having children. Such decisions are interpreted as a fault in men. Other possible explanations are rarely if ever considered. Discourse is being led by women, as identified in analysis of sources, and the commitment and responsibility that they principally seek – the only ones that seem to count – are to themselves and their children.

**Figure 14.** Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to commitment and responsibility.
Men’s physical health

Men are portrayed as not taking care of their health. As shown in Figure 15, leading issues reported and portrayed in relation to men’s health were alcohol drinking and drug abuse. Disease generally was reported to be increasing and male health was cited as requiring attention. However, preventative treatment and programs to address men’s health problems such as prostate cancer were little reported in leading mass media. For example, prostate cancer, a major killer of men, was discussed in just 12 articles – 0.67% of reporting about men.

Figure 15. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to physical health.

A week-long national health conference in Cairns called for a National Men’s Health Policy, concluding that Australian men “are not only neglectful of their health, but are poorly served by the Federal system compared with women”. University of Western Sydney health professor and co-director of the Men’s Health Resource and Information Centre, John Macdonald was reported saying while the past 20 years had seen “an understandable and laudable move towards women’s health, there has not been an equivalent for men” (The Australian, September 9, 2003, p. 3).
Contributing to the neglect were reports that tests for diagnosing prostate cancer were flawed, leaving many men at risk of having cancer undetected (*The Australian*, July 25, 2003, p. 3).

Several major publications called for increased focus on prostate cancer among men. For instance, *Australian Women’s Weekly* reported that “every three hours an Australian man dies from prostate cancer” and urged women to help “save your man’s life” through testing (*Australian Women’s Weekly*, November 2003, p. 183). Also, a major weekend newspaper feature headlined “Killing me softly” pointed out that “prostate cancer is a threat to men, similar to breast cancer in women, but we’re not doing enough about it” (*The Australian*, December 20-21, 2003, p. 20).

Some mass media have played a commendable role in bringing key issues concerning men’s health to national attention. For instance, in addition to the two articles cited in the previous paragraph, two major features on men’s health were published by one newspaper group (*The Age*, July 28, 2003, A3 pp. 8-9 and *The Sunday Age*, August 10, 2003, pp. 1, 8) and *Family Circle* magazine (November 2003) devoted a major feature to men’s health (pp. 54-56).

**Men’s mental health and suicide**

Men’s mental health was mostly reported in relation to suicide so these issues (coded separately as shown in Figure 7) were analysed together.

Most media focus was on suicide among older males, followed by young male suicide and male suicide attempts, as shown in Figure 16. A shift in focus from youth suicide to suicide by older men reflects statistics showing that older males are most at risk of suicide. Male suicides were reported predominantly in relation to depression and insanity (including temporary insanity) during or following instances of men committing violent crimes such as killing their partners and children.

Other key contributors to male suicides cited by mass media were relationship break-up, loss of access to children and sexual dysfunction (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 4, 2003, p. 13; *Sunday Age*, September 28, 2003, p. 11 and a multi-page feature entitled...

**Figure 16.** Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to mental health and suicide.

Analysis of mass media reporting of both male and female suicide and suicide attempts was conducted and this shows much higher reporting of male suicide in mass media, as shown in Figure 16.

A letter to the editor told of two parents’ tragic experience of young male suicide. The parents wrote: “It was Father’s Day 2001 when our 19-year-old son Anthony, decided to leave and not return. We waited … hoping that he would call to ask to come home or to at least say that he was OK and didn’t want to come home. A week later, on September 8, the police came to tell us that our son was dead” (*The Age*, October 15, 2003, p. 10).

**Men and communication**

Men were mostly reported as unable to express or poor at expressing their feelings and emotions and also for not talking, as shown in the high proportion of negative media reporting of these issues illustrated in Figure 17. The dominance of female writers on
men’s issues and the content of media discussion suggest that communication may be largely defined in female and feminist terms.

Men were reported to be poor at non-verbal communication and listening. Only a few mass media articles represented men as good communicators.

**Leading Issues**

![Leading Issues](image.jpg)

*Figure 17. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to communication.*

**Male competitiveness**

Other noteworthy findings were that male competitiveness was frequently cited in mass media reporting and portrayals of men and male identities, predominantly as causing harm rather than benefits.

Figure 18 shows that mass media references to male competitiveness causing harmful effects such as risk-taking and oppressive actions appeared more than twice as often as male competitiveness associated with benefits such as success in an endeavour or achievement.

Male teamwork and co-operation among men was cited even less frequently.
Male competitiveness was portrayed as leading to greed and was cited frequently in instances of men committing corporate fraud. While this study did not examine business media reporting, some notable corporate collapses were widely reported in general news such as disgraced Australian business tycoon, Alan Bond, released from prison and trying to rebuild his career. *A Current Affair* raked over Bond’s past, referring to him as perpetrating “Australia’s biggest ever corporate fraud” (*A Current Affair*, November 4, 2003).

High profile Australian multi-millionaire stockbroker, Rene Rivkin, also made it out of the business pages into mainstream news when he was convicted of insider trading and sentenced to prison (*The Australian*, November 5, 2003, p. 4; *The Daily Telegraph*, November 14, 2004, p. 4; and a major Weekend Inquirer feature in *The Australian*, November 1-2, 2003, p. 17). Bond and Rivkin were two of a number of men in senior corporate positions who, like their counterparts in Enron, Worldcom and Tyco in the US and a number of other companies, were found to have succumbed to greed and broke the law.
A Current Affair also reported “An Australian man at the centre of a multi-million worldwide fraud”, showing the arrest of a man from Nyngan, New South Wales, Nick Marinellis, allegedly a “Mr Big behind the Nigeria e-mail scam”. *(A Current Affair, October 30, 2003)*. A total of 25 charges were subsequently laid against Marinellis.⁴

**Men and domestic involvement**

Men’s role in child care was the most reported issue in terms of male domestic involvement, followed by house cleaning, ‘house husbands’ (men involved full-time in family domestic duties) and cooking. Half of 28 articles discussing men and child care were positive, reporting men taking a major role in caring for their children. This included prominent stories on fathers such as Russell Crowe reportedly ecstatic about the birth of his first child and John Travolta of whom Oprah Winfrey said “his eyes light up whenever he talks about his children”, as cited under “Men and fatherhood”. However, a significant number of media articles also criticised men for lack of involvement in child care as shown in Figure 19.

![Leading Issues](image)

**Figure 19.** *Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to domestic involvement.*

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⁴ Marinellis was sentenced in November 2004 to more than five years jail *(Sydney Morning Herald, November 9, 2004, p. 8).*
Media reporting on men in relation to house cleaning were mostly negative, citing men’s lack of effort in this regard, and comment on ‘house husbands’ were equally balanced between positive, negative and neutral.

An interesting observation is that domestic involvement (including terms such as child care and housework) is primarily defined as work inside the house. Only one article in this study reported or noted men’s domestic work outside the house. Domestic involvement and ‘housework’ appear to be strictly defined as caring for children, cleaning inside the house and cooking. Attending to gardens, garages, paths, driveways, washing cars, cleaning out gutters, handyman repairs and maintenance are not acknowledged. Definitional issues appear to be a significant factor in widespread claims that men do not do their share domestically and a broader definition of ‘housework’ may substantially alter the alleged inequity between men and women in this area.

**Boys’ education**

Boys’ education was a major focus of mass media reporting during 2003. Academic performance of boys was reported favourably in this sample as shown in Figure 20, with boys excelling in Year 12 exam results.

**Figure 20.** Leading issues in mass media reporting of boys in relation to education.
However, the small number of reports of boys topping examinations belies the broader issue of boys falling behind girls on average in academic achievement and calls for a renewed focus on boys’ needs. A major feature in *The Bulletin* entitled “Through the glass ceiling” reported that “men are the new second sex” when it comes to education. The three-page article reported that there were 75,000 more women than men enrolled at Australian universities in 2003 and 80,000 more women than men with degrees in the 25-34 age group. According to the report, female school teachers outnumber men four to one and also outnumber men among university staff. And, not only do women outnumber men in education, but they are outperforming them. Boys fill detention rooms and remedial groups, *The Bulletin* reported. Meanwhile, women dominate six out of 10 major tertiary fields of study and, of 145,000 students awarded degrees in 2002, almost 60% were women (*The Bulletin*, September, 9, 2003, pp. 28-30).

The appointment by the Australian Federal Government Ministerial Council on Education of Richard Fletcher, a noted proponent of boys’ educational needs, men’s health and head of the Engaging Fathers Project to a review of gender equity policies in education to ensure balance between the needs of boys and girls was not greeted enthusiastically by education authorities, according to Bettina Arndt. However, Fletcher commented: “I’m hoping that the new attention to boys will result in them achieving their potential but not at the expense of girls” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum, December 20-21, 2003, p. 7).

A number of mass media reported on boys’ education needs and programs, discipline problems with boys in schools, teaching methods for boys, and school facilities for boys. Several very unfavourable media stories reported teachers punishing boys for making noise and policies which discriminated against boys.

Four controversial incidents which highlighted potential problems in school treatment of boys made national TV news and current affairs during the period of this study. In one, a six-year old boy was suspended 30 times for behavioural problems. He was described as “a runaway”, “a terror” and accused of “abusing teachers”. However, the report investigated and found poor treatment by the teacher had substantially contributed to the problems. The teacher was disciplined (*A Current Affair*, July 3, 2003).
In a second incident, a primary school teacher was dismissed for her treatment of a young boy. The female teacher allegedly stuck masking tape over the boy’s mouth to stop him talking (National Nine News, August 6, 2003).

In an even more serious incident, four boys at a school in Yarrawonga, Victoria were reportedly forced to lie on the floor of a classroom by a female teacher who then invited their classmates to walk over them, kick them and “stomp on them”. Parents were outraged and called for an investigation (National Nine News, October 30, 2003). In a follow up current affairs program, one boy, Sam, reported feeling bullied and humiliated. The 25-year old teacher was disciplined (A Current Affair, December 23, 2003). However, the series of incidents raises serious questions about the approach of education authorities to managing boys in schools.

Eltham North Child Care in Melbourne was reported to have banned boys from wearing super hero costumes. The school claimed that wearing of super-hero costumes such as Superman and Batman outfits made the boys boisterous and unruly and provoked violence. However, the decision was described by parents of the three to five year old boys – mothers as well as fathers – as “political correctness gone mad” (A Current Affair, August 18, 2003).

Media representations of boys at school, while limited, support claims that boys are disadvantaged in school systems and that their needs and attributes are not catered for.

**Leading messages about men**

The overall negative portrayal of men in mass media is particularly demonstrated by the leading messages communicated about men in news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle media content. Figure 21 reports the top 10 messages concerning men in this sample. This shows that men are mainly described as criminals, aggressive, violent, sexual abusers and predators. They are also represented and described frequently as chauvinists and misogynists, stupid or incompetent, insensitive, out of touch with their feelings and commitment phobic.
**Figure 21.** The ‘top 10’ messages about men in mass media.

Figure 22 further illustrates the overwhelmingly negative portrayals of men and male identities by contrasting positive and negative messages analysed. It shows negative iterations of most messages are far more frequent than positive iterations.

**Figure 22.** Comparison of leading positive and negative messages about men.
There are positive representations of men in mass media. Men are shown, albeit a minority, as commitment orientated and responsible, protectors and carers/gentle and non-violent, and as law-abiding responsible citizens. These messages are reflected in mass media reporting of heroes such as fire fighters and rescue workers, war heroes (particularly in news and feature articles around Armistice Day), Father of the Year awards, stories of police officers protecting communities, and profiles of respected male leaders.

Examples of portrayals of men as heroes and protectors found in this study included:

A Melbourne single father who saved his three children from their burning house, including running back into the flames to rescue his three-year old daughter trapped on the second floor (The Age, December 13, 2003, p. 11);

A man who ran into a neighbour’s burning house to save a young girl after her mother had already died in the fire. “I couldn’t see her. I could just hear her screaming. Then I saw her silhouette curled up inside through all the smoke. I threw a table and smashed through the window at the side and just reached through and grabbed her,” he reported (The Daily Telegraph, November 22, 2003, p 23);

A 46-year old Sydney western suburbs man who climbed into a burning car to release a child restraint and free a four-year old girl. The Daily Telegraph reported: “This lap of flame took her whole eyebrow off. It just went schooom – that was horrible – it just dissolved in front of me …that’s the point where I shit myself and thought, this seat’s got to come – if this belt won’t undo, I’m going to bite it out, I’m going to tear it out, whatever” (The Daily Telegraph, October 30, 2003, p 9);

A Melbourne University media studies student who jumped from a platform on to railway tracks to rescue a 16-year old who had fallen off a train and sustained serious head injuries. The man administered CPR and called emergency services on his mobile phone despite other trains approaching, saving the young male’s life (The Age, October 23, 2003, p. 8);
A father who jumped on to railway tracks to save his infant son whose stroller had rolled off the platform into the path of an approaching train. “Mr Candy jumped on the tracks, hurled the stroller back on the platform and then tried to scramble up as an eight-carriage Tangara bore down on him. But he slipped off the platform edge and was forced to wedge his body up against the platform as the train hurtled past, centimetres from his head …” it was reported (The Daily Telegraph, December 10, 2003, p. 9);

A 17-year-old young man who pulled a disabled driver out of a burning car one night on Sydney’s north shore. Nominated for a bravery award, the young man reported: “When I got to the car, the dash was melting on to the man’s legs. I told him to get out, but he said he couldn’t because he was a quadriplegic. I didn’t stop to think, I just reacted instinctively and I pulled him from the car and carried him out” (The Daily Telegraph, August 24, 2003, p. 29);

A young man washed out to sea by huge waves on the New South Wales south coast with his girlfriend who spent his last moments protecting her and helped saved her life, according to her accounts (The Sunday Telegraph, November 23, 2003, p. 11);

An Australian, Simon Leunig, was interviewed on a national current affairs show following his heroic assistance to victims following the 2003 terrorist bombing of the Jakarta Marriott Hotel. The program reported that Leunig helped rescue victims of the blast without regard to his own safety (A Current Affair, August 6, 2003);

Two Qantas flight stewards, Greg Khan and Denise Hickson, who over-powered a man threatening a flight with a knife. The male steward who led the attack on the would-be hijacker sustained cuts to his head and face, but passed the incident off as “in the line of duty” (National Nine News, July 3, 2003);

A British father who auctioned one of his kidneys over the Internet to fund pioneering treatment that he hopes will enable his six-year old disabled daughter to walk (Agence France Pressé reported in The Australian, December 5, 2003, p. 11);
Australia’s famous ‘Crocodile Hunter’ Steve Irwin made headlines in 2003 when he rescued an injured American diver off the coast of Mexico. Irwin, who was filming in the area, offered his boat and satellite phone to assist in a search when he heard two American divers were missing. After being alerted to the divers clinging to rocks in heavy seas by kayakers, Irwin went to the area in a dinghy and swam the last few hundred metres to rescue one remaining diver. The second diver slipped from his friend’s grasp before Irwin arrived (*The Sunday Telegraph*, November 30, 2003, p. 19);


A number of mass media honoured returned soldiers to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War (July 27) and on Armistice Day (November 11). Media told of the atrocities of war faced by (mainly) men and their heroism. *The Bulletin* published a moving account of bravery headlined “Valour under fire” which recounted an incident involving Ron Cashman, a 20-year old corporal, at the time fighting on the front line in Korea to try to gain high ground called ‘The Mound’. This article, reporting outstanding male heroism, is quoted and analysed in detail in section 5.2, “Qualitative findings”.

*The Age* reported “Diggers recount cost of freedom 50 years on” featuring photographs of memorial celebrations (*The Age*, July 28, 2003, p. 3) and the national daily *The Australian* published an interview with the widow of Lieutenant-Colonel Charlie Green who was killed in the Korean War. The courage, commitment and protective instincts of men who fought in wars was headlined in Lieutenant-Colonel Green’s reported last words: “Look after my men; they are all good blokes” (*The Australian*, July 26, 2003, p. 27).
On Remembrance Day (November 11) 2003, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* both published a profile to honour one of the world’s oldest veterans, Marcel Caux, 104 in 2003. After laying a wreath at the Sydney Cenotaph, Caux who was wounded three times in fierce fighting in World War One and lived post-war as a declared pacifist, shook hands with children and said “Peace is so much better than war” (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 12, 2003, p. 5; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 12, 2003, p. 8). TV news reported that there are “just six Australians left who survived the horrors of World War One” (National Nine News, November 10, 2003). *Australian Women’s Weekly* in a special report (October 2003) noted that 65,000 men died during World War I.

The courage and strength of men was shown positively in peacetime also in chilling reports of coal miner Colin Jones whose right arm was trapped under his front-end loader following an underground accident. Jones amputated his own arm with a knife to escape (*The Age*, July 1, 2003, p. 2).

Other positive representations of men and masculinity appeared to mark the opening of a photographic exhibition of the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the 100th anniversary of the first flight by the Wright Brothers. A *Sydney Morning Herald* feature entitled “Men of steel who built the bridge with hard yakka” recognised traditional male industry and work. The famous Sydney landmark was “built by ordinary men with intricate calibrations and hard physical labour … some worked 11 or 12 hour days and there were many accidents, including 16 fatalities, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported (August 25, 2003, p. 7). The pioneering aviators were hailed as “heroes” in a number of media articles in December 2003 to mark the historic first 12-second flight in North Carolina (eg. *The Daily Telegraph*, December 18, p. 43).

*Family Circle* magazine published a major feature over several issues for readers to nominate and vote the ‘Husband of the Year’. The magazine published descriptions of the finalists, usually provided by their wives, saying “these lovely men are the winners of the *Family Circle* Husband of the Year competition”. However, over five issues of the magazine, the competition featured idealised images of men and a certain degree of objectification. In the final (December) issue announcing the winner, the judges said: “All

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5 Marcel Caux died in August 2004.
the men have displayed the most important relationship quality – commitment to their women”. The word “commitment” or “committed” was used four times in the first three paragraphs of judges’ comments and the magazine further commented “Most women would say that a man who makes them laugh would be high on the list” (Family Circle, December 2003, p. 28).

Analysis of texts quoting women speaking about men reveals a near obsession with commitment, suggestive of a lingering insecurity among women despite their strides towards autonomy and independence. The ‘Bridget Jones syndrome’ (30-year old single female without a man) continues to be a topic of discussion in women’s magazines and popular newspapers. For instance, in a major newspaper weekend magazine insert, Sarah Wilson wrote:

… I was like Carrie Bradshaw sitting cross-legged at her laptop. I started reading astrology columns, I grew my hair, I joked about having a questionnaire to hand out to blokes to save time … and I suddenly cared, in the face of feminist schooling, that I didn’t have a man by my side (The Sunday Telegraph, Sunday magazine, November 16, 2003. p. 12).

The role of fathers was recognised positively in the Australian Father of the Year award. In 2003, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, a prominent scientist, was voted Father of the Year (National Nine News, September 5, 2003).

TV stars are afforded the mass media limelight regularly – an interesting case of mass media reporting on mass media. For instance, during the period of this study, the first season of Australian Idol was completed, with Guy Sebastian voted the winner. He appeared on most TV news, in countless newspaper and magazine reports and was interviewed on current affairs television (A Current Affair, November 20, 2003).

Mass media also profiled the (then) new Federal Opposition Leader, Mark Latham, calling him “Federal Labor’s big gamble” but reporting on him relatively positively (A Current Affair, December 2, 2003). However, within days of his election, attacks were launched against him, not on political grounds, but as a man as outlined later.
Despite a number of noteworthy heroic profiles of men presented in mass media, Table 8 shows total unfavourable messages (1,082) outnumbered favourable messages (455) by 2.4 to one. More than 70% of all messages analysed were unfavourable, compared with just 29.5% favourable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Favourable Mentions</th>
<th>Unfavourable Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criminals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
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<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
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<td>149</td>
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<td>Sexual abusers/predators</td>
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<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment orientated and responsible</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauvinists/oppressors/misogynists</td>
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<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protectors/carers/gentle/non-violent</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stupid or incompetent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insensitive, out of touch with feelings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law - abiding responsible citizens</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment phobic/lack commitment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snags/Metrosexuals/shows 'feminine' behaviour</td>
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<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power focussed/obsessed</td>
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<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not committed to children</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent and capable</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groomed/waxed/feminine appearance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal and care for children</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, sports, cars, mates focussed</td>
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<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong active but non-aggressive</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't do their share/lazy domestically</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong, rugged, traditionally masculine appearance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Communicators</td>
<td>21</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not take care of their health/risk taking</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work focussed</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communicators/women are better</td>
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<td>Well rounded/balanced</td>
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<td>Balance work/personal/family</td>
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<td>Traditional men/male behaviour</td>
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<td>Share power/rights/opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treat women equally/with respect</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do their share domestically</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fathers deserve equal child rights</td>
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<td>Inconsiderate/Ineffective lovers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't deserve/can't be trusted with equal child rights</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Care for their health</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexually responsible/considerate</td>
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<td>Boys do not/girls need more attention</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**Total** 455 1,082

*Table 8. Detailed breakdown of leading messages in mass media representation of men in order of occurrence.*
**Gunmen, hitmen, conmen and man hunts – gender language continues (at least against men)**

Noteworthy in this analysis was the number of times that gendered terms using “man” as a suffix or prefix appear in mass media headlines and stories – particularly in negative ways. Examples frequently cited include “gunman”, “conman”, “hitman” and “man hunt”. Prominent examples of these gendered terms found during this study included:

A front-page headline in *The Age* proclaiming “Chaos as West Gate gunman holds police at bay” (*The Age*, September 17, 2003, p. 1);

A full front page story in *The Daily Telegraph* headlined “Another day … another burst of gunfire” began “A GUNMAN fired up to three shots from a high-powered weapon yesterday …”. The word “gunman” was capitalised for emphasis (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 10, 2003, p. 1).

Other headline references to “gunman” or “gunmen” included:

“Gunmen flee on foot after home attacks” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, August 31, 2003, p. 3);
“Ring of steel to shut down the drive-by gunmen” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 23, 2003, p. 4);
“Gunman in court” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, November 2, 2003, p. 20);
“Arrested gunmen linked to gangsters” (*The Australian*, December 23, 2003, p. 3);
“Gunmen ambush Iraq’s top female” (*The Daily Telegraph*, September 22, 2003, p. 18);

Melbourne’s *Age* newspaper ran a page four headline carried over from page one: “Hitman clue in murders investigation” (*The Age*, September 3, 2003, p. 4) and another *Daily Telegraph* front page was headlined “Family tears as hitman kills the wrong man” (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 9, 2003, p. 1).
When Australian-born Peter Finlay (writing under the pseudonym D. B. C. Pierre with the initials standing for Dirty But Clean) won the Booker Prize for his book *Vernon God Little* in 2003, his gambling and criminal past were reported more than his literary achievements with headlines including:

“Conman’s Booker hopes” (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 14, 2003, p. 6);

“Dirty but clean Aussie conman wins Booker” (*The Australian*, October 16, 2003, p. 7);

“Australian conman wins Booker Prize” (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 16, 2003, p. 15);

Other uses of the term “conman” included a story of an 82-year old man convicted for pension fraud which was reported under the headline “Ageing conman jailed” (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 27, 2003, p. 19).

Of Australia’s major daily newspapers, only *The Age* avoided gendered language and reported more positively on its front page “Regretful rogue in a tux takes literary jewel” (*The Age*, October 16, 2003, p. 1).

Other male gendered terms used in media reporting included “wanted man” (eg. “Asia’s most-wanted man lived the life of a dollar-a-day backpacker” in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 27, 2003, p. 8) and “man made”. Like all other uses, the latter was negatively presented in a major story on whale beaching which was headlined “Man-made hazards to blame in theory over whale strandings” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition, December 6-7, 2003, p. 3).

The same media regularly used the terms “spokesperson” when the speakers were male, with no uses of “spokesman” or “spokesmen” found in the extensive sample of coverage studied. Similarly “chair” was used in place of the traditional “chairman”.
Guidelines have been introduced in Australia and many developed countries allegedly to eliminate sexist language, but men reading the media studied could only conclude that positive man words have been removed, while negative man words proliferate in media language.

Significantly, not one use of “gunwoman”, “hitwoman”, “conwoman” or “woman-made” was found, even though murders, frauds and armed offences committed by women and female-created effects were reported.

Any of the negative “man” words cited can be communicated without reference to the gender of the person involved. For instance, a “gunman” can be described as an armed person or person with a gun; a “conman” can be described as a con artist, confidence trickster or fraudster; and a “man hunt” can be simply described as a hunt for a suspect.

Also, it is noteworthy that legal terms such as “manslaughter” continue to use the male gender when women can commit and be victims of the offence. In summary, analysis of mass media content suggests that gendered language has been addressed only insofar at it disadvantages women. Negative references to men and males frequent discourse.

**Other noteworthy findings**

One of the most internationally high profile media stories towards the end of the period of this study reported the capture of former Iraq President, Saddam Hussein. Like many media, The Daily Telegraph devoted its full front page to a photo of the fallen dictator dishevelled and humiliated under the headline “Got Him” (The Daily Telegraph, December 15, 2003, p. 1). Saddam Hussein was widely reported as evil and despotic, particularly in American-originated media, and his downfall was widely welcomed despite controversy over the invasion of Iraq.

It was also reported that, ultimately, all men are facing extinction according to a number of media reports based on release of research and the book Adam’s Curse by Bryan Sykes (2004) which claims that the Y chromosome is deteriorating and within 150,000 years or so, it will die out. Broderick (2003) summarises Sykes’ argument like this: a human female has two X chromosomes, each with a slightly different version of the human female-building genome. This provides a back-up in the event of corruption or decay. Males have...
one X and one Y chromosome. There is no spare copy of the code for the Y-carried sex genes – the male. Sykes says that “under the microscope, today’s Y chromosome has shrunken, a mere stump of the gene package on the X … without an archival copy for repair purposes, the Y is doomed to unremitting degradation and finally must perish 6,000 generations hence.” New research has found that the deteriorating Y chromosome may not be as doomed as first thought, with discovery of “reversed versions of the key code … mirror images that allow it to check the sex-building templates for fidelity and to repair mutations” (p. 10). However, the complexity of genetic studies makes them difficult to understand and mass media generally have promulgated the original story that men are a dying breed. During the period of this study, headlines included:

“Y men are on their way to extinction” (The Age, July 10, 2003, p. 13);
“Y men are going to be extinct” (Simon Benson column in The Daily Telegraph, August 25, 2003, p. 19);
“Male sex hormones to blame for heart disease” (The Daily Telegraph, September 17, 2003, p. 3);
“Testosterone makes the heart fail faster” (The Age, September 17, 2003, p. 7);
“Cardiac perils in the genes for men” (The Sydney Morning Herald, September 19, 2003, p. 3);
‘Y factor spells doom for men’ (The Sydney Morning Herald, 13 October 2003, 4);
“Degeneration Y: Adam is on the eve of extinction” (The Age, October 13, 2003, p. 3);
and
“XX-rated negotiation possible as the Y-front faces extinction” (Emma Tom column in The Australian, October 15, 2003, p. 11).

Such an onslaught of mass media messaging as outlined above can do little for men’s self-esteem and identities.

Approaching Christmas, newspapers and magazines traditionally review the year passed. The Daily Telegraph published a series entitled “Saints and Scoundrels”. Saints were evenly balanced between men and women. But scoundrels identified six men and one woman (The Daily Telegraph, Confidentially Speaking, December 23, 2003, p. 13).
Whenever a man rises to a public position, it seems only a matter of time before he is attacked on the grounds of gender or gender-related issues. When Australia’s Federal Opposition elected Mark Latham as its leader in 2003, it could be expected that his policies or lack thereof, as appropriate, and his political leadership capabilities would be under scrutiny. But, within days, mass media headlines contained allegations that he had “abandoned his first wife”, that he “uses his children” and that he has left a “trail of human wreckage”. His former wife was interviewed and quoted saying: “He goes on about working-class roots, but in terms of gender, is it patriarchy or class that is most repressive?” (The Australian, December 4, 2003, p. 4) Gender? Patriarchy? Repressive? These terms appear in the interview without context. Why introduce gender at all if the subject under discussion (and the subject of the speaker’s sentence) is working class roots? What has patriarchy got to do with a discussion of one man’s political leadership capabilities? The statements made in this article resonate with feminist ideology.

Cartoons also were a site of bias against men in mass media. No cartoons were found in this study which negatively portrayed women. But a number of cartoons depicted men negatively. For example:

A large Spooner cartoon in The Age showed a terrorist figure with the text: “What a piece of work is man, how ignoble in passion, how limited in faculties, in form and moving how frenzied and degenerated, in action how like a fiend, in apprehension how like a man (with apologies to William Shakespeare)” (October 16, 2003).

A Sydney Morning Herald cartoon (November 13, 2003, p. 14) showed a figure attempting to sell Christian crosses to a customer saying” “It’s cheaper without the bloke”.

Another Sydney Morning Herald cartoon in a Health and Science supplement showed an illustration of a confused-looking man sitting in front of a doctor who is peering into a microscope saying “I’ve just discovered your true manhood” (October 30, 2003, Health and Science, p. 1).
This study focussed on general news and current affairs, as well as talk shows and lifestyle media and did not analyse business reporting, entertainment or sport. Some researchers point out that men dominate senior positions in business and suggest that business media not included in this study are likely to represent men favourably. However, a study of business media coverage in Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia in 2003 found “more than 70% of reports on business related to corruption, fraud, poor corporate governance and ethics, insider trading, excessive executive payments, regulatory change to combat business fraud and malpractice, and poor customer service.” The 10-week study of 630 business media articles found 593 negative messages prominently reported compared with 385 positive messages in relation to business (CARMA International, 2003).

Other studies have shown that mass media reporting of sport have represented traditional hegemonic masculinity which is increasingly criticised as overly competitive, discriminatory and violent (eg. Duncan and Jensen, 1990; Messner, 1988; Messner, 1992; McKay and Middlemiss, 1995; and Sabo and Curry Jansen, 1992).

Therefore, it can be concluded that men are overwhelmingly represented negatively in mass media, not only in news, but in a wide range of representations and discourse reflected in and propagated through mass media.

**Leading sources**

As shown in this study and illustrated in Figure 23, media discourse is largely contributed and often dominated by women writers, academics and researchers. Male voices given resonance in mass media discourse are, in most cases, pro-feminist men.

Analysis of sources making statements and quoted shows that 21% of mass media reports and comments on men was attributed to men generally, with a further 7% sourced from male authors and columnists and 5% from male academics and researchers. Mass media reports and comments on men were almost equally contributed by women – 16% from women generally; 10% from female authors and columnists and 2% from female academics and researchers. In total, 33% of mass media discussion of men was based on quotes from men, with 28% attributed to women. Considering that the subject of media content analysed was men and men’s issues, including their work, physical health, mental health sexuality, body image, fatherhood and children, it could be argued that men’s
subjectivities (i.e. opinions, views and feelings) on these issues are the most relevant and should be more prominent.

**Sources**

Top Ten Sources by Volume & %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man - Other</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman - Other</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge/Lawyer/Court</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Body/Official</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Academic/Researcher</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Academic/Researcher</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Author/Columnist</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Study/Organisation</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Author/Columnist</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 23. Breakdown of media content analysed by sources.**

Sources are not to be confused with by-lines (the writers) of news reporting. While a case can be made that the gender of journalists is irrelevant in the case of reporting news (which is allegedly factual and dispassionate), sources of comment – the experts, authorities or subject experiences quoted – could be expected to be dominated by men for two reasons. Firstly, as men hold most positions of authority in politics, business, the police and the military, statistics suggest that men would comprise the majority of sources quoted. Secondly, when the subject of discussion is men, men’s issues and male identities as outlined in this study, it could be expected that the experiences and feelings of men would be the most relevant and most reliable.

The most significant finding in relation to sources of mass media discourse on men is that opinion columns (articles contributed by experts and authoritative commentators) discussing men were mostly contributed by female authors and columnists (10%) compared with 7% from male authors and columnists.
Certainly women are entitled to hold and express opinions on men. As close observers and partners of men in relationships, families and businesses, women have a vantage point from which to contribute useful insights. But, the finding that women dominate opinion columns commenting on all men’s issues studied reveals a disturbing reverse discrimination and inequity. Men’s subjectivities, recognised as key components of knowledge in post-structuralist theory, are under-represented in discourse.

While the majority of media columnists writing on gender issues are women, in the interests of balance it is noted that not all write negatively about men. Bettina Arndt, writing in *The Age* under a headline “Stop sneering at men. They need our help”, strongly attacked feminist and women’s group criticisms of Australian Federal Government proposals to reform child custody laws to give men increased rights and access including possible joint custody. Responding to Labor MP, Nicola Roxon, who labelled the Prime Minister’s announcement as “playing dog-whistle politics to men’s groups aggrieved by the Family Court”, Arndt observed: “She used the phrase ‘men’s groups’ as if she was talking about something that had crawled out from under a rock.” Arndt pointed out that the Prime Minister’s move for reform was triggered by alarming statistics from the Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention at Griffith University which show that relationship breakdown and resulting loss of access to children is the major cause of male suicide, now running at four times the rate of female suicide. Arndt continued: “It remains a mystery why so many men’s issues, including male suicide, attract blatant sneers. Perhaps women like Nicola Roxon, with strong feminist histories, are still in the grip of the anti-male fervour that poisoned sectors of the women’s movement 30 years ago” (*The Age*, July 4, 2003, pp. 4-6).

Women writers such as Bettina Arndt and Janet Albrechtsen who have defended men or criticised feminist approaches frequently incur the wrath of other women writers in the mass media. In a column headed “Women behaving badly”, Stephanie Dowrick took issue with female journalists who she said “seem to have it in for other women”. Dowrick asked “What drives a woman to write so negatively and obsessively about other women?” The clear implication of Dworick’s polemic seems to be that women should not criticise other women in any circumstances. In a column titled “Women behaving badly”, she commented: “Whatever their social class, men have traditionally held enormous power
relative to women, at least in the external world.” She then continued her attack on male sympathetic women in the following terms:

Consciously or unconsciously, penis-envying women have tended either to align themselves with men (becoming ‘one of the boys’) or to live out the worst conventionally male attributes such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, vengefulness and misogyny (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Good Weekend magazine, “Inner life” column, November 1, 2003).

Dowrick’s statement is open to criticism on three grounds: (a) it contains dubious logic with its implication that women should always support women irrespective of the merits of their case in a Lemming-like loyalty on the grounds of gender; (b) it generalises that aggressiveness, vengefulness and misogyny are male attributes (ie. characteristics of all men); and (c) it contains a derogatory description of women who are sympathetic to men as “penis envying”. The phrase “the worst conventionally male attributes such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, vengefulness and misogyny” resonates with the misandric rhetoric of radical feminist discourse continuing to be propagated through major mass media in 2003.

An even more polemic diatribe against men was published by Julie Doohan in a column in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. She describes the process of dating and marrying a man in the following terms:

You take him out of the pub when he can no longer stand and pour him into the hatchback he has designated you to drive … Suddenly your weekends are taken up with your undivided attention and moral support for him while he is playing soccer, cricket, pool, football, riding dirt bikes, karate. You wait patiently for the final whistle and drive him to the pub for drinks with the boys … He has coffee while you do the dishes, he watches the evening news while you prepare dinner … You put a mirror in the bedroom that he stops in front of every time he walks past … You prefer the fragrance of the air freshener, he prefers the smell of his own gases … Suddenly all your friends have kids. Getting together becomes an opportunity for the female to have some kind of adult conversation, the male to drink and make himself look ridiculous … (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Heckler column, September 23, 2003, p. 18).
While the title of this column suggests it is satire, the content represents men as lazy, egocentric, uncouth drunkards and fools. Its tone is one of sarcasm and patronisation and it uses sharply critical language such as “make himself look ridiculous” suggestive of disgust and dislike. This text is further discussed in Section 5.2, “Qualitative findings”.

As shown in this summary of mass media articles from a wide sample, this type of language and tone is common in portrayals of men and boys. Positive portrayals of men and male identities are overwhelmingly outnumbered by negative portrayals. The popular lament by women that “there are no good men out there” is, one could conclude, a reflection of these representations as much or more than reality. And the old adage “it’s a man’s world” is no longer credible to men. Instead, they see, read and hear criticism, blame and condemnation daily in mass media.

**Leading media**

Mass media content analysed came from a variety of publications and programs as outlined in Table 9 which shows the top 10 media by volume of content. This shows, as could be expected, that the four daily newspapers contained the most representations of men and male identities. Interestingly, the average favourability of tabloids (*The Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*) and broadsheet dailies (*The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*) was very similar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Favourable</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unfavourable</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Average Favourability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Age</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Nine News</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunday Telegraph</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Current Affair</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunday Age</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bulletin</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Weekend Australian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>207</strong></td>
<td><strong>330</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,280</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,817</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9. Leading (Top 10) media reporting on men and men’s issues.*
The Daily Telegraph, which published the most articles reporting on men during the period of this study (500) was the least favourable newspaper with an average rating of 43.9 on the favourability scale used (where 50 is neutral). This was due to a high proportion of news stories reporting on crime perpetrated by men.

The Sunday Age was the most favourable newspaper towards men, with 29 articles referring to men published in its pages averaging 49.5 (almost neutral) on the favourability scale used. The Weekend Australian also published 29 articles on men, but was slightly unfavourable on average with an average favourability rating of 48.1.

The Age was noteworthy for a number of multi-page features it published on key issues such as men’s health and male suicide, although it and other newspapers including The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian and The Sunday Telegraph were all unfavourable on average.

The current affairs magazine, The Bulletin, was the most favourable media overall in relation to men and male identity issues. As a current affairs magazine, The Bulletin has little interest in crime stories – a major source of unfavourable representation of men. Instead, it published feature articles reporting research into education, politics, science and topical issues such as the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War and achievement awards. For example, The Bulletin (October 28, 2003) reported Australia’s ‘Smart 100’, a profile of “the 100 brightest, most creative people and the benefits they bring to our lives”. Men won nine categories out of 10. Another issue of The Bulletin (December 9, 2003) published an annual review of “news makers” ranging from Army generals and inventors to sports stars of which 13 out of 16 prominent people profiled were men. The Bulletin averaged 50.9 on the favourability scale used, slightly above neutral (50.0) and was the only media in the sample to average above 50 (neutral).

The largest circulation magazine in Australia, Australian Women’s Weekly focussed principally on women’s issues, as could be expected, although the magazine is conservative in tone and focussed mostly on traditional families. It included a Husband of the Year competition which favourably represented men – albeit family men committed to their wives and children. Single men, gay men and adolescent males rarely appear in its pages.
Cosmopolitan contained extensive representation of men, mainly in the context of objectification (eg. “Guy without his shirt” section and features advising women on how to tell if a man is committed and how to keep a guy). Cosmopolitan also reinforced stereotypes of men as sex-obsessed (eg. “The Penis Monologues” lift-out).

Family Circle published very little on men other than articles about fatherhood and the importance of fathers being actively involved with their children. The prime focus of the magazine was children, mothering and domestic issues including cooking and food.

Men’s magazines such as Ralph and FHM do not present men with much to be proud of given their mix of smut, sexism, chauvinism and trivia, as evidenced in the samples cited in quantitative and qualitative analysis. Rather than being at the spearhead of representing men in positive and progressive ways, so-called new-age men’s magazines represent reactionary, stereotyped images of men. Significantly, men’s magazines contributed many of the unfavourable articles about men analysed in this study, as further discussed under “Qualitative findings” in the next section.

Television news analysed contained the most negative reporting and portrayals of men and male identities overall – 39.1 average on the favourability scale used where 50 is neutral and the average for all news (press and TV) was between 45 and 55. TV news predominantly focussed on major crime stories including murders, bashings, rapes, gangland killings, sexual assaults, armed robberies, and so on. TV news also reported male hero stories such as rescues and tributes to servicemen and women on occasions such as Armistice Day and the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War which occurred during the period of this study. But these positive stories were a small minority of the coverage pertaining to men. Given its large audience and the widely reported impact of television, television news is a major source of negative representations of men.

TV current affairs shows 60 Minutes and A Current Affair broadcast a number of high profile reports on men and are particularly prominent in breaking sensational stories such as claims of sexual assault by prominent men, as instanced in this study. To be fair and balanced, one TV current affairs report by 60 Minutes internationally warrants singling out as an example of quality journalism and representation of men positively and realistically.
A *60 Minutes* documentary segment entitled “Band of Brothers” filed by US reporter and former soldier Mike Cerré, gave a first-hand account of several days with Fox 2/5 Company, a US Marines unit which spent 189 days on active duty in Iraq in 2003. What is noteworthy about the report is that Cerré, a war veteran himself, takes a neutral position on the merits or otherwise of the war and does not sensationalise or eulogise the exploits of the soldiers. He even states in the segment that there was nothing special about Fox 2/5. “They were ordinary soldiers sent to do a job”, he said. The report showed the group of young men frightened, coming to grips with the stresses and confusion of battle, coping with the harsh elements of the desert and facing imminent injury or death. During the filming of the report, First Sergeant Smith, the unit’s mentor and senior non-commissioned officer, was killed by enemy fire. Tragically, Smith was due for retirement, but his departure from the military was deferred because of the Iraq conflict. Cerré traces the effects on the men as they see death first hand, their triumphant entry to Baghdad, and their return home and thoughts of what they would say to First Sergeant Smith’s wife. He reports with a tone of both respect and tragedy: “I went to war with Fox 2/5 Company and watched them become men” (*60 Minutes*, September 28, 2003).

The talk show analysed was *Oprah* presented by Oprah Winfrey, an international daytime television talk show with a large global audience. The program deals with a wide range of issues including health, beauty, self-fulfilment, fashion, personal success stories, personal crises and social issues. While commonly seen as a women’s program, *Oprah* in fact presented substantial content on men and men’s issues, several examples of which have been cited in this study. One program, in particular, involved six men talking about their concerns as fathers. They were given a significant amount of time to speak in their own words. Then their views were presented on video to their wives and the audience, after which open discussion was invited. Another significant *Oprah* special, cited in this study, involved a two-episode discussion of domestic violence which presented a range of views including men’s perspectives and considerable research on the issue.

*Frasier* was chosen as representative of TV programs in the general lifestyle category. While within the genre of comedy, Frasier is a psychologist who gratuitously dispenses advice on his radio show and the program deals with themes including love, dating, sex, marriage, family relationships, fatherhood and men. Frasier lives with his father and their housekeeper (he is divorced and unpartnered) and his brother, Niles, also a psychologist
and going through divorce, is a frequent visitor to their apartment. The program does not provide substantial representations on men given its humorous and satirical format which cannot be taken too seriously. However, both Frasier and Niles are presented as boorish and arrogant snobs and Frasier is shown as patronising of his long suffering producer, Ros. Frasier episodes contained mostly unfavourable representations of men.

Queer Eye for the Straight Guy became one of the most watched cable TV programs in the US in 2002 and launched to ratings success in Australia in September 2003. It was an obvious choice for analysis given its overt gender themes. Queer Eye, as it is affectionately abbreviated, represents gay men in a largely favourable context. The ‘Fab Five’ are talented presenters who, despite ‘camping it up’, are sympathetic and empathetic to the heterosexual men whom they “make-over”. However, the show depicts heterosexual men, before the intervention of the ‘Fab Five’, as being poorly dressed and groomed, domestically incompetent, unsophisticated, untidy and often unclean. Heterosexual men need to be rescued by the ‘Fab Five’ to the knowing smiles and gratitude of their long-suffering wives and girlfriends. Queer Eye is a complex format as it represents both favourable and unfavourable images of men. It is positive in that it shows gay men as talented, considerate and productive members of society and it also shows that heterosexual men can be sensitive and sophisticated – albeit with considerable coaching. On the other hand, gay men are shown in largely stereotyped ways and unreconstructed heterosexual men are presented extremely negatively.

5.2 Mass media representations of men and male identities – qualitative findings

A number of significant mass media portrayals of men and male identities were further analysed qualitatively and in depth to identify the underlying attitudes towards men and male identities that they reveal and the meanings that they are likely convey to men, boys, women, girls and societies about men and male identities.

Selection of media content for in-depth qualitative analysis was based on Huberman’s (1994) recommendation for qualitative sampling in three stages:
Typical or representative examples;
Negative or disconfirming examples; and
Exceptional or discrepant examples.

To maintain balance, three media articles in each category were selected for in-depth qualitative analysis as follows.

**Typical and representative mass media representations**

In this study, the most common and typical representations of men were found to be negative portrayals. Three short texts, already cited in this research, typical of this type of representation are further analysed qualitatively here.

**Example 1.**

Suddenly I was remembering all those other times I’ve been afraid. Fending off a gang of aggressive young men on a train station late at night. Walking home from a bus stop, being followed by a strange man in an overcoat. Backing away from a man who is smiling at me and masturbating in broad daylight in my local park. Locking my car doors while a man shakes his fist at me for taking the last parking spot outside the supermarket. This month the newspapers have been full of stories about men shooting their wives, murdering their fathers-in-law, men strangling prostitutes, men taking their own lives. I’ve been lucky. This kind of extreme violence has never touched me personally. Most of the men I know are gentle, talkative types. (And yes, I know women can be killers too.) But at the back of nearly every woman’s mind lurks a fear of that naked masculine aggression … (Sian Prior, “Figures and front mask the fear within”, opinion column in *The Age*, September 29, 2003, A3, p. 2).

The context of the above paragraph is a simple, albeit unpleasant, incident reported in preceding paragraphs – a man kicks Prior’s car door and shouts at her while she is stopped waiting to turn at an intersection. There is no evidence presented to show whether the man is unjustifiably aggressive or whether, for instance, Prior had not seen him and almost run him over causing him to react. However, even giving the author the benefit of the doubt, the text traverses from this simple, inconclusive incident to a series of recollections of past events and then, at the end, attempts to link these events to make a generalisation about men – ie. they exhibit “naked masculine aggression”.
The grammatical construction of the text uses a series of incomplete sentences each beginning with a participle – “Fending off a gang … Walking home … being followed … Backing away from a man … Locking my car doors …”. Use of participles such as “fending” and “walking”, rather than past tense verbs brings these unrelated events into close proximity and suggests they are ongoing, even though they occurred some time in the past. The close grammatical linking of these events also suggests an inter-relationship and creates a unification of what, in reality, are almost certainly totally unrelated events occurring at different times and in different places. Linking these events in a series of run-on sentences achieves the effect of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. To the reader coming across these incidents presented as a list in this way, the likely impression is that there is a lot of male aggression and violence about. Use of the words “all those other times” in the opening sentence primes the audience to believe that there have been many instances of male violence observed by Prior.

It is also significant that the author writes in the first person, sending a sign to the reader that she is an eye-witness to the described events (and the victim), giving her voice credibility and enlisting sympathy from the audience – two powerful factors in creating meaning.

On close examination, it is doubtful whether some parts of the text are truthful or reliable statements. For instance, the second sentence refers to “fending off a gang of aggressive young men”. How could one young woman fend off a gang – particularly a gang of young men? On examination, the narrative lacks credibility. The third sentence talks about “being followed by a strange man in an overcoat”. Breaking this phrase down reveals further questions about the authenticity of the text. The word “strange” is used even though, presumably, the author could not observe the man clearly given that he was behind her, and the basis for her description of him as ‘strange’ is unclear. Furthermore, the phrase ‘in an overcoat’ employs clichéd imagery – a man in an overcoat being a hackneyed shorthand image for a sexual pervert. Was the (strange) man following her really wearing an overcoat (not many men in Australia do), or is this a literary device – ie. fiction?

Then Prior employs a somewhat ironic twist and a circular argument in an attempt to present third-party endorsement to support her claims of pervasive male violence. She
mourns that “this month the newspapers have been full of stories about men shooting their wives …” when, in fact, Prior herself is contributing to the filling of newspapers reporting on men allegedly committing various offences – even though nothing has actually happened to her. This statement represents is a case of the media reporting media reports.

What she reports the media reporting is also significant. In the space of a few lines, the author moves from a man kicking a car door and shouting to men “shooting their wives” “strangling prostitutes” and “taking their own lives”. The text implies that this is a logical progression of male aggression.

The phrase “I’ve been lucky” preceding the admission that “this kind of extreme violence” had never touched her personally shifts the perspective from violence being deviant behaviour to male violence being the norm – ie. she has been lucky not to have been killed by a man. Statistically, her safety was not luck. In reality, a very small number of people are attacked or killed in Australia each year. But Prior makes it sound a common occurrence from which she has narrowly escaped by sheer good fortune.

The acknowledgements that she had not personally experienced extreme male violence, that most of the men she knows “are gentle talkative types”, and that women can be killers too, suggest that Prior is finally going to withdraw from her negative rhetoric and represent a balanced view of men. But she immediately follows these acknowledgements stating “But” – a conjunction to indicate opposition and exception – and continues “at the back of nearly every woman’s mind lurks a fear of that naked masculine aggression”. The phrase “every woman’s mind” explicitly suggests that all women live in fear of men – a generalisation without foundation. And use of the word “naked” in front of masculine aggression is suggestive (symbolic) of primeval, primitive male behaviour.

From both a narratology and semiotic perspective, this text contains signs indicating that all or most men are extremely aggressive and violent, engaging in threats, assault, sexual perversion and murder on a regular basis. Its use of voice (first person eye-witness subject), tense (frequent use of participles instead of verbs) poetic imagery, clichés and adjectives (eg. “naked”) are selected and combined to create meaning beyond the facts presented. In reality, little or nothing has happened to Prior – no damage to her car was reported and the sum total of violence was a man “shouting”. In media terms, it is a non-
story. But, she manages to present images of male gangs, stalkers, sexual perverts, harassers, shooters, stranglers, murderers and suicides in the space of one paragraph.

Only close examination reveals the inconsistencies in the text. Most readers quickly scanning the text are likely to come away with an impression of pervasive male violence and aggression based on claimed first hand experience by the author.

**Example 2.**

You take him out of the pub when he can no longer stand and pour him into the hatchback he has designated you to drive … Suddenly your weekends are taken up with your undivided attention and moral support for him while he is playing soccer, cricket, pool, football, riding dirt bikes, karate. You wait patiently for the final whistle and drive him to the pub for drinks with the boys … He has coffee while you do the dishes, he watches the evening news while you prepare dinner … You put a mirror in the bedroom that he stops in front of every time he walks past …You prefer the fragrance of the air freshener, he prefers the smell of his own gases … Suddenly all your friends have kids. Getting together becomes an opportunity for the female to have some kind of adult conversation, the male to drink and make himself look ridiculous … (Julie Doohan, Heckler column in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 23, 2003, p.18).

The first characteristic of this text that stands out is the use of second person voice. This writing technique is not uncommon in highly personalised writing which seeks to create an intimacy with the reader by moving the reader into the subject and, by implication, excluding ‘third’ persons. But immediately the text indicates that it is not simply a discourse between subjects sharing a common experience. The words “you” take “him” show a mix of second person for women and third person for men to set up an oppositional binary and a conflict that runs throughout the text – an ‘us and them’. This framing of the narrative positions the reader with the author as subject (“you”) and men as objects (“him”).

The next words “out of the pub when he can no longer stand up” sets the scene of the narrative. She has to take him home; he is not only drunk but “unable to stand up let alone walk”. The phrase “pour him into the hatchback” employs a clichéd verb used for drunks
which emphasises the excess of the man’s drinking and his helplessness – he is ‘poured’ like liquid or jelly, lacking shape, strength and substance. The final phrase of the first sentence referring to the hatchback “he has designated you to drive” resonates with resentment and even anger. The author portrays this man as dominating, domineering and patronising (his wife is given the hatchback which is presumably not the main car in the family), as well being a drunken, selfish, boorish fool.

While the text mainly uses active verbs in association with the second person to denote the active forthright female subject – eg. “you take him out of the pub” and “[you] pour him into the hatchback” – passive verbs are employed in connection with negatives to emphasise loss and a sense of victimisation – eg. “your weekends are taken up”. The verb “taken up” suggests theft and invasion of the woman’s free time and freedom by this demanding, selfish man. In other words, positive things are done by the author; negative things are done to the author by a man.

The pronouns “you” and “your” are used 10 times in the one paragraph, on each occasion doing something for “him” directly or indirectly – taking him home, driving him, giving him attention, waiting for him, driving him again, doing the dishes, preparing dinner, decorating the house, freshening up the house. Meanwhile, “he” is falling down drunk, poured into the hatchback, showing off at soccer and other sports, going to the pub, sitting having coffee while she works, admiring himself Narcissus-like in the mirror that she hung, smelling up the house, drinking, and making a fool of himself.

Phrases such as “he prefers the smell of his own gases” ventures into sarcasm and a patronising tone, as well as shifting voice to third person omniscient – a technique of fiction writers. The author could objectively observe that her husband farts if he does so, but she is unlikely to know that he prefers this smell. He is not likely to have stated he prefers passed wind to fresh air. In this phrase, the author is venturing beyond reporting of events and facts into subjective comments and the techniques of the all-knowing omniscient narrator of fiction. She is describing his thoughts, making them (or at least her highly derogatory representation of them) visible to the audience. This is a clear sign introduced to the text by the author to say dislike this man.
The paragraph concludes with an even more telling sign of what the text is about. The final lines describe get togethers with friends as “an opportunity for the female to have some adult conversation” clearly implying that she does not have adult conversation at home with him. But, most significantly in this phrase, use of the article – “the female” and “the male” – turns her personal anecdote into a generalisation about women’s and men’s social habits. Use of the article in “the male” signifies that not only the man who is the subject of her narrative but men generally drink and make themselves look ridiculous. Doohan’s text is a diatribe against men given vent in a high circulation mass media.

**Example 3.**

My children were three and seven when I ended my marriage. Their father kept contact with them for a year or so, but after three less than three months, I knew it wouldn’t last. Somehow, in that short time, his love for them just seemed to evaporate. I would watch helplessly as my little boy sat on top of his suitcase waiting for his daddy to arrive, legs kicking back and forth with anticipation, for a father who often did not keep his promise … There’s a backlash against single mothers. It is being fuelled by commentators such as Arndt who never miss an opportunity to portray single mothers as manipulative and self-serving, a men’s movement that is deeply misogynous, and a Prime Minister who wants to drag women back into the kitchen where he thinks they belong (Trish Bolton, ‘When it comes to child access, many men just don’t want to know’ in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 4, 2003. p. 11).

The very first word of this text, a pronoun (which text and discourse analysts study assiduously) sets the tone. “*My* children” contrasts with the second sentence that also begins with a pronoun “*Their* father …”. Pronoun use reveals that the author believes that the children are hers rather than theirs – although the main point of the text is that he has obligations and responsibilities to them. The first sentence also makes it clear that she ended the marriage. She may have had good cause, although the reasons are not stated.

The second sentence indicates that the father kept in contact for “a year or so” – a not inconsiderable amount of time if he was really intent on leaving his children’s lives as she alleges – but adds that “after less than three months, I knew it wouldn’t last”. The latter statement is interesting for its use of the first person pronoun “I” and the definitive verb
“knew”. She does not say she “suspected” or “was concerned” that it wouldn’t last. She “knew”. Such a statement indicates either fortune teller powers – or an arrogant and self-important viewpoint.

The author goes on to state “his love for them just seemed to evaporate”. Again, this statement goes beyond reported conversation or observation and imputes reasons and intent to the man. In reality, she is unlikely to know how he felt about his children and her claims contradict extensive research. Surveys and interview data suggest that separated fathers fret for their children – some even commit suicide in depression. This sentence illustrates a characteristic common in many discussions by women of men – a tendency to speak not only for themselves but for men as well. And not only for men’s actions which women could observe, but men’s thoughts, feelings and even the extent of their love for their children which, particularly when living separately, they have little if any capacity to know.

The sentence “I would watch helplessly as my little boy sat on top of his suitcase waiting for his daddy to arrive, legs kicking back and forth with anticipation” contains a number of signs which seek to affect the emotions of the reader. The verb “watched” suggests the author is simply an observer of this scene with no part in it and the adverb “helplessly” to describe her position evokes pathos and sympathy, when in reality the text reveals that she chose to end the marriage. Even though he may have been an undesirable husband, she was clearly not helpless. And the negative and judgemental tone of the author’s statements about her ex-husband suggest that she may not be merely a helpless bystander; her attitude towards him and stated views evident in the text, may be a contributing factor to his absence. This is not argumentative to suggest that she is to blame for her son’s fatherlessness; it is presented simply as a possibility. But it is a possibility to which the reader has little if any access. The man’s perspective is beyond the text and the reader is left with an image of a helpless woman and a little boy kicking his legs back and forth waiting for his daddy who never comes.

Use of the term “his daddy” stands out as an intentional linguistic device. Earlier, the author describes the man as “their father”. But when he does not come to visit his son, the terms switches to the more emotive term “his daddy”. The man is described with the more distant term when he is close up; then with the more emotionally close term when he is
absent. The phrase “legs kicking back and forth in anticipation” also is symbolic of the child kicked back and forth physically and emotionally between the mother and the father and presents a visual image of a sad lonely boy – sadness and loneliness caused by his father. The child may have been kicking his legs back and forth in boredom – many boys do. The author ascribes intention to the father and the son which are signs to the reader on how to interpret the narrative.

Then the subject broadens to writers, the men’s movement and the Prime Minister and further manifest signs are presented on how this text is to be interpreted. The term “backlash”, a feminist hallmark applied to any oppositional viewpoint, is used. A generalisation is made concerning commentators such as Bettina Arndt – they “never miss an opportunity” to denigrate single mothers; the men’s movement is not only women-hating but “deeply misogynous”; and the Prime Minister “wants to drag women back into the kitchen”. The terms “backlash”, “misogynous”, “drag” in relation to women, and reference to the “kitchen” are symbols of male violence, chauvinism and subjugation. This narrative is not about one single mother’s experiences of child custody and visitation. It presents signs suggesting that a more pervasive and sinister movement (or even conspiracy) by men generally is acting against single mothers.

The concluding words that provided the headline of the article, “when it comes to child access, many men just don’t want to know” confirms this polemical objective and provides yet another example of women generalising men’s intentions and feelings as well as their behaviour. From her experience as narrated, the first person author could observe that “When it comes to child access, some men just don’t turn up”. But whether many men “don’t want to know” and how they feel about their children can be revealed only through interviews, discussions and surveys among separated fathers. Such research, which has been conducted (eg. Hawthorne, 2002), suggests that the majority of separated fathers do want to know and want increased access to their children.

From a narratology perspective, the story suggests this woman’s ex-husband is a ‘deadbeat dad’ and, most significantly, that he is typical of many separated fathers – that is, if one takes the narrative at face value.
Semiotic and semiological analysis which focus on the meanings interpreted by the audience are problematic in this and the other texts cited because it is not clear without audience research whether, or to what extent, readers ‘see through’ such polemic. One interpretation is that the preceding text is about the understandable frustration and anger of a single mother whose ex-husband skipped his responsibilities to their son. In the mind of a reader armed with alternative experiences or statistics on the relatively small number of fathers who are ‘deadbeat dads’, the meaning could be that Bolton is presenting an extreme example non-typical of fathers and, therefore, while she deserves sympathy, her argument against increased father access should be rejected. A more extreme reading could be that Bolton is a whingeing single mother who threw her husband out, is bitter and hostile towards him which possibly accounts for his absence, and is now angry at the world for her predicament. In a structuralist view, there is one meaning coded in the text, but it is a matter of some contention how this is identified and what validity such a reading has. In a post-structuralist view, any one of these readings, or others, can be equally valid.

What is known about the audience of these three samples is that they are readers of The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age newspapers respectively. Demographic data available indicates that, conservatively, 879,000 people potentially read two of the articles which appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald (its audited circulation at the time) – 1.76 million audience in total. A further 689,000 people potentially read The Age column (its audited circulated at the time), giving a total audience of almost 2.5 million people. Demographic data also shows that these newspapers are read by a mass audience spread across a wide socio-economic spectrum, although most are better educated than average. The audience is approximately 50% men who are likely to read these texts quite differently than women. This suggests that many readers are likely to interpret the texts differently to the authors’ intended meanings. But others may not equipped to make oppositional or alternative interpretations of the signs presented and are likely to draw meanings from the signs which speak their language (eg. “pour him into the hatchback”, “you take him home”, “waiting for a father who often did not keep his promise”).

The semiologist or semiotician can, at best, make but an educated guess as to audiences’ interpretations without conducting audience research. What can be concluded is that qualitative analysis of the texts cited shows the highly negative and at times vitriolic nature of representations of men and male identity in mass media today, despite introduction of
anti-discrimination and anti-sexism policies. Men could conclude that these policies work one-way to protect women, but offer no protection to men from highly discriminatory and sexist discourse. And the frequency of negative representations of men and male identities suggest that at least some, if not many, get through and impact audiences – men, boys, women and girls.

**Negative or disconfirming mass media representations**

Mass media representations disconfirming of the key finding of this study included mass media portrayals of men as heroes, leaders and success stories. Three short texts of this type are analysed in the following.

**Example 4.**

… that night in June 1953, the Chinese got there first and at 10pm the diggers were attacked with automatic rifles, burp guns and grenades … One of the men, Private E.R. ‘Tubby’ Ballard, a 17-stone Tasmanian, was hit by a Chinese grenade. ‘I saw him lifted up and thrown down the hillside like a rag doll,’ Cashman remembers.

Then Slim Gargate went down wounded and Cashman suddenly found himself patrol leader … Cashman helped Gargate down the hill and across the Bowling Alley (the narrow strip between the Allied and Chinese forces) to the safety of the Australian outpost … and then called for volunteers to go back for Tubby Ballard. Don Harris, a private from Sydney, offered to go with him.

As the two young diggers crossed the Bowling Alley again, a Chinese machine gun started firing from a clump of trees near the Mound. The Australians reached a point where it was impossible for them to go further without being shot.

Cashman decided to try his luck. Standing up in full view of the Chinese with his Owen gun above his head, he shouted ‘Skoshi towshong’ (a Chinese phrase for ‘little surrender’ or temporary surrender). The Chinese had not expected this. The machine gun ceased firing and Cashman added in English, ‘I’m coming for my wounded and am unarmed’. In the bright moonlight, he hurled the Owen gun behind him and walked towards the Chinese repeating ‘Skoshi towshong’ with his hands held high.
Reaching the enemy position, Cashman called out loudly ‘Are there any 6 Platoon wounded here?’ Bemused, the Chinese let him pass. After a search of the slopes, the two diggers found Tubby Ballard beside a small creek …. He was subsequently rescued (*The Bulletin*, July 29, 2003, pp. 30-31 reporting on Ron Cashman, at a time a 20-year old corporal fighting on the front line in Korea to try to gain high ground called ‘The Mound’).

What is immediately apparent in this text is the minimalist unemotional language used to describe what is a harrowing and bloody incident. When one of the men, E. R. (Tubby) Ballard, a 17-stone Tasmanian, is blown up by a grenade, it is told as “I saw him lifted up and thrown down the hillside like a rag doll”. The language is colourful, but matter of fact. Similarly, the shooting of Slim Gargate is described unemotionally as “when Slim Gargate went down wounded”. The story teller, Ron Cashman, seeks no sympathy for himself placed in this invidious position and there is no sense of victimhood applied to any of the characters. Similarly, the author recounting Cashman’s story does not embellish, but simply tells Cashman’s experiences with simple economical language, letting the facts speak for themselves. This language possibly indicates emotional detachment used by the men to cope with the circumstances of war. However, the text is not ‘cold’ as it describes, quite vividly, an incident involving courage, comradeship and mateship, loyalty and pride – both in the soldiers’ sense of themselves and the author’s tone in presenting the story.

The narrative is one of courage. A 20-year-old Australian corporal, pinned down under enemy machine gun fire and with his comrades wounded behind enemy lines, decides to stand up and approach the enemy with a white flag asking to retrieve his wounded. Incredibly, possibly out of confusion, the enemy troops let him pass and rescue his comrades.

Use of the Chinese phrase *Skoshi toshong* in the text presents a sign to the reader that the hero has a credible position of knowledge, being able to speak some words of Chinese which suggests that he has been at the front line for some time and is not an inexperienced ‘rookie’. There is also symbolism in that the Australian soldier not only entered Chinese territory, but he spoke to the enemy in their language as well.
The imagery of Cashman walking with “his hands held high” in the “bright moonlight” towards the enemy position, his Owen gun “hurled … behind him”, is strong and vivid. It signifies to the audience that he is decisive (he didn’t simply drop his gun) and brave. Conversely, the imagery of Tubby Ballard being thrown down the hillside “like a rag toll” by a grenade shows the fragility and vulnerability of the soldiers against the destructive weapons of war. That these forces can be overcome by sheer bravery and mateship gives the narrative a context against which Cashman and his colleagues are shown as heroes.

The naming of places is also highly symbolic. “The Bowling Alley” is suggestive of the soldiers being knocked down like ten pins and “The Mound” occupied by the Chinese machine gun which needs to be taken is perhaps a subtle reference to the futility of war. It is described not as a hill or valuable high ground, but simply “a mound”.

From a narratology perspective alone, this text stands symbolic of men represented as courageous, strong and committed to their mates. Despite the negativity of the subject (war), the unemotional, economical language and understatement allows the events and names to stand out and take on a symbolic quality beyond the narrative itself.

**Example 5.**

In the late 1920s, labourer Pat Crawley would leave his Redfern house at 3.30 each morning, heading to Milsons Point to melt down asphalt for the teams of men who started work at 7.30 am building the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Mr Crawley was part of a workforce which probably reached 4,000 over the decade of building and was a workforce based on hard manual labour … We tend to forget that the bridge was the outstanding engineering achievement of its age and that it was built by ‘ordinary’ men with intricate calibrations and hard physical labour … Some worked 11 or 12-hour days and there were many accidents, including 16 fatalities (‘Men of steel who built the bridge with hard yakka’, The Sydney Morning Herald, October 25, 2003, p. 7)

This text is an extract from a major news article previewing the opening of a photographic exhibition of the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Unlike the previous example, the narrative is not substantially developed, although it does focus on one worker as a way of
telling the story of 4,000 men who built the bridge. But we know only a little about Pat Crawley. His presence in the story is more symbolic.

Semiotically, however, there are many signs in this text which suggest meaning. It is fixed in time by the opening “In the late 1920s”. The audience is prompted to imagine this period, assisted by an accompanying grainy black and white photo of the bridge under construction. The text and visual image combine to speak of a time of industrialisation and pioneering achievements, just two decades after Australia became a nation.

We are told Pat Crawley lived in Redfern. This selection is unlikely to be accidental. Redfern was (and still largely is) a working class suburb on the low end of the socio-economic scale. The celebration of working class strength and values is further emphasised by the phrase “it was built by ‘ordinary’ men” in which the single quotation marks signal that the author is not using the term “ordinary” to mean plain or unremarkable. To the contrary, the author is giving a sign that he means these men were extraordinary and remarkable, even though they were mostly manual labourers.

Crawley leaves his house at 3.30 am, so he would be required to rise around 3 am or earlier, a sign of the extremely hard life he lived. The use of specifics such as the time of day this worker left for work, while seemingly a micro detail irrelevant to the overall story, is a semiotic device that creates meaning. Most readers can imagine getting up at 3 am every day and probably shiver at the thought. The men all start work by 7.30 am and work 11 and 12 hour days, facts selected and used in the text which speak to the nature of the task and conditions faced by the men.

The text tells that there were “intricate calibrations” involved, but on no less than three occasions in this short text, the audience is told that the building of the bridge involved “manual labour”, “hard physical labour” and “hard yakka”. Use of the term “manual” interspersed with “physical” and the colloquial Australian term for hard work “yakka” uses an interplay of language to provide redundancy in the communication. It is almost certain that any reader of this text would get the meaning that these men toiled hard and long.

The combination of “intricate calibrations and hard physical labour” in the same phrase implies that the men who built the bridge were not mindless labourers who toiled only for a
wage. It signals a combination of skill and hard work, a combination of brain and brawn. In this sense, the text is lifting these men out of the event and making them iconic. They are presented not simply as bridge buildings, but as symbols of revered virtues of Australian manhood – intelligence and skill combined with hard work and a down-to-earth, unpretentious demeanour. They are celebrated as quiet heroes.

Example 6.

“I was looking into her eyes and she was singing,” recalls Mike. “It was a happy song. She sang a line, I laughed. She’d sing the line again. And we both laughed. She was singing, laughing – and hiccuping and I’d say, ‘Do it again Mummy’. The hiccuping and singing proved the first symptom of a far deeper malaise that was to dominate their lives – the destructive shadow of Beryl Munro’s alcoholism and the beatings she later dished out to her cheeky, tough, sometimes defiant son.

“If she had only a couple of drinks and I had poured most of it down the toilet, she became mean, very mean, and that’s when she started to hit me.”

“These are difficult and delicate subjects for me, even today, but the point of the book, really, is that a slightly disadvantaged housekeeper’s kid does okay. I think that message is important. You can’t blame society for your problems – you just have to get on with it as best you can. That’s not to say that you can just wipe those things from your mind, but you can’t blame anyone else for things that happen in life. The thing I had to do was pick myself up, dust myself off and get stuck in, rather than blame anyone, including my mum.” (“Secrets and Ghosts”, interview with Mike Munro, TV journalist and author of A Patsy Faced Nothing in Australian Women’s Weekly, August 2003, pp. 106-112).

This text is a short extract from a long feature article based on an interview with Australian 60 Minutes reporter and presenter of This is Your Life, Mike Munro, following publication of his autobiography, A Patsy Faced Nothing. The book’s title is based on what his mother belittlingly called him during his troubled childhood.

The text begins with Munro reminiscing of happy times as a child living with his mother, but immediately introduces the intrusiveness of her alcoholism. He describes her as
“singing, laughing – and hiccupping”. “Hiccupping” is a visual and auditory sign, working on several audience senses at once, and its use abruptly disturbs the positive flow of the text, symbolic of the way his mother’s drinking interrupted his otherwise happy childhood.

Nevertheless, Munro refers to her as “Mummy”, an affectionate term rather than a more formal and distant description as ‘my mother’. The second paragraph, a first person quote, reports how his mother’s drinking resulted in her becoming “very mean” and beating him with, as described later in the text, “belts and ironing cords”.

The selection involved in Munro pouring his mother’s alcohol “down the toilet” rather than down the sink is also a sign to the reader. Pouring the liquor down the toilet is more graphic than simply pouring it down the sink or the laundry basin or out in the garden. It suggests disgust towards her drinking and perhaps also has a metaphorical suggestion of her and his life ‘going down the toilet’.

What is most striking about this text from a narratology perspective is the author’s avoidance of blame and victimhood. Unlike many narratives which seek to apportion blame for their circumstances on others, Munro reports on his mother’s alcoholism in a documentary way, equally citing happy times as well as the misery. Furthermore, he explicitly states “you can’t blame society for your problems” and “you can’t blame anyone else for things that happen in life”. Critics might cite that Munro has been very successful which perhaps makes it easier to reflect compassionately on his mother’s deficient and at times violent raising of her son and it is true that Munro has enjoyed the benefits of education, professional recognition and financial independence. Elsewhere in the article, the reporter notes that Munro has travelled the globe and interviewed Madonna, Barbra Streisand and Katherine Hepburn among a list of celebrities.

But Munro makes it clear that he was hurt and scarred by his mother’s alcoholism following his father’s desertion (described elsewhere in the article). He says: “That’s not to say that you can just wipe those things from your mind”. But he expresses a get on with it attitude saying “The thing I had to do was pick myself up, dust myself off and get stuck in, rather than blame anyone, including my mum.”
Munro’s story is salutary and perhaps inspirational to people who are victims of abuse or violence and it is a representation of a man with a courageous, forgiving, compassionate and sensitive approach to life.

**Exceptional and discrepant mass media representations**

Exceptional and discrepant representations can be deduced to be those outside the categories of typical or disconfirming examples and contradictory of both. In presenting a balanced qualitative analysis of mass media representations of men and male identities, three examples that are neither typical of the majority of representations of men cited or disconfirming are briefly reviewed.

**Example 7.**

Men are governed by two brains – one above the belt and another below. You won’t find this fact in any medical textbook, but deep down we all know it to be true … This quest to reconcile our upper and lower house members is what makes a man’s life so fantastically infuriating … Still, for all the trouble he gets us into, we love him. He is, from birth until death, our best friend, with much of the time in between spent trying to make him the best friend of whichever woman takes his – that is, our – fancy. Perhaps that is why he, like Our Dark Lord Satan, travels under so many names – dong, wang, cock, knob, prick, tockley, pecker, schleng, skin flute, love muscle, tummy banana, trouser snake, pork sword, giggle-stick, and so on (Editorial in *Ralph*, September 2003, p. 14).

This text extract confirms almost every unfavourable feminist cliché about men – obsessed with their penis, their mind below their waist, their brains in their underpants, personifying and talking to their penis as if it is a separate person. One can only wonder why a so-called men’s magazine would publish such content which, in any objective analysis, trivialises, objectifies and demonises men.

Readers of this text encounter a number of signs that suggest men are sex-obsessed and promiscuous. The penis is given the status of a second brain and spoken about as “he” and “him”. Clear signs of sexual promiscuity are conveyed in the phrase “whichever woman takes his – that is, our – fancy”. Clearly, any woman will do for this penis/man.
There is also visual imagery suggested in the nicknames listed for the penis. Terms such as “prick”, “sword” and “love muscle” are signs of penetration causing bleeding, a weapon and strength. “Our Dark Lord Satan” and “trouser snake” use signs of the Devil and evil.

A sympathetic reading could view this text as light (albeit smutty) humour and interpret it as not serious. But, on the other hand, it was presented as an editorial column near the front of the magazine in a box opposite the editorial contacts page with the author’s signature on the bottom. These formatting conventions are signs that the text so displayed is an important, insightful observation from the proprietors or editor of the publication representing the publication’s philosophy. As such, it could be taken seriously by readers and create or at least reinforce negative views of men (and in men).

**Example 8.**

*FHM* (October 2003, p. 202) presented its “Bloke Test” which listed the following 10 questions as a quiz to determine ‘blokiness’:

1. Stared down the opposition before a match?
2. Lost your cool on the pitch?
3. Thrown a wobbly when someone messed your hair?
4. Have you ever knocked yourself out?
5. Written off a car?
6. Had a brush with death?
7. Been bitten on the nuts by an animal?
8. Jumped a motorbike?
9. Been thrown out of a pub?
10. Have you ever set fire to a tree?

The first two questions clearly apply to sports, particularly football. While staring down opponents might be reasonably accepted as a psychological tactic, losing one’s cool on the pitch suggests aggression is a requirement for being a bloke.

Questions in relation to having written off a car, being thrown out of a pub, and jumped a motorbike confirm the quiz’s focus on aggressive behaviour as synonymous with being a
bloke. Also, “had a brush with death?” implies a self-destructive, risk-taking mode of behaviour.

Other questions asking readers if they have been “been bitten on the nuts by an animal” and “set fire to a tree” are puzzling and can only be explained as an attempt at humour and part of the magazine’s quirky style, or they could be taken as signs that men are wild, environmentally destructive and partly or largely out of control.

“Thrown a wobbly when someone messed your hair” seems out of context as it suggests a concern for grooming which is inconsistent with the other nine criteria. Nonetheless, the colloquial term “wobbly” is generally taken to mean throwing a tantrum or becoming angry which is consistent with the aggressive nature described in the text. Furthermore, this question suggests aggression for little reason is part of being a bloke.

In total, the 10 questions provide little which could be seen as complimentary of men.

**Example 9.**

I’m angry, because as a role model for you men I’ve had enough of the feminist attitudes that have shackled and turned too many of you into Sensitive New Age Guys. I know you’re only doing it to get shagged, but the problem is that, because you listen to women, most SNAGS become whipping boys for female man-gripes. That’s why here at the Capper Institute for Male Advancement I’ve developed a three-step system to let even the soppiest SNAG get a girl into their bedroom. Here’s how: When confronted by a gender-sledging chick, accept her view, but then come back with a sensitive yet assertive man-ism. That’ll shake them enough for them to be putty in your hands. Hell, you might even convert a lesbian or two back to the ways of man-love (“The world according to Warwick”, Warwick Capper column in *FHM*, August 2003, p. 29).

The opening phrase of this text states that the author is “angry”, although it soon becomes apparent that the text is written satirically. For instance, the author’s self-praise as “a role model for you men” can be interpreted as tongue in cheek by most Australians familiar with Warwick Capper as a high-profile, self-promoting, tight shorts-wearing Australian Rules footballer and aspirant sex symbol. Also, reference to the Capper Institute for Male
Advancement is clearly fictitious, although the acronym CIMA may be an allusion to semen.

Despite the attempt at satire, the text openly attacks feminists and dismissively criticises SNAGS (Sensitive New Age Guys), referring to them as “shackled” and as “whipping boys for female man-gripes”. The narrative alleges that the main motive of men is to “get a girl into their bedroom” and proceeds to give tips on how to coerce women into bed through clever word plays.

Signs in the text likely to be interpreted by readers in relatively predictable ways include reference to women as “chicks” and advice on how to get women to be “putty” in men’s hands. The latter resonates with symbolism of women being shaped by and to men’s desires. Partly, this can be seen to be a reflection of the author’s intention to be provocative. But chauvinistic men are likely to interpret the text as reinforcement of their negative attitudes towards women, while women are likely to be enraged by the text, or view it dismissively as the sort of sexist garbage men like reading – itself a meaning (and an uncomplimentary one concerning men).

The final sentence “Hell, you might even convert a lesbian or two back to the ways of man-love”, while also perhaps tongue in cheek, contains a number of significant semiotic elements. The verb “convert” suggests that lesbianism is a philosophy or belief from which people can be converted through persuasive argument. The phrase also enlists the religious connotations of the term “convert”, implying introducing or re-introducing lesbians to heterosexuality is a worthy and even holy cause. The term “man-love” is somewhat ironic given that the entire text is devoted to discussing anything but love – rather exploitive promiscuous sex.

Much of what is published in men’s magazines does not warrant in-depth qualitative analysis, as these media present themselves as light entertainment rather than serious reporting or analysis of social issues. However, men’s magazines themselves cross the line, mixing humour which is afforded a high degree of licence with comment on important social issues including health, sex and women. Men’s magazines have attracted considerable readerships as outlined under “Media sample” in chapter four, so their messages reach a sizeable audience.
It could be concluded that so-called men’s media are men’s worst enemies as they represent highly sexist, chauvinist, insensitive, violent and outmoded images of men.

**Further analysis using qualitative content analysis software**

In a second verifying phase of qualitative media content analysis, six of the preceding text samples were analysed using MAXqda – MAX for Qualitative Data Analysis, a software program for qualitative text analysis (Dressing&pehl GbR & Verbi GmbH, 2004). The three typical and three disconfirming examples were selected for this further analysis. These texts were imported into MAXqda and analysed against a set of text categories and codes. The preceding manual (human) analysis of the texts by the author focussed attention on signs such as pronouns, voice, tonal qualities and other qualitative criteria, but did not fully adhere to Mayring’s (2003) suggested approach of inductive category development and deductive category application. Use of MAXqda allowed text categories to be set up based on the research questions posed, the theoretical framework of this study and understanding of the text studied, and for codes to be applied in a systematic way to the selected texts.

Like a number of qualitative text analysis programs, MAXqda allows dictionary-supplied categories to be applied to texts, or categories to be created by the researcher. Given the specialised nature of this study, categories were created in the program for:

1. Overall focus of texts;
2. Tone;
3. Messages;
4. Key words.

Specialised codes were created in each category reflecting the issues and messages identified in this study during quantitative analysis. Overall focus of text codes were created based on Nathanson and Young’s categories of male representations identified in the chapters of their 2001 study – blaming men; laughing at men (ie. ridicule or trivialise); looking down on men and separatism; bypassing men; dehumanising men; and demonising men. The negative category of ‘marginalise’ was added reflecting findings of quantitative...
analysis in this study, and positive categories correlating to each negative category were created to allow analysis to be balanced. For instance, ‘blaming men’ was matched by ‘supporting men’; ‘demonising men’ was matched by ‘eulogise or praise men’. In addition to 10 codes for overall focus, eight codes were established to identify tone (respect, friendship, love, partnership, anger, ridicule, sarcasm and fear) and 20 messages were tracked (10 positive and 10 negative) as identified in quantitative analysis and listed in the Coding List in Appendix A.

This computer-aided qualitative analysis was not conducted to an in-depth level given the extent of study of the selected media texts already undertaken using other methodologies and the concerns expressed by many researchers over the reliability of computer content analysis. However, this analysis further confirmed the predominant focus on male aggression and violence and overwhelmingly negative representations of men and male identities. Qualitative text analysis using MAXqda found:

The predominant overall focus was demonising of men, followed by trivialising of men.

The most common tones evident in the texts were fear, ridicule and anger. Respect, friendship, love and partnership did not appear in the texts selected.

The leading messages were that men are aggressors and violent and that they are criminals. Work and responsibility also featured in the texts, but not as frequently as violence and crime and irresponsibility was cited equally with responsibility. Hero, protector and committed/commitment each appeared only once, as did sexual abuser and deadbeat dad.

The leading key words found were ‘murder/murdering’, ‘killing/killers’, ‘drinking/drunk’ and ‘misogynous’ – all on more than one occasion in just six short texts totalling slightly over 1,000 words.

As an equal number of correlating positive codes for overall focus, tone and messages were created and available for coding, and computer-aided qualitative analysis was
conducted on three typical media articles as identified in quantitative analysis and three disconfirming articles, these findings can taken as reliable reflections of media discourse and confirm the findings reported in quantitative analysis and human qualitative analysis.

Qualitative codings and findings obtained using MAXqda are reported in Appendix E.
6.1 Conclusions of this study

This extensive analysis of mass media news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle media found that these primary sources of what are claimed and widely seen as ‘fact’, ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ predominantly portray men as violent and aggressive thieves, murderers, wife and girlfriend bashers, sexual abusers, molesters, perverts, irresponsible deadbeat dads and philanderers, even though, in reality, only a small proportion of men act out these roles and behaviours.

As reported in chapter five, almost 70% of all reporting and comment on men and male identity in the mass media genre studied was negative and more than 80% of portrayals of men and male identity were unfavourable. Violence and aggression are overwhelmingly the most frequent representations associated with men and boys, portrayed in a daily barrage of reports of criminal acts including armed robberies, assaults, murder, sexual abuse and assaults on women; domestic violence, harassment, and discrimination in work. Men and boys are also widely represented as irresponsible, risk-taking, commitment phobic, insensitive, undomesticated, out of touch with their feelings and poor communicators.

With the exception of a small minority of positive media portrayals of male heroes such as war veterans, fire fighters and rescuers, and an equally small percentage of portrayals of men as good fathers, husbands and citizens, the only males presented positively are men and boys who have been ‘feminised’ such as ‘metrosexuals’ and males who exhibit “a feminine side”. In short, the only good in men, according to most discourse reflected and propagated in mass media, are traits alleged to be female. Maleness is widely represented as innately and culturally evil, and characteristics of masculinity are principally portrayed as undesirable and anachronistic – notably aggression, violence, sexual predaciousness and promiscuity, competitiveness and traditional body image.
As well as highly negative portrayals in mass media discussion of serious issues such as violence, family involvement, fatherhood and work, men are trivialised and objectified in populist media content such as “Hunk of the month” and “Man without his shirt” sections in women’s magazines, and treated as the butt of jokes in newspaper cartoons and TV ‘sitcoms’ such as Frasier.

Negative representations of men and male identity are not only a quantitative phenomenon – ie outnumbering positive portrayals which, in isolation, may not prove anything. Qualitative analysis also conducted as part of this study shows highly negative messages concerning men and male identity are communicated through influential ‘quality’ media as well as ‘popular’ press (University of Queensland, 1992); are contributed by credible sources such as academics and best-selling authors (see Figure 23); and are couched in semiotically significant (ie. persuasive) language as shown in chapter five. In-depth text analysis techniques reveal that, tonally, mass media content frequently includes highly critical and even vitriolic attacks on men and male identity, and balance is not provided through oppositional (ie. male supportive) views in all but a few cases. Analysis confirms bias against men in key areas of discourse in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

It can be concluded from this study that men are widely demonised, marginalised, trivialised and objectified in mass media. These findings support and expand those of Nathanson and Young (2001) and others who have reported “misandry” and denigration of men in modern societies.

Some media writers recognise the prevalence of negativity in representing men. Journalist, Andrew Bock (2003) reports that “media that appeal to women are more likely to portray men as bungling, incompetent fall guys in the workplace and in relationships”. Bock also alleges that articles in print media contain more prejudicial generalisations about men partly because women dominate the field of writing about relationships, as is shown in this study. “Biases run many ways across the media, but an overriding bias in modern media seems to run away from positive images of men” he says (p. 13).

Alan Close (2003), in his “In the male” column in The Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend magazine, writing in response to a woman columnist lamenting “all the decent men are either married or gay” responded:
It’s an example of the systemic dismissal men have suffered for decades, from insidious images of dumbcluck husbands and inept fathers on TV to the pernicious suspicion that any man seen in public with a child must be a potential pederast. It’s a sobering reminder of how accepted this degradation of men has become (p. 51).

In a major opinion feature in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Miranda Devine (2003) sympathetically summarised the plight of men today. Devine cited:

The Oxford University research finding outlined in *Adam’s Curse* by genetics professor, Bryan Sykes, that the male Y chromosome is disintegrating and destined for extinction (although this finding has been contradicted in other research);

British psychotherapists’ description of the ‘Atlas syndrome’, the male equivalent of ‘superwoman’ which it was said is setting impossible ideals for men to live up to as breadwinners, workers, ‘superdads’, perfect husbands and other roles;

Men’s Line counselling service data which reports that 80 per cent of 30,000 calls from men in two years of operation were about family and relationship problems, particularly distress over lack of access to their children, with many men suicidal;

Surveys which have found that at least one in 10 men feel they have been discriminated against by the Family Court;

Confusing new images of masculinity such as metrosexuals. Devine asked: “What is the average man to make of ads for hair-removal treatments in which a woman recoils from the embrace of a hairy-chested man in the before shot and, in the after shot when he is hairless, she can’t keep her hands off him” (p. 17).

Devine acknowledged “there are very negative images of men at the present time … anger at broken relationships, coupled with a masculine ideal they have no hope of meeting and an epidemic of man-bashing in popular culture, leads to challenged self-worth at best for men. At its extreme, it can lead to the kind of tragic murder-suicide we witnessed in
Sydney this week” (p. 17) (referring to a tragic case of a father killing his three children and himself cited under “Men and fatherhood” in chapter five).

A further important conclusion is that the most frequent and generalised representations of men identified in this study – men as violent aggressors frequently committing domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and other violent crimes – are misrepresentations.

For instance, Woods (1998) and a number of other researchers challenge many of the so-called facts presented by mass media in relation to domestic violence (commonly abbreviated to DV) and child abuse. Woods says that “using data from reputable sources such as the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, and major research studies, we find that the ‘demonising’ of the male is certainly not justified”. He cites research conducted by Straus and Gelles in 1975 and in 1985. Straus and Gelles (1986), in the National Family Violence Survey in the US, one of the largest studies of family violence undertaken, found that women are just as likely to perpetrate violence on men as men on women. Further, they found that between 1975 and 1985, the rate of violence by men against women decreased, while the rate of violence by women against men increased.

Tomison (1996) has reported that most physical abuse of children is perpetrated by women, with the single largest group of child abusers being mothers. Other studies support this claim. A US National Incidence of Child Abuse and Neglect report in 2000 found that “where maltreatment of children led to death, 78% of the perpetrators were female” (Hilton, 2000).

Clare (2000) reports that in 1981, 43% of children living in households with a mother only were abused, compared with 18% of children who were abused in the population overall. Abuse by single mothers’ male partners or casual acquaintances was not identifiable in this study, but it did suggest that single mothers living alone with children committed or were party to abuse more frequently than occurred in dual parent families.

While these studies were conducted across a number of different cultures and socio-economic groups and investigated different types of domestic violence, which makes comparison problematic, they consistently contradict claims that men are responsible for domestic violence and recent Australian statistics confirm these findings. In 2001-2002,
there were 30,500 substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect in Australia, involving 25,600 children aged between 0 and 17 years. Physical abuse and emotional abuse or neglect each comprised 27% of these, while sexual abuse comprised 14% of cases. Information collected by community services authorities indicates that the incidence of abuse or neglect was higher among one-parent families (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 52). Analysis shows that in more than 88% of 23,000 Australian one-parent families, children under 15 were under the care of their mother (20,300), compared with just 11% of children under 15 (2,700) in the care of their fathers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 28). If men were the predominant child abusers, sole-parent children in the care of women should have a lower rate of abuse than families where men were present. But, instead, the contrary is true.

Despite these research statistics, an editorial in the national newspaper, The Australian (2003) reported that a Queensland Crime Commission study found 45% of females and 10% of males had been abused and stated “…offenders are almost universally male …”. The claim and many others about male perpetrated domestic violence are simply wrong, say researchers such as Woods (1998).

Statistics on domestic violence are hotly contested with various studies using different definitions of violence and agencies suggesting that reported violence is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’, arguing that many instances remaining unreported. However, Woods (1998) notes that under-reporting is more likely to occur among men, as police do not take complaints of ‘husband bashing’ seriously in most cases and many men are reluctant to admit that they have been battered or abused. There are few if any support agencies or refuges for men to go to as there are for women, so reporting offers little benefit. The man often has few options but to return home.

Claims in relation to domestic violence are also skewed by definitions applied. Hilton (2000) cites an Australian government brochure on domestic violence which states that “watching” a person can constitute the crime of stalking. He also comments on a brochure distributed by the Centre for Women and Families which informs readers that “embarrassing a person in public or private”, criticising, or “withholding approval, appreciation or affection” can constitute “dating violence”. That the definition is applied to men as perpetrators is clear from the text and the distribution which specifically addressed
women. Hilton notes: “It used to be called free speech, constructive criticism or free choice.” This latter definition of violence – “withholding approval, appreciation or affection” – begs challenge as it suggests that a man breaking off a relationship or even declining sexual activity could constitute the offence of “dating violence”. In simple terms, it suggests that men could be charged for not dating and not having sex with a woman.

These concerns and research contradicting claims of men being perpetrators of most or all child abuse and domestic violence are not cited to repudiate justifiable concerns of women over violence committed by men against them and children. Whatever level of violence against women and children is perpetrated by men, it is unacceptable and initiatives to reduce domestic violence are commendable. But men suffer in three ways in relation to discourse on domestic violence: (a) they are demonised as the perpetrators of most or even all violence; (b) all men are implicated and placed under a ‘cloud of suspicion’ by generalisations about male violence against women and children; and (c) it is assumed that violence is not done to men and little or no attention is paid to claims that it is.

Generalisations including those in relation to male violence and others cited in this study, such as women are better communicators than men and claims that the world would be peaceful and a better place if women were in charge, are allowed to pass unchallenged in popular and in academic discourse reported in mass media. Statements of superiority in reverse (ie. suggestions that men are better than women) are defined as sexism and viewed as ‘politically incorrect’ and even illegal in some cases. This analysis shows that gender discrimination in language and discourse cited by Weatherall (2002) has reversed, or at least applies to both genders.

6.2 Implications of findings of this study

A key question that arises in analysing this data and underpins implications that can be deduced is whether the demonisation, marginalisation, trivialisation and objectification of men and male identity that are prevalent in mass media are reflecting existing social attitudes (the humanist view of media roles and effects) or creating or at least influencing social attitudes (the behaviourist view of media roles and effects), or some combination of both (Shoemaker and Reese (1996, pp. 31-32).
While there has been polarisation of social sciences thinking on mass media towards one view or the other, there is strong evidence that mass media do both, as discussed in chapter four – ie. they reflect social attitudes and they create or influence social attitudes (Lull, 2000, p. 165). Lull’s explicit conclusion on the multi-directional nature of mass media communication is supported by a number of researchers including Newbold et al. (2002) who summarise that “today it is commonly appreciated that the media do not simply mirror reality” (p. 16). They argue that mass media do reflect reality, but that they do much more. Similarly, Curran (2002) sees mass media as “powerful ideological agencies” (ie. creators of attitudes), but cautions that their effects are not as simplistic or clear-cut as public ‘brainwashing’ (p. 165). It can be concluded from research that mass media are both mirrors and creators of social attitudes.

This leads to a follow-on question: when do mass media mirror social attitudes and when do they create or influence them? This fundamental cause and effect question in relation to mass media content influences conclusions and implications that can be deduced from various mass media representations.

To the extent that mass media content reflects or mirrors social attitudes, it provides a database of recorded opinions and views which can be analysed to learn about a society – albeit with the important qualifications and limitations identified in this study. Sources analysis, a sub-element of content analysis, can specifically identify groups or individuals that hold and propagate various opinions and attitudes, and issues and messages analysis can identify how prevalent certain views are. When mass media mirror social attitudes, media content provides a window to view and study society and media content analysis is a proxy form of social research with the advantages that it provides a non-intrusive methodology and it can analyse large amounts of data over extended periods. In this approach, mass media themselves are unimportant except as a portal or vantage point.

To the extent that mass media content is involved in the creation of social attitudes and even behaviour, media content analysis, as discussed in chapter four, can draw inferences about media producers’ intent and, with reasonable probability, make predictions about likely effects on audiences (Neuendorf, 2002, p.53). In this instance, the mass media are the focal point of study, with societies seen as consumers of mass media content.
However, the distinction between media as mirror and media as creator of attitudes is not so clear-cut as being one or the other in any situation. Two key related issues that determine the level and way in which mass media reflect or create attitudes are (a) the genre and type of content and (b) the level of media access available to various viewpoints.

As well as arguing that entertainment media content such as drama and ‘soap opera’ reflects widespread audience attitudes in order to be popular, media proprietors, producers and journalists claim that news reporting and news related media content such as current affairs reflect reality because they report what happens and what is said by various sources. ‘We tell it as it is’, is a common claim by news reporters and editors. However, this claim ignores that selection of subjects to report is, from the outset, an ‘agenda setting’ or ‘agenda framing’ function (Blood, 1989). No systematic method of sampling from all available topics and viewpoints is applied; news media select some issues and subjects to report and ignore others. Secondly, news reporters and editors select sources to quote within articles while other potential sources of comment are ignored and, further, they select elements of what these sources are quoted saying, often editing statements severely to what broadcast media call ‘10 second grabs’. Thus, even news is a highly produced representation of reality and does not broadly reflect what happened on any given day – only small, highly selective parts of it.

Furthermore, the principle criterion for selection of mass media content analysed in this study is news value/newsworthiness which further limits the capability of these genre of mass media content to reflect social attitudes and viewpoints. While definition of news is complex, in general terms feature articles, opinion columns, letters to the editor and talk show segments as well as news articles and current affairs reports, must contribute something new or at least unknown to audiences to meet news media requirements. News and news-related media content by its very nature does not simply reflect social attitudes and viewpoints – it if did only this, it would not be news or newsworthy.

Externally contributed opinion columns and feature articles are arguably types of media content which reflect social attitudes and viewpoints and, to some extent, they do because they are written by independent experts and authorities from various vantage points in society, not media staff. However, even in these types of content, the functions of reflecting and creating opinion overlap and fuse because of the selective nature of mass
media content and the related issue of media access. Media content analysis shows that, along with a small group of journalists and program presenters, media content is contributed by a relatively small number of politicians, heads of organisations, published authors, prominent academics (often those who actively promote their views), and ‘celebrities’ (defined rather loosely). Some mass media refer to these regular sources that they rely on as ‘talent’, reflecting their preferred status as willing and skilled spokespersons and commentators. For instance, in this study, almost 50% of media discussion of the two leading issues in relation to fatherhood (father involvement with children and child support) was contributed by just 10 authors and spokespersons.

Letters to the editor, theoretically mass media content broadly reflective of social views, are given very limited space in newspapers and magazines and letters are usually edited to a few paragraphs in most media. Similarly in radio ‘talkback’ programs, ostensibly open to the public, callers are screened with a limited number getting through ‘on air’ and most are given a minute or even less to express their viewpoint. Dissenting viewpoints are often cut off abruptly by program producers or presenters.

These characteristics of mass media editorial content result in representations reflecting a narrow and limited range of attitudes and viewpoints. Often, these are vested interests and organised campaigners such as political leaders and apparatchiks, paid spokespersons of organisations, professional PR practitioners (Macnamara, 1993), authors promoting new books, and academics who use the media to promote their views.

Through their focus on news and newsworthiness and their relatively narrow selection of sources to publish, broadcast or quote, editorial mass media do not as a general rule reflect widespread social attitudes. Mass media reflect particular viewpoints and attitudes. Further, mass media expose these selected attitudes and viewpoints to large audiences. In reflecting some views to large audiences, while not reflecting others, mass media combine reflection of social attitudes and creation or influencing of social attitudes in a mixed model of communication.

The extent of reflection and creation varies from medium to medium, issue to issue, and article to article and can occur simultaneously even within the same article, such as a report or column reflecting views of one or more individuals or groups and communicating them
persuasively to a larger audience previously unexposed to these views. Thus, reflecting societies and influencing societies are not discrete alternative or separate functions of mass media, but inter-related and intertwined functions that often feed one off the other in a circle of influence. At the same time as they reflect attitudes and viewpoints from within society, by their selection and amplification of these selected viewpoints mass media are concurrently engaged in creation and influencing of social attitudes and viewpoints. As Gauntlett (2002) summarises on the media as mirror or manufacturer debate “the power relationship between media and the audience involves a ‘bit of both’, or to be more precise, a lot of both” (p. 254).

Interpretation of media content analysis must take account of the complex interaction of both these potentialities and examine findings on a case by case basis noting the frequency of similar views being expressed, the range of sources quoted or cited, the presence or otherwise of documented data to show a base of support for statements made, and the size and nature of audiences reached.

When significant volume of content from a diverse range of sources presents consistent or complementary viewpoints, such as a ‘flood’ of letters to the editor or articles by several academics or authors presenting the same or a similar case, or representative data is presented such as research reporting the views of a valid sample group, it can be concluded that these views reflect at least to some extent social attitudes and viewpoints. Conversely, news, current affairs reports, opinion columns, feature articles and talk show segments relying on narrowly selected views or data, unsubstantiated claims, anecdotal evidence, and content couched in emotional terms without supporting data, is unlikely to broadly reflect social attitudes and viewpoints with any accuracy. But this content may nevertheless influence social attitudes and viewpoints. Furthermore, even when media content reflects societies, it also has the potential to influence societies because of the mass media’s ‘broadcasting’ capabilities and other factors such as semiotic efficacy. So the potential of mass media to create or influence social and even political attitudes remains paramount in media researchers’ minds and informs this chapter exploring potential implications of mass media representations and misrepresentations of men and male identity.
As well as considering the extent that mass media content may reflect societal attitudes as well as or instead of creating them, discussion of implications of this research must also be cognisant of the limitations of content analysis which have been openly acknowledged in framing this study. Notwithstanding recognition of the importance of discourse and research techniques for analysing discourses and texts, there is a move away from the view that discourse is transparent and that texts can be taken in themselves to reveal meaning. Hermes (1995) warns that “cultural studies often makes the mistake of assuming that ‘texts are always significant’” (p. 148). Post-structuralist theory holds that “neither the … subject who produces the texts, nor the researcher, is the final arbiter of meaning” in any text being read. Davies and Gannon (2005) propose that it is the task of researchers “to develop concepts they find in … texts as a source of creative possibilities” … the point of a … post-structuralist analysis is not to expose the hidden truth in all its simplicity, but to disrupt that which is taken as stable/unquestionable truth”. They add “experience is understood as being constituted through multiple discourses which give rise to ambivalent understandings and emotions”. This study involved empirical research rather than post-structuralist analysis, but drawing of conclusions and citing possible implications of the empirical data gathered is informed by post-structuralist theory.

Clatterbaugh (1998) also warns that “we should be reasonably clear that we are not talking about men when we are talking about images, stereotypes or norms” (pp. 42-43). He notes two ways of studying men: examining male behaviours, attitudes and abilities on one hand and images, stereotypes, norms and discourses on the other.

This study has examined images, stereotypes, norms and discourses represented in mass media and, therefore, cannot directly report implications in relation to behaviour, attitudes or abilities. Fully understanding the implications of the negative representations of men and male identities reported in this study fully will require further research. In particular, identifying the effects of this negative discourse on men, boys, women and girls will require audience research such as surveys, interviews or focus groups. Audience effects research may also need to include observation (ethnographic) techniques and even clinical psychology methods, and may need to be conducted over time to identify effects fully.

However, post-structuralist thinking recognises the important constitutive force of discourse. Foucault pointed to the significance of not only the origin of discourses, but
their power effects and the types of knowledge they produce and institutionalise (Woods, 1999). And mass media play an important and, according to some, a growing role in discourse in contemporary societies (Grossberg et al., 1998; Curran, 2002).

As discussed in chapter four, modern media theory holds that meaning of media texts is derived through a synthesis between (a) the content mediated by the producers, (b) the semiotic complexity and efficacy of the medium, and (c) interpretations by readers. The latter, termed the ‘ethnographic turn’ in research, recognises both internal factors in readers such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, education level, and socio-economic background, and external factors such as influence of family, peer groups, the Church, and other alternative sources of discourse.

While emphasis in audience and media effects research has been appropriately placed on readers who interpret texts within a matrix of often opposing influences, social research cited in chapter four shows that, in contemporary Australia and other western societies, many sources of oppositional or alternative discourse for readers – such as extended and nuclear families, the Church, and radical press – have declined substantially (Curran, 2002). In this environment, mass media content potentially exerts a greater influence than it otherwise might have in the presence of alternative and oppositional sources of meaning.

A further important concept in relation to the likely impact and implications of mass media representations is the notion of intertextuality discussed by Kristeva (1980). Kristeva refers to the construction of meaning from texts on two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and a vertical axis on which the text is connected to other texts (p. 69). This is particularly relevant in the case of mass media representations. Few if any audiences connect with only one media text. Most read one or more newspapers and several magazines, listen to radio, and watch several hours of television each day according to media research. For instance, television ratings data in 1999 found that the average Australian watches TV for two hours 43 minutes and 51 seconds a day, and during winter months the figure climbs to close to three hours a day (Dale, 2000). Therefore, most audiences consume numerous media texts and are likely to encounter a multitude of representations of men and male identities. Kristeva, cited in Culler (1981) says “every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it” (p. 105). This points to the likelihood of cumulative effects of mass media representations.
Drawing on Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality, it can be concluded that sustained negative portrayals of men and male identity, as identified in this study, are likely to have long-term cumulative effects as well as their immediate impact.

Transmission of meaning and, therefore, the implications of findings of this study, are also informed by Eco’s (1965) concept of “aberrant decoding” referring to audiences’ capability to decode texts using different codes than those used to encode them. Eco (1981) describes texts as “open” or “closed” and says that aberrant decoding is most likely to occur with open texts. Exemplars of open texts, which have a wide range of possible meanings, are literary works which use metaphor, symbolism and poetic expression. Eco believes aberrant decoding is less likely or unlikely to occur with closed texts. Mass media texts tend to be closed because they are written to formulaic journalistic styles and produced to programming standards which are widely followed. While Eco believes that diverse decodings can occur with mass media texts when they are broadcast to heterogeneous audiences, many media target and package their content for specific demographic groups (eg. men’s and women’s magazines). Hence, Eco’s views on audience decoding further suggest that mass media content can have significant effects.

These factors, together with the pervasiveness of mass media today, their audience reach in literate societies, and the volume of content to which audiences are exposed, make mass media representations socially and cultural significant as influencers of society, as well as reflectors of society. It is pertinent that this analysis was not based on a small sample, but on 1,799 articles and program segments discussing men and male identities from a selection of 21 media over a six months period. Across all media reaching various audiences in Australia over a period of a year or longer, the number of media articles of the type studied is likely to be in the tens of thousands. Mass media content identified in this study speaks to societies on a massive scale. The media analysed reach a combined audience in Australia alone of 20 million, and many are reached daily. Worldwide, the international programs and content analysed reach an estimated audience of 100 million.

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1 Total audience is derived from total circulation/audience of daily, weekly and monthly media as shown in Table 10, minus duplications inherent in counting weekend editions and insert magazines of newspapers (ie. only incremental circulation on weekends has been counted). Audience is different to population as some people are reached by more than one medium.
Lull (2000) says “people navigate endless archipelagos of cultural representation” (p. 266). Similarly, Lash (1990) observes: “We are living in a society in which our perception is directed almost as often to representations as it is to ‘reality’” (p. 24). Mass media are major purveyors of those representations.

Given the constitutive force of discourse recognised in post-modernist and post-structuralist thinking, and the significant role of mass media as influencers as well as reflectors of social attitudes, widespread negative representations of men and male identities are likely to have had, be having and continue to have significant effects. This study concludes by briefly exploring some of the possible specific implications of mass media representations of men and male identities and recommending areas for further study.
Implications for men and boys

From both a humanist perspective in which mass media content provides a site of discourse in which one can examine reflected societal attitudes and culture, and from a behaviourist view which sees mass media as a major source of societal influence, this study suggests alarming implications for men and boys growing up.

A significant number of mass media articles contributed by writers external to the media on subjects such as domestic violence and fatherhood indicate that viewpoints propagated on these subjects are reflective of at least some elements of society. In particular, analysis of sources contributing the most negative discourse on men and male identity suggests that these views are reflective of intellectual and academic thinking. For instance, the leading commentators and writers on fatherhood and related child support issues included Australian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward; ‘fatherhood consultant’ and author, Adrienne Burgess; Trish Bolton, cited as a tutor in media and communications at Swinburne and Monash Universities; and Sian Prior whose Web site credits her as being a lecturer and media trainer at the Performing Arts School, Deakin University and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (Prior, 2005). In this sense, mass media cannot be ‘blamed’ for the views expressed and one must consider the implications of these negative views of men being held in societies. That highly negative views of men are held within intellectual and academic fields is potentially of more concern than the potential for mass media communication of these views to influence society, as it indicates that these attitudes already exist and that they exist at an influential level. University lecturers, trainers, writers and senior political appointees frame education and social and political policy for future generations.

In addition, as discussed earlier in this chapter, by their amplification of selected viewpoints and communication to large audiences, mass media simultaneously become involved in influencing social attitudes as well as reflecting social attitudes.

Looking through mass media as a lens or prism, men in Australia, and possibly other contemporary western societies, are presented with a misandric world that devalues and demonises them. This is likely to have implications for men’s self-esteem and self-identity.
In exploring the potential influence of mass media representations, it is important to also examine what they don’t say as well as what they say. From this perspective, mass media are not representing valued and respected roles for men. This study has shown that, through industrial, economic, technological and social change, men today are denied access to many traditional roles and identities which they previously took on. While this may be seen as a progressive step for societies and men in some respects, discourse which demonises, marginalises, trivialises and objectifies men denies or at least limits access to the materials and opportunities to construct positive new identities. The images of men reflected and refracted through mass media provide little positive material for men to construct strong ‘narratives of the self’.

Costello (2000) says: “Our culture is just not doing what cultures are supposed to do, providing the myths and stories and beliefs and values that give people a sense of place, or purpose, or meaning, or belonging”.

Also, while further research is required to identify how men feel about their treatment and position in modern society and what effects discourses might have on them, given the substantial influence of major mass media and the overwhelming predominance of negative portrayals of men and male identities shown, these are likely to have significant impact on the self-esteem and self-image of men. Femiano and Nicherson (2002) argue that media propagated male stereotypes are powerful because:

… they affect our expectations of what men should and should not be like. They are damaging because they narrow our notions of what men can be and do. They affect women’s expectations of men in relationships and men’s expectations of other men in work settings or in friendships. Media stereotypes have extra impact because they create images based on these assumptions, helping to shape men’s own views about how they should act and how successful [or unsuccessful] they are as men.

In discussing gender, Butler (1995) says “we must begin with the presumption that masculine and feminine are not dispositions, as Freud sometimes argues, but accomplishments …” (p. 24). Given the celebratory tone of feminism towards being a woman and femininity, this suggests that being a woman is a laudable accomplishment, a
source of pride. But the widespread criticism and at times vitriolic attacks on men and masculinity suggest that being a man/male is a failing and a cause for shame.

Nathanson and Young (2001) raise serious questions over the long-term impact on men of such mass media representations, commenting:

> What is happening to men as a result of this massive assault on their identity? How do men feel about being portrayed over and over again as psychotic or sinister thugs? What does it mean for a group of people to be identified as a class of victimisers? We will not know the full effect of all this misandry for many years … In the meantime, one thing is certain: attacking the identity of any group of human beings per se is an extremely dangerous experiment (p. 248).

Woods (1999) says that “the hegemonic discourse of the ‘flawed male’ can only lead to the experience of social exclusion for many young men, an experience that is known to lead to disastrous consequences for the well-being of individuals and communities”.

Macdonald et al. (2000) conclude from their studies: “We would suggest that there is a strong element of negativity in our culture about men which cannot contribute to positive mental health and we must actively pursue cultural initiatives which promote in boys and men a positive sense of self”.

A number of populist writers, such as Tim Ferguson writing in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 2004, claim that men are in crisis. Ferguson said “there is a crisis … in masculinity itself” and argued that “masculinity is becoming redundant in modern sport, industry and parenting”. He expounded:

> Femininity is timeless. Its list of qualities includes caring, nurturing and emotional awareness. Such a glowing resume makes femininity eminently adaptable to societal change. Masculinity, however, is placed quite specifically in the Neanderthal era. Its key features are of a more practical nature – construction, combat and survival in the outdoors. These abilities boil down to skills in hunting and warfare (Ferguson, 2004, p. 9).
This study seeks to avoid generalised claims of a crisis and inciting moral panics, recognising such approaches are unhelpful and often unjustified. Views such as that of Ferguson, and pro-feminist writers such as Webb (1998) who claims that traditional masculinity is redundant and needs to be “junked”, fall into the trap of generalising and are extreme in that they recognise no good in men or masculinity at all. This is a position also taken by pro-feminist academics such as Connell (1995a) and Edgar (1998) who urge men to discard traditional masculinity and evolve instead to feminist-dominated gender studies notions of what they should be – usually involving, as Edgar’s concluding chapter title says “Reshaping masculinity”.

Significantly, feminism has not denounced any of the wide range of femininities that exist and, instead, advocates that women can be whatever they want to be – wives, careerists, jet fighter pilots, astronauts, strippers, prostitutes, or ‘girlies’ wearing mini-skirts and boas. Third Wave feminism has celebrated traditional feminine values and traits as well as opened up new ‘narratives of the self’ for women. However, widely propagated discourse tells men that they need to totally discard traditional masculinities and be “reconstructed”. Discourse suggests that women can be whatever they want to be; men have to be what feminist-dominated discourses dictate they should be, affording them limited possibilities and denying them self-determination and autonomy as individuals.

Most writers agree that men will benefit from change in many respects – for example, more flexible work regimes to allow more time with their partners and children and a wider range of accepted male identities. But the direction and degree of change advocated in discourse contains an underlying devaluation of manhood and maleness. Edgar (1998) cites Clive James who in his memoir, Unreliable Memories, recounts a turning point in his life where he asks himself (in Edgar’s words) “whether he wants to join in the construction of a typical masculine self, or whether he wants to take off on some utterly different project of self” (p. 219). The words “utterly different project of self” implies that only outright rejection of traditional masculine characteristics is acceptable – ie. traditional masculinity has no value and no redeeming qualities which should be retained. All traditional masculinities are denigrated and rejected.

This position is in conflict with the philosophy of choice widely advanced in feminist gender theory. If men are to be ‘liberated’ and afforded the same autonomy that women
claim, they need to be allowed to be what they want to be. Imperfect that may be at times, but social equity suggests that men should be allowed to write themselves into existence and be given voice in the discourse that forms the scripts that other men use to write themselves into existence.

Boys (men in the making) are potentially affected in two ways by mass media representations of male gender to the extent that they create or influence social attitudes and perceptions. John Marsden, author of *The Boy You Brought Home* (2002b), said in an interview during the period of this study:

Teenage boys are among the most maligned in society. The media portrays them as either drug-crazed, illiterate, unemployable, suicidal, failures at school, sex criminals or vandals. So adults tend to treat them more suspiciously and that causes them (unconsciously) to become angry or frustrated or alienated (Bock, 2003).

Secondly, social learning theory informs us that boys look for role models and benefit from positive role models as they grow up. While many political calls for role models for boys such as more male teachers are responses to populist views and lack a research basis, social learning theory as outlined by Bandura (1977), Bandura and Walters (1963), Brewer and Wann (1998), applied studies such as Gibbs (1991), and reviewed by Wells-Wilbon and Holland (2000), shows that positive and relevant role models contribute significantly to learning and personality development. Keen (1991) reports that “a grief close to the surface for men is the aching void of the absent father” (p. 137), a finding confirmed by Sheehy (1998) who reports that “father hunger” is a common issue raised by men she interviewed. In education, research by Buckingham (1999) reports that boys deprived of a father often perform poorly at school, and West (2002a) cites British research by Head from King’s College, London who reported boys from families with a mother only needed male role models more than boys with resident fathers or non-resident fathers who were regularly accessible.

Ideally, role models and mentors should exist in the physical world, such as fathers, grandfathers, uncles and friends. But, in addition, mediated images of men serve as exemplars and role models for boys and mass media portrayals shape their perceptions of what it means to be a man. Edgar (1997) concludes in relation to mass media hero images
“it’s unavoidable that our cultural self definitions are forged against this shining crucible of glamorous masculinity (p. 54).

This study has shown that there is comparatively little by way of positive representations of men in mass media for boys to use as role models. Furthermore, the representations of men that they see promise a future offering derision, marginalisation, devaluation, demonisation and confusing choices between social and sexual identities. A key question for women as well as men is whether they want their sons growing up in an environment of such criticism and misandry.

On a wider social scale, Bradford (1999) concluded in a report on boys in the UK:

The consequences of having large numbers of young men who are under-educated, unemployable and who hold little responsibility in society are potentially explosive – and a tragedy for the individuals concerned as well as the community in which they live.

Devine (2003) cites poet C. S. Lewis who wrote in The Abolition of Man: “We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful” (p.17).

**Implications for women and girls**

While these findings are most directly a matter of concern for men, there is a compelling argument that the issues raised also have major implications for women and girls. Men are the husbands, partners, lovers, fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, sons and friends of women. Every woman is connected to at least one man, and most women interact and have emotional links with a number of men.

Rather than being contrary to the interests of women, addressing the needs and concerns of men and boys, and inequities they face, will arguably benefit women through creating healthier, happier, better socialised males who can interact with them and societies in constructive and positive ways.

However, this study shows that many of the ‘thought leaders’ of debate on men are women, particularly prominent women in academic, political and social positions as
identified in chapter five, and the attitudes of many such women, as reflected in mass media, are mostly negative towards men. These negative attitudes by women in positions of social and political influence are likely to affect policy making in areas such as education, health and family welfare in ways that are unsympathetic and even detrimental to men. In addition, such women are likely to be mentors for young women and, therefore, the highly negative viewpoints that they reflect and which mass media propagate are likely to negatively affect the attitudes of young women and girls towards men.

An unknown factor worthy of exploration also is the extent to which highly negative attitudes towards men reflected and propagated through mass media on subjects such as child custody, child support, fatherhood and domestic violence influences men away from marriage and family commitment. While not supported by empirical data, anecdotal evidence cited in this study such as letters to the editor by men show some men disillusioned with and turning away from current family structures and arrangements.

**Implications for societies**
As far as mass media content reflects or mirrors social attitudes, the overwhelmingly negative views of men and male identity identified in this study reveal highly gender biased societies where such media content is produced, with all the social equity issues that this entails. It may well be that gender bias against women also exists in these societies. But to the extent that mass media reflect societies, this study shows that gender bias is not a one-way street; it disaffects men as well. And the extent and nature of content analysed shows that this gender bias against men is not trivial.

Furthermore, in ‘broadcasting’ predominantly negative images and identities of men, mass media simultaneously create or influence social attitudes among men and towards men. Nathanson and Young (2001) define ideology as “any systematic re-presentation of reality in order to achieve specific social, economic or political goals” (p. 200). If this view is accepted, mass media content is ideology creation. As such, it plays a key role in shaping and reshaping societies.

Nathanson and Young warn that ideologies are “quasi-religious worldviews” (p. 209). When widely propagated, they take on the weight and emotional power of religious beliefs. As such, they gain considerable and sometimes unchallengeable influence in societies. The
shift of focus and resources from boys to girls in education and national taxpayer funded campaigns against male domestic violence are examples of how gender discourse shapes social and political policies.

In their discussion of the “quasi-religiosity” of ideologies once they come to dominate discourse, Nathanson and Young take the analogy further and argue that anyone speaking against them is seen as a heretic. Paglia (2003c) refers to this tendency to protect and propagate ideologies in a modern social context as the “self-defeating tyranny of political correctness” which provides a form of censorship that silences critics and alternative views. As well as identifying predominantly negative discourse about men in contemporary societies, Nathanson and Young noted a loss of men’s voice, saying “men are silenced now, literally, just as women were silenced in the past” (p. 67). This study shows the comparatively small number of men writing on and commenting publicly on men’s issues and the relatively small number of positive representations of men and male identity to balance negative portrayals.

The implications of (a) highly negative representations of men in areas such as domestic violence and child abuse, and (b) an imbalance in discourse are likely to include an imbalance in data that informs policy-making. The result of such an imbalance is highly likely to be imbalanced policies. Hood (2001), in examining child abuse and professional intervention, reported that focus on men as the perpetrators of child abuse had influenced policy and legislation and noted that there were negative implications for all men. Hood commented: “Child-care centres and schools have designed programs to ensure lone men are supervised in the company of children and adolescents at all times.” She added: “the feminist construction of men as responsible for child abuse has had consequences for the relationship of non-abusive men with children. A side-effect has been to cast a shadow over the interaction of all men with all children” (p. 108).

While further empirical data seems to be urgently required to accurately identify violence against women and men under a set of consistent definitions and reporting methods, discrimination against men is evident in DV programs and responsible agencies. For instance, within the NSW Attorney-General’s Department, violence is a major focus of the Crime Prevention Division. The program established by the Attorney-General’s Department in relation to violence is entitled “Violence Against Women” and a Violence
Against Women Specialist Unit has been established. No unit exists to address violence against men and no information is provided on the site in relation to violence against men (NSW Attorney-General’s Department, 2003). When asked by this researcher why the program did not recognise or address domestic violence against men, or be neutral and focus on domestic violence irrespective of gender, a senior female government official and spokesperson for the unit dismissed the question and stated: “We know who the problems are. Don’t go there” (personal communication, February 7, 2003).

Liz Mulder, a regional violence prevention specialist employed by the NSW Government stated to a congress on women in Norway that the focus of programs to combat domestic violence has been “making women feel better and putting men in jail” and reported that these were the “desired outcomes, not necessarily the achieved outcomes” – although Mulder herself did not necessarily agree with this approach and called for more focus on prevention of domestic violence (Mulder, 1999).

In announcing the Australian Labor Party’s 2004 Federal election policy on women issues, Labor leader Mark Latham called for men to “own” what Summers (2004) called “the dreadful cycle of domestic violence”. During the same period, the Federal Liberal government was conducting a multi-million dollar publicly-funded advertising campaign against domestic violence targeting men exclusively as the perpetrators. These are clear examples of how popular and academic discourse shape political platforms, policy and ultimately even legislation.

In turn, imbalanced discourse, policies and legislation is likely to trigger resentment, frustration and anger among men. Nathanson and Young warn that the highly negative discourse on men, with its influential effects on individual men and social and political policy, will contribute to “the growing polarisation between increasingly segregated communities of rage” (p. 63). Increased polarisation of men and women is an undesirable outcome that will further destabilise families, communities and society cohesion, and driving men into “communities of rage” is a highly destructive and dangerous potentiality which will have repercussions for men, women and societies.

Macdonald et al.’s (2000) conclusions cited on page 289 suggest that the negative mass media representations of men shown in this study will ultimately have a catastrophic social
and financial cost to communities through deteriorating male mental and physical health, as well as obvious cost to individuals.

Bradford’s (1999) warning in relation to boys growing up under-educated, unemployable and with little responsibility in society is also salutary in terms of the longer-term societal implications.

At a societal level also, post-structuralist views of discourse pose fundamental questions for gender studies which primarily position women as protagonists and men as antagonists who need to change. An underlying principle of post-structuralism is encouraging and engaging with alternative and even contradictory discourses to resist and destabilise a single view or truth. As cited in this study, feminism has advanced considerable theory on gender including male gender – eg. men seek power, including power over women; all men are beneficiaries of this power; patriarchy is a constructed manifestation of male power which men actively maintain; male violence is perpetrated by men to maintain power over women. Post-structuralist gender theories, if they truly employ post-structuralist thinking, must engage alternative discourses and allow ‘free play’ in the concepts of gender and views advocated.

Within intellectual feminism, and particularly within what Nathanson and Young term superiority feminism, there is a tendency to replace former doctrine with new doctrine; to replace one discourse (eg. patriarchal views) with another opposite discourse (feminist views). Rather, a post-structuralist approach suggests that feminism and ‘masculinism’ if there is such a thing (ie. the men’s movement and men’s studies), need to engage in examination of multiple discourses to explore the plurality of views and possibilities. The old binaries of men as primary and women as ‘the Other’, men as right and women as hysterical and wrong, should not simply be replaced with the opposite if progress is to be made intellectually and socially.

**International implications**

While this study focuses specifically on Australian mass media, a number of articles reported in Australian newspapers were sourced from international wire services including Reuters and Associated Press and international publications including *The Times* in London and the *New York Times*. Australian editions of magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*
and *FHM*, while being edited to include local news and features, publish considerable content from their overseas editions. The TV programs *Oprah*, *Frasier* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* are broadcast globally with exactly the same content. In addition, a high degree of similarity exists in the content of programs such as *60 Minutes* with many stories broadcast internationally.

Cultural differences in audiences may result in different interpretations of media content in different societies. However, the global reach and high level of homogeneity in major western mass media content (ie. shared programming) suggests that some or many of the findings of this study apply to other western societies – particularly the US, Canada, UK and western European countries. The magnitude of the bias against men in discourse as reflected in mass media identified in this study, and the increasingly global nature of mass media, suggest that further research internationally is warranted.

Particular caution must be exercised in applying Australian or western data and conclusions to regions such as Asia where wide cultural differences are recognised. For instance, Patz (2000) warns against ethnocentricity, arguing that because many nations speak English westerners are lulled into a false sense of security in communication and culture (p. 52). Eley and Suny (1996) state that “culture is more often not what people share, but what they chose to fight over” (p.9), pointing out that cultural differences are so important and often so wide that people have gone to war over them. However, even in Asia, many of the same issues appear to be prominent in mass media. While not within the media sample studied, some content from Asian media was read to gain an indication of whether there are marked differences compared with western media. This cursory examination indicated a high penetration of western media content and discussion of many of the same issues in Asian countries, particularly in developed Asian societies such as Singapore and Malaysia.

For example, a television debate broadcast on *Channel News Asia*, a major Singapore-based south-east Asian network, was controversially entitled “Women have evolved, but men have not”. Men and women speakers agreed that women in Asia hav evolved significantly over the past few decades – particularly in developed countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Malaysia – and that women have power and independence much more than in the past. But, equally, women and men speakers rejected
the implication of the title and agreed that men have evolved also. One woman stated: “Most women have partners and women cannot be independent and build careers as well as have children without the co-operation of their men” (Channel News Asia, July 17, 2003).

Some other examples of prominent Asian media articles on topics and themes consistent with mass media content analysed in this study were (grouped by topic):

“Civil service flexi-hours get more flexible” – a feature reporting on a new ‘pro-family’ scheme to allow men and women to work flexible work hours without loss of career status and opportunity (The Straits Times, Singapore, May 7, 2004, p. 3);

“Ireland helps women balance job and family” – a report republished in Asian media from Dublin on the ‘Celtic Tigress’, a term used for the huge surge of women into Ireland’s workforce during the 1990s and recent initiatives by companies to offer flexible work arrangements for women (The Straits Times, March 18, 2004, p. 12);

“Having a baby? Here’s a bonus from the bosses” – a feature reporting that private firms in Singapore, while not offering paid maternity leave to women, are offering bonuses such as cash or gift vouchers to department stores (The Straits Times, March 29, 2004, p. 3);

“What mums in Europe really want” – a one and a half-page feature on motherhood and parenting issues such as maternity leave, reviewing practices and trends in Europe. As with many similar media features in Australia, paternity leave and the needs of fathers was not seriously addressed (The Straits Times, March 13, 2004, pp. 32-33);

“It’s not just a men’s world” – column reporting that, while men have dominated executive positions in the civil service in Singapore in the past, 11 of 26 deputy secretaries are now women. The article also reported on the appointment of the first woman permanent secretary (The Straits Times, Insight column, May 8, 2004, p. H16);
“Singapore women hold all the cards” – a feature reporting that women hold more credit cards than men by a ratio of five to three and that many women are spending as much or more than men on credit cards (*The Straits Times*, May 28, 2003, p. 3);

“Be fair, dear man” – a full-page feature on male beauty, asking why men should not hide dark under eye circles or add colour to pale lips. The ‘metrosexual’ is a mass media representation in Asia too (*The Star*, Malaysia, December 11, 2003, Lifestyle, p. 10);

“Keep talking, I’m listening” – a column by a man talking about fatherhood, proposing that parents including fathers should spend time talking to and listening to their children (*The Straits Times*, October 8, 2003, p. L6);

“Meet the new exhausted super dad” – a major profile on Mr J. N. Yim, 33, a stay-at-home dad who carries out most of the domestic duties in his home (*The Sunday Times*, Singapore, October 5, 2003, p.10);

“MP aims to turn out family friendly men” – a report on a prominent Singapore politicians starting a men’s club to nurture men as husbands and fathers (*The Straits Times*, July 13, 2004, p. H3);

“What women really want” – a major TV program on domestic violence examining the causes and calling for tougher action to curb male violence (*Channel News Asia*, March 16, 2004);

“Living in fear of rape” – a major ‘World’ feature reporting on rape of women in Iraq (*The Sunday Times*, July 20, 2003, p. 15);

“Romantic paedophile” – a headline news report published in Asia on the arrest of an ex-US marine for Internet seduction of a young women in Manchester, England and his alleged rape and molestation of other women (*The Sunday Times*, July 20, 2003, p. 8);
“Fight sex crimes” – a front page report calling for a major public campaign to reduce sex offences by men in Malaysia (The Star, Malaysia, May 12, 2004, pp. 1, 10);

One article published internationally did report on violence against men. A London Telegraph article filed from India re-published in The Age in Australia reported that a group called the All-India Front Against Atrocities by Wives had been formed in India to demand laws to protect husbands against maltreatment by their wives. The organisation claimed to have 40,000 abused husbands as members in 400 branches. A police officer quoted said there had been 6,700 cases of marital harassment registered in Delhi during 2002-2003, of which 10% were “women harassing and beating up their husbands”. Also, it reported that a common complaint was wives making false allegations against their husbands which take years to sort out in the legal system (The Telegraph, London, reprinted in The Age, October 14, 2003, p. 8).

This limited examination of some Asian mass media content suggests that the “work/family collision”, men’s role as fathers, domestic violence, sex crimes and male body image including ‘metrosexuality’ are widely discussed in many countries and men are mostly represented negatively in this discourse, with the attendant social and potential effects discussed in this study.

Further international study of the representations of men and male identity is recommended, as well as research to further identify the effects that mass media discourse has on men directly and, indirectly, on women and societies.
APPENDICES

The following appendices are attached:

A. Coding List
   - Issues Categories and Issues
   - Messages

B. Coding form

C. Intercoder reliability assessment data

D. Quantitative content analysis system (CARMA®)

E. Qualitative content analysis coding in MAXqda
## CODING LIST

### ISSUE CATEGORIES & ISSUES (Classifications/Categorisation):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>ISSUE/CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ARTICLE TYPE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>News article</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Feature article</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Editorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Column</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Letter to the Editor</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>TV News</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>TV Current Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>TV Lifestyle/Drama</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>SOURCES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Male author/columnist</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Female author/columnist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Male academic/researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Female academic/researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Man – Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Woman - Other</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Men’s organisation</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Women’s organisation</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Research study/organisation</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Government body/official</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Judge/lawyer</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MEN PROFILES (Overall Themes)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Protector</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Good provider</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>Good father</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Good/loving husband/partner</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>Good citizen (<em>eg. celebrated doctor, charity worker, rescue worker, teacher, etc)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Handyman (<em>including competent handyman, problem solver, etc)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Villain (<em>include criminals, fraudsters, conmen, etc)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Power abuser (<em>include leaders found corrupt or any stories about male power)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Workaholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Aggressor (<em>include attackers, murderers, rapists, thugs, etc)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Pervert (<em>include paedophiles, sexual abusers, peeping Toms, etc)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Philanderer (<em>include Cads, promiscuity, playing around, leaving for other women)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Deadbeat Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Incompetent Fool or Lazy (<em>subject of ridicule, foolish, not doing housework, not doing share with children, being incompetent at domestic duties, etc)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WORK &amp; CAREER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Career success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Career/business failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A

Representations of Men & Male Identities in Australian Mass Media

40. Pay/earnings
41. Promotion & achievement
42. 'Boys Club'/discrimination
43. 'Glass ceiling' for women
44. Redundancy/job loss
45. Working hours
46. Work v family/lifestyle

VIOLENCE & AGGRESSION
47. Crime general (non-violent including fraud, corruption, corporate crime, theft, etc)
48. Violent crime (including murder, bashings, attacks, 'gunman')
49. Domestic violence (DV) (bashing, attacks, etc in the home or relationships)
50. Sexual abuse (rape, assault, molestation, stalking, paedophilia,)
51. Fights/brawls/thuggery
52. Gangs
53. Boys' violence (by boys in gangs, in schools, under-age crime)
54. Militarism (include men cause/promote war or are warlike, conquestorial)
55. Risk-taking behaviour (include drunken driving, speeding, dare-devil behaviour)

COMPETITION/COMPETITIVENESS
56. Will to win
57. Male competitiveness benefits (eg. leading to efficiency, success, discovery, etc)
58. Male competitiveness causing harm (eg. lack of co-operation, destructive ego, etc)
59. Acceptance of failure / 'good sport'
134. Non-acceptance of failure / 'bad sport' *
60. Teamwork & co-operation

PHYSICAL HEALTH
61. Disease generally
62. Heart disease/heart attacks
63. Cancer
64. Prostrate cancer
65. STD (Sexually transmitted Diseases)
66. Alcohol/drinking
67. Smoking
68. Drug abuse
69. Preventative medicine (including visiting doctors, health check ups, etc)

MENTAL HEALTH
70. Nervous breakdown
71. Stress & stress related diseases
72. Depression
73. Mental instability/insane (include cases of courts finding someone mentally unfit or temporarily insane)

SUICIDE
74. Young male suicide
75. Older male suicide
76. Female suicide
77. Male suicide attempts (ie. unsuccessful)
78. Female suicide attempts (ditto)
APPENDIX A
Representations of Men & Male Identities in Australian Mass Media

EDUCATION
79. Boys education needs/programs
80. Teaching methods for boys
81. School facilities for boys (including sport, games & exercise areas)
82. Discipline problems
83. Academic performance
84. School completion
85. University attendance

FATHERHOOD & FAMILY
86. Father role/involvement (all references to the role or importance of fathers, father’s time with children, what fathers do or don’t do with their children)
87. Deadbeat Dads (fathers who desert, don’t pay child support, ignore their children)
88. Single/lone parent families
89. Family Court
90. Child custody
91. Child support
92. Property settlement
93. Paternity leave
94. Househusbands
95. DNA paternity tests

COMMITMENT & RESPONSIBILITY
96. Family commitment
97. Work/career commitment
98. Mateship (standing by your mates, loyalty)
99. Community/national commitment (include military heroes, male rescue workers, firemen)
100. Commitment phobic
101. Desertion/walking out

COMMUNICATION
102. Talking
103. Expressing feelings/emotions
104. Non-verbal communication
105. Listening

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
106. Gentleman
107. Family man
108. Sensitive/SNAGs (Sensitive New Age Guys)
109. Metrosexuals
110. Ockerism
111. Machismo
112. Mates
113. Blokes
114. Lads
135. Chauvinism *
SEXUALITY
115. Heterosexual
116. Homosexual/gay
117. Bisexual
118. Men’s ‘Feminine side’
119. Sex drive (any articles on libido, male sex drive and energy, etc)
120. Sexual activity (include attitudes towards, conduct of as well as prowess at sex (ie. skill, tenderness, ability to satisfy partners)
121. Paedophilia (including ‘toy boy’ representations as well as girl victims)
122. Pornography

BODY IMAGE
123. Body building (eg. references to ‘six packs’, muscles, toning, ‘hunks’ and photos of same)
124. Waxing/hair removal (photos or stories)
125. Male fashion (clothes, dress, shoes)
126. Male make-up/beauty products
127. Traditional masculinity (references to or images of physical aspects of traditional masculinity – eg. rugged, hairy, muscular, tough, strong, etc. Behavioural aspects under ‘Social Behaviour’)

DOMESTIC INVOLVEMENT
128. Cooking
129. House cleaning
130. Child care
131. Gardening
132. Handyman
133. Househusband

* Added after initial pilot testing.
### MESSAGES:

<table>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>Positive</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Balance work / personal / family</td>
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<td>Work focussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Share power / rights / opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Strong, active but non-aggressive</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Law-abiding responsible citizens</td>
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<td>Criminals</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Protectors/carers/gentle/not violent</td>
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<td>Violent</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Sexually responsible/considerate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sexual abusers/predators</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Insensitive, out of touch with feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Good communicators</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poor communicators / women better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Well-rounded / balanced humans</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sex / sport / cars / mates focussed</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Commitment orientated &amp; responsible</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Commitment phobic / lack commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Treat women equally/with respect</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chauvinists/pressors/misogynists</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Intelligent and capable</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Do their share domestically</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Don't do their share / lazy domestically</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Paternal &amp; care for children</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Not committed to / caring for children</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Care for their health</td>
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<td>Do not take care of health/risk taking</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Fathers deserve equal child rights</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Don't deserve / can’t be trusted with equal child rights</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Strong, rugged, traditionally masculine appearance</td>
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<td>Groomed / waxed / feminine appearance</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Traditional men/blokes’ behaviour</td>
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<td>SNAGs / Metrosexuals / show ‘feminine side’</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Considerate sensual lovers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Inconsiderate/ineffective lovers</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Boys need special/more attention</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Boys do not/girls need more attention</td>
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CODING FORM

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<th>MEDIA NAME: .................................................................</th>
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<td>HEADLINE: ..............................................................................</td>
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ISSUES *(Circle relevant Issue numbers from Coding List)*

|        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 | 105 | 106 | 107 | 108 | 109 | 110 | 111 | 112 | 113 | 114 | 115 | 116 | 117 | 118 | 119 | 120 | 121 | 122 | 123 | 124 | 125 | 126 | 127 | 128 | 129 | 130 | 131 | 132 | 133 | 134 | 135 |

MESSAGES *(Circle relevant Message numbers from Coding List for Positive & Negative)*

Positive: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Negative: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

NAMED SOURCES *(Write names & titles of favourable, unfavourable & neutral sourced quoted)*

Favourable: ...................................................................................................................................................

Unfavourable: ..................................................................................................................................................

Neutral: ...........................................................................................................................................................

BYLINE/S ..................................................................................................................................................

RESEARCHER ID/INITIALS: ............. FAVOURABILITY RATING: 

* Each article must be labelled/numbered to correspond with the Article ID on this form.
INTERCODER RELIABILITY ASSESSMENT

Intercoder reliability was assessed using PRAM (Program for Reliability Assessment of Multiple coders), a Windows computer application still in development by Skymeg Software recommended in and made available in an Academic version (Alpha release 0.4.4) to readers of The Content Analysis Guidebook (Neuendorf, 2002). Further information is available at the following Web site:

http://www.geocities.com/skymegsoftware/pram.html

PRAM is described by Neuendorf (2002) as providing “the full complement of intercoder reliability statistics” (p. 241).

An explanation of the statistics calculated by PRAM are outlined in chapter five.

Reliability statistics were calculated for each of the key variables analysed in this content analysis, as recommended by researchers. The following tables present PRAM intercoder reliability assessment reports and detailed coding data sheets for:

The primary units of analysis in this study – MESSAGES (1-20 in both positive and negative expression, numbered as 1P, 1N, 2P, 2N, etc – 40 messages in total); and

The overall favourability/unfavourability RATING of articles, labelled as Variable 41.
## PRAM Intercoder Reliability Assessment Report

### Variables 1-20 (Messages - Positive & Negative)

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* Fields shown as 0* set to 0 because there were no codings for these messages.

** Minus numbers are shown in Scott’s pi measurement where there were no messages coded by one coder and one or more by the other. In these instances, variation was still low. Note intercoder reliability averages shown on the next page.
### PRAM Intercoder Reliability Assessment Report

**Variables 1-20 (Messages - Positive & Negative)**

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fields shown as 0* set to 0 because there were no codings for these messages.
** Minus numbers are shown in Scott’s pi measurement where there were no messages coded by one coder and one or more by the other. In these instances, variation was still low.

Note intercoder reliability averages shown in far right column on this page.
## PRAM INTERCODER RELIABILITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Variable 41 - Overall Rating of Articles (Favourability Score out of 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
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<th>Average</th>
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### Holsti's Coefficient of Reliability

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1,2</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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### Scott's $\pi$

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### Cohen's $\kappa$

<table>
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<tr>
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### Spearman's $\rho$

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### Pearson's Correlation Coefficient ($r_c$)

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### Lin's Concordance Correlation Coefficient ($r$)

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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
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* The above table presents intercoder reliability scores for the overall favourability/unfavourability rating given by coders to articles on a 100 scale where 50 = neutral using the Program for Reliability Assessment of Multiple coders (PRAM). See Methodology details in Appendix D.
CARMA International is a global research firm specialising in Computer Aided Research and Media Analysis (of which its name is an abbreviation). The company, established in Washington DC in 1984 and with offices in the USA, UK, Europe, Japan, Asia Pacific headquartered in Australia, India and South America, developed proprietary software for media content analysis (primarily quantitative) and is recognised as a world leader in this field of research.

The CARMA® system utilises an Oracle database (widely recognised as the most powerful and robust database available) with customised data entry screens, menus and functions for conducting media content analysis. The CARMA® proprietary database also includes media circulation and audience data for each country.

CARMA® provides fields for media analysts to enter a range of coding data including:

- Date;
- Headline;
- Media name;
- Media type (newspaper, magazine, radio, TV, online and a breakdown by international, national, metropolitan, suburban, regional and rural);
- Article type (news, feature, editorial, opinion column, letter to the editor);
- Article prominence (e.g., headline mention, first paragraph, prominent mention, etc);
- Issues categories and issues (categories/classifications assigned by coders);
- Messages (positive and negative);
- Sources quoted;
- Byline;
- Photos or illustrations; and
- Tone (including key word usage from a coding list).

CARMA International conducts media content analysis for companies and for government agencies, not-for-profit organisations and academic institutions. CARMA International (Asia Pacific) clients in 2002-2003 included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Government/Academic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telstra</td>
<td>CSIRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optus</td>
<td>Biotechnology Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>Land &amp; Water Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>Australia Day Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore Telecom</td>
<td>Economic Development Board of Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nokia</td>
<td>Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citigroup Asia &amp; Australia</td>
<td>University of Technology Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PriceWaterhouseCoopers</td>
<td>University of Melbourne.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology
A list of issues categories and issues (categories/classifications), messages and sources to be analysed (the Coding List) is set up in the CARMA® system before content analysis is undertaken. Issues and messages are categorised by key words and phrases and sources by names or title descriptions. Content analysts then enter data about articles in the fields according to the criteria set up in the Coding List.

The CARMA® system captures and analyses mainly quantitative content analysis data including the volume, frequency and type of reporting of each issue category and issue, message, source and media. The system can also calculate the total audience reached by various articles from circulation and audience ratings data. CARMA® also allows collection and processing of some qualitative data such as leading messages and calculates an average Favourability Rating of articles, media and sources based on a total cumulative score of coding data. The method of calculating the CARMA® Favourability Rating is outlined on the next page. This overall rating of articles was used in this study as it is a more sophisticated and specific than a simple positive/negative/neutral categorisation (Note: this is particularly relevant where articles contain a mixture of positive, negative and sometimes neutral content).

Technical Specs
The CARMA® system utilises an Oracle V. 8-10 database with customised data entry screens and fields for media analysis. Data is queried using Business Query and analysed using Business Objects or SPSS™ software. Data is also exported into Microsoft Excel® for further detailed analysis including development of pivot tables and charts and graphs for reporting.

Recommended workstations for operating the CARMA® system are Pentium 4 microprocessor PCs with a minimum of 256 Mb RAM and 40-80 Gb hard disk capacity. Recommended operating system is Microsoft Windows XP or 2000 Professional with Microsoft Excel® 2000 or later.
### CALCULATION OF FAVOURABILITY RATINGS USING CARMA®

Each article begins at 5.0 on the scale of 1 to 10 (ie. neutral).

1. **For PROMINENCE of mention** (add up to maximum of 2 points):
   - a. HEADLINE mention of name – add 0.5 if favourable; subtract 0.5 if unfavourable;
   - b. PRIORITY/TARGET MEDIA – if the article is in a high circulation or target media, add 0.5 if the article favourable; subtract 0.5 if unfavourable;
   - c. PROMINENCE – if the mention is prominent taking account of (i) page number (eg. pages 1,2,3, A1, A2, etc); (ii) size or length of the article (medium to large); and (iii) the subject has more than a passing mention; add 0.5 if favourable; subtract 0.5 if unfavourable;
   - d. PHOTO or LOGO – if there is a photo or logo of or related to the subject, add 0.5 if the article is favourable, or subtract 0.5 if unfavourable;

2. **For favourable or unfavourable SOURCES**, add or subtract up to a maximum of one point (1.0) as follows:
   - a. ONLY A FAVOURABLE SOURCE quoted – add 1.0;
   - b. ONLY AN UNFAVOURABLE SOURCE quoted – subtract 1.0;
   - c. EQUAL NUMBER OF FAVOURABLE & UNFAVOURABLE SOURCES – no change;
   - d. MORE FAVOURABLE THAN UNFAVOURABLE SOURCES quoted – add 0.5;
   - e. MORE UNFAVOURABLE THAN FAVOURABLE SOURCES quoted – subtract 0.5;

3. **For favourable or unfavourable MESSAGES**, add or subtract up to a maximum of one point (1.0) as follows:
   - a. ONLY POSITIVE MESSAGES in an article – add 1.0;
   - b. ONLY NEGATIVE MESSAGES in an article – subtract 1.0;
   - c. EQUAL NUMBER OF POSITIVE & NEGATIVE MESSAGES – no change;
   - d. MORE POSITIVE THAN NEGATIVE MESSAGES in an article (or more prominent) – add 0.5;
   - e. MORE NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE MESSAGES in an article (or more prominent) – subtract 0.5;

4. **For the OVERALL TONE** of an article, add or subtract to a maximum of one point (1.0) as follows:
   - a. If the article is substantially POSITIVE overall in tone and angle with positive messages or content in addition to those already counted, add 1.0;
   - b. If the article is substantially NEGATIVE overall in tone and angle with negative messages or content in addition to that already counted, subtract 1.0;
   - c. If the article has NO OTHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE characteristics beyond those already counted – no change.

The Favourability Rating is then totalled and scaled out of 100 in the CARMA® system.
QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING

Qualitative analysis in this study was primarily conducted using human analysis methods based on the techniques of text analysis, discourse analysis and other related disciplines as outlined in chapter four, “Methodology” and as reported in chapter five, “Findings of this study”.

In addition, a sub-sample of media texts were analysed using MAXqda Version 5.0, a specialist Windows software program for qualitative text analysis. In support of findings of qualitative analysis reported in chapter five, the list of text categories, codes and coded text segments from MAXqda analysis are reported in this appendix.

Further information on MAXqda is available at:

http://www.maxqda.de
## APPENDIX E

### Representations of Men & Male Identities in Australian Mass Media

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### QUALITATIVE CODINGS IN MAXqda

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<th>Text Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Text Segment</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>TYPICAL\Prior Text</td>
<td>Main Focus\Demonise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>aggressive young men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPICAL\Prior Text</td>
<td>Key Messages\Aggressor/male violence</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>aggressive young men</td>
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<td>Tone\Fear</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>I’ve been afraid. Fending off a gang</td>
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<tr>
<td>TYPICAL\Prior Text</td>
<td>Tone\Fear</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>followed by a strange man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Key Messages\Aggressor/male violence</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>followed by a strange man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Key Messages\Sexual Abuser</td>
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<td>TYPICAL\Doohan Text</td>
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<td>TYPICAL\Doohan Text</td>
<td>Key Messages\Oppressor/chauvinist</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>he has designated you to drive</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representations of Men &amp; Male Identities in Australian Mass Media</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX E</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Messages: Not sharing</td>
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<td>He has coffee</td>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tone: Ridicule</td>
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<td>he prefers the smell of his own gases</td>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
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<td>Tone: Ridicule</td>
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<tr>
<td>make himself look ridiculous</td>
</tr>
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<td>Main Focus: Trivialise</td>
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<tr>
<td>he is playing soccer, cricket, pool, football, riding dirt bike</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Focus: Trivialise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is playing soccer, cricket, pool, football, riding dirt bike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
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<td>Main Focus: Marginalise</td>
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<td>he stops in front of every time he walks past</td>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Messages: Female Superiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the female to have some kind of adult conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Messages: Female Superiority</td>
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<tr>
<td>the female to have some kind of adult conversation</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Doohan Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Words: Drink/drunken</td>
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<td>You wait patiently</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Irresponsible</td>
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<td>a father who often did not keep his promise</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Messages: Oppressor/chauvinist</td>
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<tr>
<td>men’s movement that is deeply misogynous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main Focus: Demonise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after three less than 3 months, I knew it wouldn’t last</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Messages: Oppressor/chauvinist</td>
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<tr>
<td>drag women back into the kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Irresponsible</td>
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<tr>
<td>many men just don’t want to know</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tone: Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>backlash against single mothers</td>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Female Superiority</td>
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<td>I knew it wouldn’t last</td>
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<td><strong>TYPICAL</strong> Bolton Text</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Deadbeat Dad</td>
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<td>his love for them just seemed to evaporate</td>
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<td>drag women back</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Commitment Phobic</td>
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<td>I knew it wouldn’t last</td>
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<td><strong>DISCONFIRMING</strong> Munro Text</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Female violence</td>
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<td>beatings she later dished out</td>
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<td><strong>DISCONFIRMING</strong> Munro Text</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Responsible</td>
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<td>You can’t blame society for your problems</td>
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<td>Main Focus: Humanise</td>
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<td>pick myself up, dust myself off and get stuck in</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DISCONFIRMING</strong> Munro Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Messages: Responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pick myself up, dust myself off and get stuck in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DISCONFIRMING</strong> Munro Text</td>
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<td>Key Messages: Female violence</td>
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<td>destructive shadow of Beryl Munro’s alcoholism</td>
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<td><strong>DISCONFIRMING</strong> Crawley Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main Focus: Eulogise/praise</td>
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<td>leave his Redfern house at 3.30 each morning</td>
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<td>Main Focus: Eulogise/praise</td>
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<td>ordinary men with intricate calibrations &amp; hard physical la</td>
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<td>Men of steel</td>
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Gender and identity


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**Mass media representation, effects & content analysis**


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Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

REPRESENTATIONS OF MEN AND MALE IDENTITIES
IN AUSTRALIAN MASS MEDIA

J. R. Macnamara

2004
The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Signature:

Date: 10 December 2004
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J. R. Macnamara
November, 2004
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ABSTRACT

Gender has been identified as a key element of human identity. Feminism has focussed particular attention on gender issues over the past five decades. But, as Seidler (1994), Katz (1995) and Nathanson and Young (2001) note, gender discourse has been dominated by discussion of women and women’s issues. Seidler says “feminists have somehow set the agenda for men’s studies” as well as women studies (p. 112).

Mass media have been identified as key sites of discourse in feminist studies. Numerous studies have examined representations of women in mass media and argued that these have significant effects on women, on men, and on societies – eg. Baumgardner and Richards (2000); Humm (1977); Kaplan (1983); Maio (1991); Stirling (1987); Tuchman (1978); and Weatherall (1996).

Some studies have examined representations of men in mass media including Gunter (1995); Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks (2001); Nathanson and Young (2001); Schirato and Yell (1999); and Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks (2000). A number of researchers have found that the treatment of men in mass media is not unproblematic. Connell (2000) cites Segal (1987) who says that feminist-led discourses have presented “pictures of men as rapists, batterers, pornographers, child abusers, militarists, exploiters, and images of women as targets and victims”. In their 2001 text, Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture, Nathanson and Young provided evidence of marginalising and “demonising” of men in the mass media. Faludi (2000) in Stiffed: The Betrayal of Modern Man acknowledges: “In the past half century, Madison Avenue, Hollywood and the mass media have operated relentlessly on men, too” (p. 41).

But studies of representations of men have been far fewer than those focussing on women. Furthermore, some media content analyses have been limited or unreliable because of small samples or lack of methodological rigor, according to Neuendorf (2002). While their research was ground-breaking, utilising systematic formal analysis, Nathanson and Young (2001) acknowledged in their preface that the methodology they used was “not scientific” (p. x).
This study was conducted to contribute to a significant gap in research of gender representations in mass media and to further investigate growing evidence that men are being represented in negative and potentially damaging ways. It involved rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis of representations of men and male identities in a large sample of top-rating news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle media. The sample was specifically selected from these mass media forms and genre as they have been identified as the most influential and, paradoxically, under-studied (Newbold, Boyd-Barrett & Van Den Bulck, 2002; Gauntlett, 2002).

The findings of this study highlight issues that should be of serious concern in health, education, the media, gender studies, and social policy making. Analysis found men are overwhelmingly represented in negative ways, predominantly portrayed as aggressive and violent thieves, thugs, murderers, wife and girlfriend bashers, sexual abusers, molesters, perverts, irresponsible ‘deadbeat dads’ and philanderers, even though, in reality, only a small proportion of men act out these roles and behaviours. This study concludes that men are widely demonised, marginalised, trivialised and objectified. The potential social implications are discussed in light of the influence of these mass media and proposed as an area for further study.

This study was conducted in Australia, but included a number of international publications and programs in its sample, giving it findings resonance for other contemporary western societies where the same or similar mass media content is consumed.