

**A QUALITATIVE TEXTUAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN THE ACTION AND ROMANTIC
COMEDY GENRES**

by

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I declare that **A QUALITATIVE TEXTUAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN THE ACTION AND ROMANTIC COMEDY GENRES** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

15 June 2012

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SUMMARY

Title: **A QUALITATIVE TEXTUAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN THE ACTION AND ROMANTIC COMEDY GENRES**

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Summary:

This study is an exploration of the representation of masculinity in film, with particular focus on the way in which the leading male characters in a purposive sample of action genre and romantic comedy genre films represent masculinity. It is posited that masculinity is a construct, the meaning of which is dependent on the social context of the individual. Film being a social artefact could then possibly influence individuals understanding of the construct. Therefore an exploration of the kind of masculinity, the variations thereof across genres, and masculine characteristics of masculinity prevalent in each genre, is a first step in understanding possible influences of the definition of masculinity.

In order to accomplish this exploration, a combination of methods is used to analyse these fictional characters according to a set of codes and 'real' world norms. The real world norms are based on seven theoretically derived norms of masculinity developed from previous research on masculinity conducted by Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, Cozza, Hill, MacEachern, Marty and Schnedekerl (1992).

The results of the findings from this study indicate that the way in which male characters are created for each genre are different, with male lead characters from the action genre having more characteristics that align with the 'real' world norms of masculinity (Levant et al 1992). Alternatively, the male lead characters from the romantic comedy genre, have fewer characteristics that align with the seven theoretically derived norms of masculinity. The

masculinity represented in the romantic comedy genre is more emotionally available and expressive, less aggressive, more compromising and reliant on others; while in the action genre masculinity is more independent, stoic, aggressive and more physically adventurous. The male lead characters in the romantic comedy genre are more about the emotional aspects of masculinity while the male lead characters in the action genre are more about the physical aspects of masculinity.

Key terms:

masculinity, gender, film, genre, directed qualitative content analysis, three-stage coding process, social construction of reality, symbolic interactionism

Table of Contents

	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	3
1.2.1 Purpose of study	3
1.2.2 Relevance of the topic	3
1.2.3 Background of the study	5
1.2.4 Relationship of the topic to the discipline of Communication	6
1.3 TYPE OF STUDY	7
1.4 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	10
1.4.1 The research problem	10
1.4.2 The sub-problems	10
1.4.3 The research question	10
1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	10
1.5.1 Collection, analysis and interpretation of data	11
1.5.2 Feasibility of the study	13
1.6 SUMMATION AND OVERVIEW OF REMAINING CHAPTERS	13
2 THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE	16
2.1 INTRODUCTION	16
2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM	18
2.3 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	23
2.4 SUMMATION	26
3 MASCULINITY	28
3.1 INTRODUCTION	28
3.2 GENDER	30
3.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER	32
3.4 GENDER ROLE STRAIN	37
3.5 MASCULINITY	46
3.6 HYPER- VS HYPO-MASCULINITY	50
3.7 MALE ROLE NORMS INVENTORY	51
3.8 SUMMATION	53
4 GENRE	55
4.1 INTRODUCTION	55
4.2 GENRE THEORY	57
4.2.1 Audience classification of genre	58

4.2.2	Semantic classification of genre	59
4.2.3	Syntactic classification of genre	60
4.3	MASCULINITY IN FILM AS A REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL ‘REALITY’	63
4.3.1	Character representation as social constructions	65
4.3.2	Evolution of the representations of masculinity in film	67
4.4	MEN’S VS WOMEN’S FILM	70
4.4.1	The romantic comedy	73
4.4.2	The action film	76
4.5	SUMMATION	79
5	METHODOLOGY	82
5.1	INTRODUCTION	82
5.2	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN	83
5.2.1	Basic research	84
5.2.2	Exploratory research	85
5.2.3	Descriptive research	85
5.3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	86
5.4	POPULATION AND SAMPLING	86
5.4.1	Population	86
5.4.2	Sampling	87
5.4.3	Unit of analysis	88
5.5	DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES	81
5.5.1	Validity and reliability	92
5.6	DATA ANALYSIS	93
5.6.1	Stage one	93
5.6.2	Stage two	95
5.6.3	Stage three	97
5.6.4	Stage four	98
5.6.5	Comparative analysis	98
5.7	SUMMATION	99
6	ANALYSIS	100
6.1	INTRODUCTION	100
6.2	CODES	102
6.2.1	Description of the codes	102
6.3	ACTION GENRE	106
6.3.1	<i>Knight and Day</i> (2010)	107
6.3.2	<i>The Tourist</i> (2010)	107
6.3.3	<i>Unstoppable</i> (2010)	108
6.4	ROMANTIC COMEDY GENRE	108

6.4.1	<i>Killers (2010)</i>	109
6.4.2	<i>Just Go With It (2011)</i>	110
6.4.3	<i>The Back-Up Plan (2010)</i>	110
6.5	SUMMARY OF CODED DATA	110
6.6	THE ACTION GENRE ANALYSIS	119
6.6.1	Fear and hatred of homosexuality	119
6.6.2	Self-reliance	120
6.6.3	Achievement and status	122
6.6.4	Aggression	124
6.6.5	Non-relational attitudes towards sex	125
6.6.6	Avoidance of femininity	126
6.6.7	Restrictive emotionality	126
6.6.8	Comparison of action genre characters	128
6.7	THE ROMANTIC COMEDY GENRE ANALYSIS	131
6.7.1	Fear and hatred of homosexuality	131
6.7.2	Self-reliance	132
6.7.3	Achievement and status	134
6.7.4	Aggression	135
6.7.5	Non-relational attitude towards sex	136
6.7.6	Avoidance of femininity	137
6.7.7	Restrictive emotionality	138
6.7.8	Comparison of romantic comedy genre characters	139
6.8	ROMANTIC COMEDY AND ACTION GENRE COMPARISON	141
6.9	SUMMATION	148
7	CONCLUSION	150
7.1	INTRODUCTION	150
7.2	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES REVIEWED	150
7.3	LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	154
7.4	CONCLUDING REMARKS	155
	REFERENCE LIST	157
	ADDENDUM	174
	Filmography of action and romantic comedy genre films described in the study	174
	LIST OF FIGURES	
	Figure 5.1 Conceptual framework of the combined data collection methods	91
	Figure 5.2 Visual representation of the stages of the comparisons	99

LIST OF TABLES

Table 6.1 Summary of coded data	112
Table 6.2 Visual representation of character alignment with themes	145

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is rare to find analyses that seek to specify in detail, in relation to particular films or groups of films, how heterosexual masculinity is inscribed and the mechanisms, pressures, and contradictions that inscription may involve.

(Neale 1993:9).

Identity constructs such as gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, and sexual orientation are social constructs which differ across time and culture (O'Dowd 2003:41). The study of masculinity, in particular, is predicated on the theory that there is a difference between an individual's sex and gender. An individual's sex is considered to be the biological identification as either male or female, and gender is the socially constructed roles that are hinged upon a culturally and historically determined set of possibilities which come to be associated with masculinity and femininity (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:214).

These socially constructed roles could come from film; as Gross (cited in Hart 2000) states that there are elements of individuals' knowledge of the social world that are derived from media representations. It is, therefore, important to examine what kinds of representations are being included in the media, as individuals are likely to form opinions of others, as well as themselves, from those representations. Furthermore, it is important to analyse the representations in film when certain genres are produced for audiences according to gender and as Livingstone (cited in Chandler 1997) argues are "concerned to establish different world views".

Taking the differences between film characters (whether main characters or supporting characters) at face value one can assume that there will be differences between film characters from different genres. Different genres are produced so that audiences are aware, on entering the cinema, what to expect from the story line, characters and film techniques (Bordwell & Thompson 2001:97). However, as stated by Schatz (2004:694) "we can appreciate difference only when we begin to examine

films systematically, when we consider the systems whereby an individual film “makes meaning”. A systematic analysis of the representations of masculinity in film, would offer more meaningful insight as to how masculinity is represented in modern film across genres.

Benshoff and Griffin (2009:228) state that ‘chick flicks’, ‘weepies’ and ‘tearjerkers’ are considered woman’s films as they are produced to attract a predominantly female audience. Benshoff and Griffin (2009:229) continue by stating that there is a lack of a matching ‘man’s film’ genre “because most of the rest of Hollywood cinema is ‘man’s film’”. The representations of masculinity within the romantic comedy genre (female genre films) and the action genre (male genre films), if different, could then lead to a different understanding of masculinity between genders.

This is particularly important if different genres are targeted at different genders and the representations across these genres differ. Different masculine representations could be a precursor to gender role strain (a feeling of incoherence between societies expectations and the lived gendered experience of an individual) in men if women’s understanding of masculinity (taken from film) is different from the men’s understanding of masculinity (taken from film). Richmond and Levant (2003:1243) argue that teachers, parents, siblings and peers increase the feelings of gender role strain in adolescent boys as they try to correlate their understanding of being masculine with what others expect of them.

This study is then an exploration of masculinity within film. It cannot be enough to argue that because genres are targeted at different audiences that the representation of masculinity will be different. An analysis of these differences is required to determine the extent of these differences, thereby noting what characteristics of masculinity are prevalent in and across genres. This study is therefore not only an exploration of masculinity as a construct and film genre as a theory, but also an analysis of the way in which masculinity is constructed in and across the action and romantic comedy genres.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In order to appropriately contextualise this study, the purpose, relevance of the topic and background are explained below. Also, a brief explanation is given as to how this particular study is relevant to the field of communication science.

1.2.1 Purpose of the study

There is a primary and secondary purpose to this study. The main aim of this study is to compare and describe the way in which masculinity is represented in the action genre to the way in which it is represented in the romantic comedy genre. Another aim of this study is to develop a data collection and analysis method that can be applied to the analysis of the representation of social constructs within the media.

1.2.2 Relevance of the topic

The gender role strain paradigm brings to the fore the idea that contemporary gender roles are contradictory and inconsistent (see 3.4), which can lead to psychological distress and in cases-where norms are violated, overcompensation through hyper-masculinity (Levant 1996:260). Pleck (1987:31) describes hyper-masculinity as exaggerated and extreme masculine behaviour that is considered a defence against “the male’s unconscious feminine identification”. Alternatively hypo-masculinity would then be behaviour that is aligned with stereotypically feminine behaviour. It is argued that modern men have more options than previous generations when defining their roles in westernised societies. Examples of options now on offer include traditional provider, stay at home Dad, or perpetual bachelor (Ivy & Backlund 2000:492). Comforting as this may be to some, for others the defining responsibilities placed on them by society can be confusing when what they choose is incongruent with their social experiences. This is particularly important with regards to the gendered experience of modern men and the conflicting expectations (from both men and women) of what it means to be masculine.

A possible explanation for gender role strain is that representations of the male role and masculinity is dissimilar in social artefacts like film when compared to the definition of masculinity from different cultures, genders and age groups (see 3.3). Symptomatic of gender role strain in certain situations is extreme hyper-masculine behaviour which, according to Zaitchik and Mosher (1993:230), is aggressive, controlling behaviour. Aggression, violence, danger and indiscriminate sexual encounters are referred to as “macho” behaviour and are argued to stem from an amalgamation of ideological rules about what it means to be masculine. It is important to state that gender role strain is not the subject of this study, but is used to emphasise the relevance of the study.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the differences, if any, in the way masculinity is represented in the action genre when compared to the romantic comedy genre. To do this, research conducted on theoretically derived norms of masculinity (Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, Cozza, Hill, MacEachern, Marty & Schnedekerl 1992) is used to compare the characteristics of the male lead characters with those that are argued to be ‘real’ world norms. The ‘real’ world norms used within this study are taken from those that were developed for the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI) by Levant et al (1992). The MRNI was developed to assess masculinity across culture, race and gender to determine what kinds of masculine behaviour is expected from, and perpetuated by, individuals of different backgrounds and social contexts. Avoidance of femininity, fear and hatred of homosexuals, self-reliance, aggression, achievement/status, non-relational attitudes towards sex, and restrictive emotionality are the seven theoretically-derived norms of masculinity used in the MRNI that will be used to analyse the representation of masculinity in the action and romantic comedy genres. In bringing attention to differences across genres, the masculine characteristics of the male lead characters from the purposively chosen sample of films can be tabulated as an indication of the masculine characteristics used to create characters for these two genres.

In order to compare and describe the representations of masculinity across genres, a data collection and analysis method is required to appropriately collect and analyse the large amount of data collected from the purposive sample of films. Analysing media representations of social constructions is a complex process

particularly when trying to compare fictional characters to 'real' world norms. The method of data collection and analysis developed for this study simplifies the process of reducing the data to more manageable sections of data that can then, after an extensive literature review, be used to analyse media representations according to existing research on the chosen social construction. The method of data collection and analysis used within this study can then be used in future research of social constructs, for example, femininity or sexual orientation. The result of this method is an analysis that provides an understanding of what kind of masculinity is represented in the sample of action films, as well as in the sample of romantic comedy films, and finally an understanding of the differences and similarities of masculinity across these two genres.

1.2.3 Background of the study

In the 1980's theorists began to examine gender issues more broadly than the previously focused feminist studies. Masculinity, it was decided, also needed analysis (Elmore 2007:931; Jeffords 1993:196). Social construction of gender requires that an analysis of gender issues be broader than a focus on women's issues alone. This is to ensure that masculinity in presumably hegemonic patriarchal societies is not perceived as the default category in the social construction of gender which would result in femininity being labelled as 'the other' and thereby the only gender category worthy of study (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:257). The so called 'men's movement' was developed to reassess men's traditional roles and behaviour in society (at the time with particular focus on society in the United States of America) (Jeffords 1993:196).

Jeffords makes use of Hollywood film in the 1980's and 1990's to emphasise the changes in the perceptions of masculinity from one decade to the next. Characters like Rambo (*Rambo*, 1982), John McLean (*Lethal Weapon*, 1987), Dirty Harry (*Dirty Harry*, 1971), Colonel Braddock (*Missing in Action*, 1984) and Indiana Jones (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*, 1981; *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, 1984; *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, 1989) exemplified the independent, muscular, action seeking heroes of the 1980's. In contrast films like *Regarding Henry* (1991), *One Good Cop* (1991), *The Fisher King* (1991) and *City Slickers* (1991) introduced a more generous, caring, sensitive male leading character to film audiences (Jeffords

1993:197). Studies of representations in Western produced film (film productions from Hollywood as opposed to Bollywood and Nollywood) can then be used to explore these social trends (such as the differences or changes in perceptions of masculinity) that are being represented on film.

1.2.4 Relationship of the topic to the discipline of Communication

Media texts, it can be argued, are ubiquitous. Television programmes, magazines, advertisements and film are just some examples given by McKee (2003:1) as texts used by individuals to make sense of their surroundings, their culture, and their reality. In attempting to define film, Dick (2002:6) explains film as a narrative, a story communicated through the visual as well as through dialogue and sound (music and sound effects). Each element plays an important part in communicating a story to build tension, and culminate in a resolution. McKee (2001:140) argues that in order for individuals to “understand the role that the media play in our lives and precisely how its messages participate in the cultural construction of our view of the world” then it is important that media texts be examined. This is particularly true as Crotty (1998:45) explains that meaning is constructed, rather than created, by individuals through their engagement with the human world. Individuals (as audiences) it could then be argued construct their realities not only through their interactions with others but also through engagement with what is being communicated in film texts.

In order to understand the way in which these realities are constructed two theories are used. The first theory, social constructionism, is used to explain that knowledge and reality are argued to be the result of communicative interaction between human beings and their world (Miller 2005:27; Crotty 1998:42). The second theory, symbolic interactionism, is used to explain how these human communicative interactions turn into behaviour. Individuals will come across symbols that they have constructed a meaning for, through previous engagements and interactions in communication. Depending on the meaning of this symbol, the individual’s interaction with the symbol will be effected (Jones 2003:103). Both of these theories fall within the interpretive paradigm and are considered to be part of the sociocultural tradition of communication theory (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:46).

1.3 TYPE OF STUDY

A paradigm can be defined as a worldview or “the broadest unit of consensus within a given science” (Skrtic 1990:126). Within the social sciences there are four metatheoretical paradigms of modern social scientific thought (Skrtic 1990:127). As this study is working only from the interpretivist paradigm the ontological and epistemological assumptions of only the interpretivist paradigm will be discussed. It is argued within the interpretivist paradigm that an individual’s experience of reality is internalised (Neuman 1997:69). This internalised experience is then founded on the understanding that reality is a construction, existing as a social agreement among individuals within a given context (Greene 1990:234).

The ontological assumption of the interpretivist paradigm is then that reality is subjective, multiplistic and ever changing. While an individual’s actions are understood by taking into consideration the context of those actions and the individual’s beliefs, practices and institutional affiliations (Greene 1990:234). The world is therefore socially constructed through the interaction of individuals and does not exist independently of individuals’ knowledge of the world (Grix 2004:83). It is with this premise that the research was undertaken. If an individual’s reality is subjective, and constructed through social interactions with not only other people, but institutions as well, then it is important to gain an understanding of what individuals are learning from those institutions. As an example, by undertaking a textual analysis of the representations of a construct like masculinity in a social artefact like film, one can begin to gain an in depth understanding of one of the many elements individuals use to construct their realities.

The epistemological assumptions within the interpretivist paradigm are based on the understanding that knowledge through research is gained from field-based, inductive methodologies and that understanding that knowledge requires considering the context embedded within that knowledge (Greene 1990:235). Interpretivists therefore argue for understanding as opposed to explanation and as such do not rely purely on observation to make sense of social phenomena (Grix 2004:83).

This study is interpretivist in nature because the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the way in which gender roles are represented in different genres. The aim is therefore not to generalise the findings. The goal is purely to gain a deeper understanding and describe how masculinity is being represented in film, and to determine if these representations differ according to the genre (context) in which they appear. This is particularly important, as was mentioned earlier, because reality is contextually specific, multiplistic and ever changing (Greene 1990:234). It is because of this that interpretivists consider knowledge to be 'circular' rather than hierarchic, with 'truth' being something that can only be found by ensuring internal consistency (Greene 1990:235). Internal consistency is reiterated by Grix (2004:83) who states that interpretivist research attempts to study the social world from within that world, once again emphasising the goal of interpretivist research as understanding as opposed to only external observation. Therefore, universal social laws and empirical generalisations and causal explanations are not goals of interpretivist research (Grix 2004:84; Greene 1990:236) and will therefore not be the goals within this research study.

As stated by Crotty (1998:87) a characteristic of the interpretivist paradigm is the study of meaning embedded within texts. The purpose of qualitative research, as explained by Babbie (2007:378), is also to discover meaning and patterns of relationships within certain phenomena. The research design chosen for this study is then a qualitative research design in order to discover the underlying meaning in the purposive sample of film texts. For this study a qualitative design in the form of a textual analysis is used to determine the meaning of masculinity as represented in the purposive sample of films and to identify patterns, if any, of masculine characteristics across the action and romantic comedy genres.

This study is also argued to be basic, exploratory and descriptive in type. It is the identification of patterns in the purposive sample of film texts as communication phenomena that is indicative of basic research (Du Plooy 2002:48; Patton 2002:224). While the innovation of a data collection and analysis method making use of 'real' world theoretically derived norms of masculinity to analyse the masculine representations of film characters that makes the study explorative. Finally the study is argued to be descriptive as the final analysis includes a description of the masculine

characteristics most prevalent within and across the action and romantic comedy genres. A full explanation of each of these is given in Chapter Five (see 5.2).

1.4 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The following is an explanation of the research problem, sub-problems and resultant research question for this study.

1.4.1 The research problem

The purpose of this study is to qualitatively analyse the representations of male lead characters in a purposefully selected sample of films from two audience gendered genres, the action and romantic comedy, to determine where on the continuum from hypo-masculinity to hyper-masculinity the characters fall, thereby identifying the masculine characteristics prevalent in each genre type.

1.4.2 The sub-problems

Using Levant et al's (1992) Male Role Norm Inventory, to what extent do the representations of the male lead characters in the purposive sample of films from the action genre conform to the identified norms of masculinity?

Using Levant et al's (1992) Male Role Norm Inventory, to what extent do the representations of the male lead characters in the purposive sample of films from the romantic comedy genre conform to the identified norms of masculinity?

1.4.3 The research question

What differences, if any, are apparent in the representations of masculinity from the male lead characters in the purposive sample of action genre films, when compared to the chosen sample of romantic comedy genre films?

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The ontological underpinnings of qualitative research are predicated on the idea that the messages expressed through the media are inextricably aligned with the ideological standpoint of the producers of the text. Over time, qualitative research was introduced to assist researchers in analysing the symbols systems used in texts, focusing mainly on the meaning, language and cultural experiences expressed by way of media texts (Du Plooy 2002:32-33). The symbol systems are analysed in order to identify qualitative themes and categories to both explore and describe the meanings communicated within these texts (Du Plooy 2002:34). To understand how masculinity is represented in film and identify the possible differences and the extent of those differences across genres, textual analysis is used as a method of qualitative data analysis.

Textual analysis, as defined by McKee (2003:1), is when a text is analysed, and an educated guess is made as to some of the most likely interpretations of that text. The most likely interpretations of the text are based on the themes identified from the different symbol systems used within the text. To draw attention to any differences between the identified themes across genres; a comparative analysis is also undertaken. The purpose of textual analysis is to attempt to understand how individuals make sense of their world by examining the possible interpretations of different texts (McKee 2003:1). Although there were no attempts within the study to understand how the audience perceives and appropriates these representations, a textual analysis of the representations should give an indication as to the different forms of masculinity that are being communicated via these texts and thereby the possible meaning being shared with audiences.

1.5.1 Collection, analysis and interpretation of data

In order to determine how masculinity is represented in the purposive sample of films, the data is analysed according to the character's verbal, non-verbal and behavioural characteristics. These characteristics are analysed in order to identify specific indicators for each of seven themes based on norms of masculinity theoretically derived by Levant et al (1992). In order to complete the analysis, a

combination of the directed qualitative content analysis process and a three-stage coding process is used (see Chapter Five). The combination of these particular methods is used in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of the methodology. Combining methods is suggested by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:65-67) as a means to increase the rigour and the trustworthiness of a study.

Directed qualitative content analysis requires that the researcher identify themes from the literature review (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:115). These themes are then the starting point during the coding phase of the analysis. The themes used to begin the coding process were taken from the theoretically derived norms of traditional masculinity developed by Levant et al (1992) for the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI). These themes include: avoidance of femininity, fear and hatred of homosexuality, self-reliance, aggression, achievement/status, non-relational attitudes towards sex, and restrictive emotionality.

The leading male characters from each film are compared to these norms of traditional masculinity by analysing what the character does (physical characteristics) and says (emotional characteristics). In order to complete this, analysis indicators are allocated to each of the above mentioned themes. It is the presence or absence of these indicators that determine the hyper- or hypo-masculinity of the character. The final analysis is a comparison of the masculinity of the characters from the action genre with that of the masculinity of the characters from the romantic comedy genre.

In order to record and analyse what each character does (physical characteristics) and says (emotional characteristics), coding is used. The coding in qualitative textual analysis requires that the researcher analyse the same material numerous times. Working in a spiral pattern the analysis takes place over numerous stages.

Starting with open coding, short-hand and personal notes are made to highlight those aspects of the male lead characters that are pertinent to the seven theoretically derived norms of masculinity as discussed above. After the initial viewing of all the sample films the short-hand notes are compared and analysed to begin the process of identifying the aspects of the male lead characters that adhere to the chosen indicators for each theme. Axial coding takes place after open coding and requires that the

researcher look at the data collected in the previous coding stage and begin to make connections between the data recorded and the themes mentioned above.

The final stage is selective coding. It is here that examples of the characters behaviour and dialogue that either fit with the themes or are in direct opposition to the themes are noted for the final discussion of the findings. This data is used to answer the first two questions raised in the study. The final question; the comparison between the male lead characters from the action and romantic comedy genres, is answered by comparing the finding from the two sub-questions. It is here that the characteristics most prevalent in each genre can be identified. The completed explanation of how the two methods are combined and the step-by-step procedure of how the analysis is undertaken are explained in Chapter Five.

1.5.2 Feasibility of the study

The sample of films was available to be purchased or rented on DVD, which was the only cost for the study. The researcher had access to equipment to view the DVD's. The purchased DVD's allowed access to the films on a continuous basis as the analysis required the watching and re-watching of the films during the open, axial and selective coding processes. Once these three processes were complete, the analysis took place using the collected data. The most time consuming element was the watching and re-watching of the films as each film was closely scrutinised to develop the data.

1.6 SUMMATION AND OVERVIEW OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

In line with the purpose of the study, a qualitative textual analysis is undertaken in order to identify the differences in the representation of masculinity across the action and romantic comedy genres. In addition to identifying the differences between these two genres, those masculine characteristics most prevalent in each of the male lead characters will also be identified.

Working within the interpretivist paradigm, there will be no attempt to explain the way in which masculine characteristics are constructed in film. To determine why

a specific combination of masculine characteristics was used within a film is therefore beyond the scope of the study. Rather what is sought after is an in depth understanding of what masculine characteristics are more prevalent in one genre as compared to another.

The following is a short overview of the chapters that follow. Chapter Two, Chapter Three and Chapter Four form a literature review which offer a discussion of the literature, previous research and theories on which this study are based. Chapter Five is the methodological chapter where the way in which the research was undertaken, and data collection procedures, is explained. Chapter Six comprises the analysis of the data, and finally Chapter Seven summarises the conclusions drawn from the findings.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Landscape

The paradigm and theories on which this study is based are explained within this chapter. The interpretive paradigm and the theories of social construction and symbolic interaction are explained as the epistemological and ontological positioning of the study.

Chapter Three: Masculinity

Theories of gender and masculinity are discussed, while variations in understanding of masculinity as a construct are explored. Also, the result of changing perceptions of masculinity is discussed with regard to the crisis of masculinity and research into determining the extent of an individual's masculinity is explained.

Chapter Four: Genre

Film theory is explored with particular reference to the classification of film into genres and film characters as representations of social reality. Romantic comedy and action films are explored as genres, as well as the tendency for these films to be targeted at certain types of audiences.

Chapter Five: Methodology

The research design, methodology, population, sampling process, unit of analysis and data collection method is explained. Furthermore, the different stages of the data

analysis are discussed in sequence to highlight the way in which the data is captured and analysed.

Chapter Six: Analysis

The codes required to identify the themes in the sample of films is explained. The codes are outlined and a summary of the data collected is included. The data captured relevant to each theme is then explored both within and across the two genres.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The final conclusion based on the previous analysis is discussed along with the limitations of this study and recommendation for future research.

The following Chapters are a literature review of the theories and concepts on which the study is based. Genre and gender are analysed to gain an understanding of these constructs that will assist with the final analysis. Before these constructs are examined however, a review of the paradigm in which this study is based is undertaken.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction to the theoretical foundation of this research study. The departure point of this chapter is the interpretivist paradigm, in which this study is embedded. This is followed by a discussion of the socio-cultural tradition that forms part of this paradigm, and two of the dominant theories, namely social constructionism and symbolic interactionism, that fall under this tradition. It is important to take these foundations of theory into consideration as they indicate the epistemological and ontological positioning of the study which in turn are the guiding principles from which the research is undertaken.

Miller (2005:26) explains that the ontological position from which research is taken is an indication of how the researcher defines reality. Linked to the ontological position is the epistemological position of the researcher. The epistemological position taken in the study is an indication as to how the researcher perceives knowledge creation; how knowledge about the social world is accumulated (Miller 2005:28).

In Chapter One, the researcher addressed the paradigm within which this study was conducted, namely the interpretive paradigm. It is explained that individuals internalise experiences, which then becomes their reality. Therefore, an individual's reality is a construction, created through social agreements amongst the individual and the institutions within his/her specific context (Greene 1990:234). It is because of this that interpretive researchers argue for subjectivity, stating that researchers need to analyse the position from which the individual is experiencing the situation, without judgment (Miller 2005:58).

The way in which an individual experiences reality is dependent on how that individual defines reality, this definition is dependent on the meaning systems gathered from the collective social activities the individual experiences (Neuman 1997:69). For example, a man who throughout his life is exposed to hyper-masculine

men (whether this exposure was through human interaction, or media representations or both) will believe that hyper-masculine characteristics are the norm (this is discussed further in Chapter 2.3). The result being that this particular individual's masculine reality is of a hyper-masculine nature, and any men who do not fit his understanding of masculinity will be considered 'abnormal' to him. To begin to understand the reality this individual has constructed for himself one could analyse the way in which he communicates as this is an indication as to his internal belief system and the resultant messages that he is expressing. In order to 'access' the meaning individuals create through conversations, photographs, television or written texts, one would first have to analyse the external gestures or medium of expression of the individual as a guide to the internal message being expressed (Wood 2004:69; Neuman 1997:69). The analysis of the medium of expression would then offer an insight as to the meaning systems individuals use and thereby the definition individuals have of reality.

Berger and Luckman¹ (1966:3), in explaining the relationship between reality and knowledge, argue that researchers are required to seriously consider whatever passes for knowledge within a society, regardless of the validity of that knowledge. This is because it is this knowledge that will assist individuals in constructing their reality within that society. Berger and Luckman (1966:3), the seminal theorists in social constructionism, argue for an understanding of knowledge and reality from a social constructionist view point explaining that specific combinations of knowledge and reality are specific to an individual's specific social context. One individual's reality and knowledge based on that reality will be different to that of another individual with a different social context.

Social constructionism is one of the two theories on which this study is based, the second being symbolic interactionism. Both of these theories are considered to fall under the sociocultural tradition of communication theory (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:46), which in turn is related to the interpretivist paradigm. What is argued in the sociocultural tradition and which forms the assumptions on which these two theories

¹ Berger and Luckman are considered to be the seminal theorists with regards to social constructionism. It is for this reason, that although a dated source, the original source has been referenced within this study.

are based, is that although individuals process information cognitively, what needs to be understood and analysed are the ways in which individuals within a group create the realities of their social groups, organisations and cultures.

These realities are then argued to be created through language, and are dependent on the interaction of individuals during the creation process; the result being that knowledge is considered to be highly interpretive and constructed (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:45). Where social constructionism and symbolic interactionism are similar is that both theories are premised on the idea that social structures and meaning are created through social interaction. Where the two theories differ is, where it is argued in social constructionism that human knowledge is created through interaction, symbolic interactionism is predicated on the idea that the same knowledge is created through interactions with, as well as observations of, social relationships (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:46). It is not the difference between these two theories that is of main concern in this study, but rather the fact that both theories value and support the premise that social interactions are important in the creation of human knowledge and therefore individuals' understanding of themselves and others.

The following is a more in-depth discussion of these two theories and their applicability to the study of masculinity as a construct that is created through the interaction and observation of individuals in a social context.

2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Miller (2005:27) argues that social constructionism has been highly influential in social research since the 1960's, and that social constructionism is based on the premise that social reality is an intersubjective construction created through communicative interaction. It is on this premise that the analysis of masculinity in romantic comedy and action films, undertaken in this study, will be based. The above definition of social constructionism is reiterated by Crotty (1998:42) who states that constructionism is:

...the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

(Crotty 1998:42)

It is at this point that an important distinction should be made between constructivism and constructionism. These two terms are often used interchangeably, but there is an important distinction between the two. Constructivism is a cognitive process in which the generation of meaning takes place within the individual (taking into consideration each individual's unique experience as a basis for his or her own generation of meaning), while constructionism is the collective generation of meaning (referring to the social generation of meaning as a group by taking into consideration that culture has an influence on an individual's view of the world) (Crotty 1998:58). The distinction that Crotty (1998:58) is alluding to is that with regards to constructivism everyone has their own unique point of view about the world. This point of view is constructed by an internal process of making sense and understanding, and should be considered to be valid and respected. Alternatively, constructionists argue that the culture in which people were raised, and are currently living, will affect their belief systems, understanding of the world and behaviour.

Geertz's (cited in Jones 2003:53), states that culture is a "system of significant symbols" and that those symbols are a guide to human behaviour. Miller (2005:56) uses the example of the term 'mother' as a significant symbol. It is a term that has some degree of shared meaning between individuals of the same culture. In Geertz's opinion, culture is the "source rather than the result of human thought and behaviour" (Jones 2003:53). Exemplified in the radical constructionist viewpoint, it is argued that 'lust', and 'sexual impulses', are not physiological functions; rather, they are constructed by culture and history. Middle ground constructionists, however, argue that there is an essentialist element to sexual desire that is constructed through acts, identity, community, and object choice (Vance 2005:20). Here, emphasis is placed on the difference between social and physical phenomena. The argument being that there are physical phenomena that exist independent of an individual's experience of the

phenomena. However, there are social phenomena that exist because of a shared meaning, phenomena that were brought into being through social interaction. Take for example an individual's biological sex; this is a physical phenomenon that exists independent of the person's experience of the phenomenon. Biological anomalies aside, an individual has the physical biological criteria to be either a man or a woman. Gender, however, is a social phenomena, with different people and different cultures having a different understanding of what it means to be either male or female.

Jones (2003:54) states that as human beings, all individuals are born into a system of meaning, which affects the thoughts and behaviours of that individual. The system of meaning an individual is born into is the culture in which the individual is raised. Jones (2003:53) makes use of Geertz's concept of culture as a control mechanism. Culture, Jones argues, consists of rules, norms and roles that are imposed on an individual which in turn govern the individual's behaviour. Individuals' understanding of gender then comes from the culture in which they were raised. As an example; an element of gender, homosexuality, for many years, and in many cultures fell into the realm of inappropriate sexual behaviour, with the socially constructed understanding of homosexuality tainted by dominant heterosexual ideologies. Foucault (cited in Freedman & D'Emilio 2005:165), however, did note a change in the social construction of homosexuality; from a discrete act, to one where homosexuality is incorporated as a characteristic which forms part of an individual's identity. As Allen (2005:37) explains, an assumption within social constructionism is that knowledge is historically and culturally specific; thus, "labels, classifications, denotations, connotations of social identity always are products of their times". The fact that gender roles have changed over the years, whether due to the women's movement in the 1960's (Ivy & Backlund 2000:492), or due to changing economic expectations requiring two family incomes (Cleaver 2002:3), is an indication that gender is not an essentialist term. If the concept of gender was essentialist the changing gender roles would not be possible.

An objective truth, Crotty (1998:44) argues, or a truth that exists independently from the individual, is therefore said to not exist. While at the same time, there is no subjectively created truth either (Crotty 1998:44). Social constructionists argue that reality fits somewhere in between the views that reality is

totally objective and totally subjective (Miller 2005:27); arguing rather, that individuals construct meaning by making use of their world, and the objects within their world (Crotty 1998:44). For example, it is stated by Allen (2005:36) that masculinity is a social construct. It is therefore without meaning and requires that individuals construct an understanding of what it means to be masculine for themselves. In order to do this, individuals gather information from their experiences of men (whether in person or through the media) and begin to generate their own 'truth' about masculinity from those experiences.

Terre' Blanche and Durrheim (1999:148) state that social constructionist researchers analyse signs and images in order to show how representations of people are created, which later affects the underlying experience individuals have of the people being represented. An analysis of the way in which a character in a film is represented, for example, can be analysed by his or her clothes, the social artefacts used, his or her relationship with other characters. These are all tools to build a representation of the character, and are the signs on which the character will be judged.

Constructionists also argue that individuals' comprehension of society is constituted through language, which means that language should be the object of study, where language is seen as a system of meanings and practices that construct the social world (Terre' Blanche & Durrheim 1999:149). Language is then the means by which individuals make sense of the world, share experiences, objectify subjective meanings and internalise constructed meanings (Allen 2005:38). Here language refers to more than just the dictionary definition of the word. Berger and Luckman (1966:38) explain that language originates in everyday life and is reference to the individual's daily experiences. Language is then dominated by meanings that are related to both present and future actions. An expression of anger, for example, can be expressed through bodily indices: stance, facial expressions, movements of arms and feet. A construct like masculinity, it can be argued, can then also be expressed through language (in both visual and spoken form). The male lead characters in film can be analysed, by not only their verbal utterances, but also their physical actions, so as to understand how they are representing masculinity.

An analysis of gender representations in film is important as Turner (1997:311) argues, “language does not describe reality, it actually constitutes it”. The importance of understanding the masculine representations in film is reiterated by Allen (2005:38) who explains that when individuals receive recurring versions of the same ‘truth’ it can have negative repercussions when the construct has been created with negative connotations. Using masculinity as an example; if the representations of masculinity are such that violent actions are encouraged in order to be considered masculine within a particular cultural context, individuals will begin to construct their understanding of men as violent individuals. Thus, for the purpose of this study, it is argued that representations of masculinity in film as either hypo-masculine or hyper-masculine will result in the understanding of masculinity as a binary construct with these two extremes at either end. Furthermore, the more conflicted and extreme the representations individuals experience across genres are the more likely there to be gender role confusion amongst individuals of the same cultural context.

Social cognitive theory, as explained by Vaughan and Hogg (2002:34), is used to describe the way in which individuals make use of cognitive processes to understand and make sense of what they are experiencing (Neuman 1997:69). For example, individuals make use of ‘cognitive algebra’ when forming impressions of people. Integration of positive and negative valences into an evaluation of a person is called ‘cognitive algebra’. An individual will cognitively integrate pieces of information into an impression of someone by attributing positive valences (pluses) and negative valences (minuses) to the collected pieces of information. (Vaughan & Hogg 2002:34). Individuals experience things, internalise them, and then attempt to understand the experience. In order to understand the experience, the individual makes use of meaning systems constructed according to the meanings they have learnt through previous social interactions. The knowledge gained from the constructed meaning systems is known as common sense. Within the positivistic paradigm, ‘common sense’ is disregarded and considered to be an invalid knowledge base as the information used to form the knowledge has not been scientifically tested. However, within the interpretivist paradigm, common sense is argued to be a valid knowledge base as individuals make use of information gained through social interactions to form that knowledge. The knowledge base individuals’ use is subjective and different for all individuals, which means that the reality individuals experience is also subjective

and different for all individuals.

One such medium of expression is film. It is stipulated in social cognition theory that individuals learn from the behaviours of ‘models’. These ‘models’ can be from either interactions in the social environment or from representations in the media (Miller 2005:252). It is for this reason that the representation of masculinity in film is being analysed. The question is: what ‘models’ of masculinity are being offered to audiences through masculine characters in film, as these ‘models’ are going to be assisting individuals in the construction of their realities and therefore their understanding of masculinity? One example of the implications of this is the adoption of extreme hyper-masculine characteristics such as, homophobia, violence, and hostility towards women. Male audiences, it could be argued, who are exposed to extremely hyper-masculine male characters in film, may adopt these same characteristics and include them in their own definition of masculinity, if these traits are consistently role modelled in film. A similar argument could be made using symbolic interactionism theory, where it is argued that individuals use role models to construct meaning, and thereby build an understanding of the self.

2.3 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

The critical concept within the tradition of symbolic interactionism is that meaning is created through interactions (Miller 2005:56). What Miller (2005:56) posits is that human thought and social interactions together serve to help individuals interpret the society in which they live, while at the same time the individual’s self is defined by these same social interactions within his or her social context. The way in which interactions happen is that individuals will come across certain symbols; these symbols have certain meanings that have been constructed through previous sociological interactions (interactions with friends, family, work colleagues, the media). These meanings in turn affect the way in which individuals interact with the symbols (Jones 2003:103). This is similar to the first of three premises that Blumer (cited in Flick 2009:58) states symbolic interactionism is based on.

Firstly, it is argued that individuals interact with objects according to the meaning those objects have for them (Blumer cited in Flick 2009:58). Using

masculinity as an example of a symbol; a man with a very specific hyper-masculine definition of masculinity will base his decision to accept and befriend other men depending on the extent to which these men adhere to the meaning of masculinity that he constructed. If a characteristic of being masculine is the avoidance of femininity, men who are perceived to be even slightly effeminate will be treated less respectfully than those who fit his constructed meaning of masculinity. This leads to the second of the three premises stipulated by Blumer (cited in Flick 2009:58); meaning is derived from the interaction the individual has had with those people described as influential in the person's life. Staying with the last example, the man will have constructed his understanding of masculinity via interactions with other men who have hyper-masculine characteristics, for example, his father, brothers, uncles, friends, work colleagues and media representations. His construction of masculinity as hyper-masculine is based on these interactions. Lastly, these same meanings are dealt with and modified via an interpretative process while dealing with the objects the individual encounters (Blumer cited in Flick 2009:58). These objects can be any aspect of the individual's reality; therefore, an object can be a thing, a quality, an event or a state of affairs (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:82). The man above constructed his meaning of masculinity using his experiences with and of other men. He has interpreted their behaviour as hyper-masculine men, as the correct meaning and thereby compares other men's behaviour according to his understanding of the construct.

Those symbols that have a shared meaning within a society are referred to as significant symbols (Miller 2005:56). For example, the term masculine is arguably a significant symbol as it is a term that has some degree of shared meaning within society. Other important concepts within symbolic interactionism are significant others, the generalised other, and role taking (Miller 2005:56). Continuing with the example above, as much as the term masculinity has shared meaning within society, a male individual may formulate his understanding of masculinity by making use of a combination of these three concepts. Firstly, he may learn what it means to be a masculine male from those individuals considered influential in his life, be that a family member, friend, or media personality (significant others). Secondly, the individual may attempt to determine the perception other's have of his masculinity and adjust his behaviour accordingly to fit with the meaning of masculinity he has

developed thus far (generalised other). Finally, the individual will learn about masculinity by modelling the behaviour of others he perceives to be masculine (role taking).

The significant symbols mentioned above are similar to what Goffman (cited in Jones 2003:107) calls labels. As with the constructs described in symbolic interactionism, labels are constructs and are therefore not objective or universal. As a result, the beliefs surrounding the label change according to different societies and because of the constructed meaning of the label, the applied labelled will be deemed as either acceptable or unacceptable. Changes in ideologies and values over time will also affect the label and what that label is implying (Ryan & Demarco 2003:1493).

These labels, as said previously, are constructed through social interactions. Brickell (2006:91) discusses the historical factor of a construct such as sexuality and the socially constructed labels that fall within the construct. Brickell, (2006:91) argues that individuals in the past had sexual identities that reflect those experienced in contemporary society; however, the understanding of sexuality has changed. As individuals become more sexually liberal, the connotations of the different sexual labels changed; homosexuality being just one example. Homosexual behaviour was once considered to be transgressing societal norms and was often represented as deviant within the media (Bennett 1982:296), with television series like *Will & Grace*, *Six Feet Under*, *Brother and Sisters* the understanding of the label of homosexuality has changed.

Where labels constructed socially become problematic is when the constructed meaning of a label is one of deviancy. Deviancy is defined by Bennett (1982:296) as a label that is attached to types of behaviour that transgress normatively enshrined behaviour. Bennett (1982:296) explains that media make use of characters that have characteristics that could be considered as deviant in order to perpetuate the norms propagated in society; by representing these characters as 'folk-devils' social norms are encouraged. Individuals who are perceived as not conforming to societal norms are therefore labelled as deviants. The result being that individuals persistently faced with certain labels will eventually come to believe that the label does indeed apply to them. That is, that the application of that label on their identity is appropriate. Also,

the self-images of the labelled individuals are influenced, making the individuals identify with the label and all that is implied by that label (Jones 2003:107). Take for example a man who has traits that are counter to the hegemonic masculinities espoused within a particular society; traits, as stated by Donaldson (1993:648), that often include acceptance of homosexuals, or effeminate behaviour. These men will be labelled as non-masculine, which will affect the perception they have of themselves as they begin to believe they are non-masculine, which in turn will affect how they perceive their place in society.

As Littlejohn and Foss (2005:82) point out, and what can be deemed from the above example, is that an important part of social interaction is that individuals will formulate an idea of the self. The self is therefore understood as a social object developed through social interactions, and acts as a frame of reference when judging other objects (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:83). If individuals are going to make sense of their social world, construct their self, model the behaviour of others and derive meaning of a construct like masculinity from others, then it is important to analyse those elements that may influence that meaning creation. One possible element that may be influential in meaning creation is film. Therefore, if individuals are going to compare themselves to, and model the representations of masculinity portrayed in film, an understanding of those representations is essential.

2.4 SUMMATION

The purpose of the above discussion was to develop the theoretical foundation for this research study. Working from an interpretivist paradigm the objective is to understand how masculinity is represented in the chosen sample of films. As Grix (2004:83) explains, interpretivists seek to understand phenomena within the social world. Understanding the representation of masculinity in a social artefact such as film is important because it is possible that individuals within society construct their reality based on these representations. If these representations are such that the characteristics and behaviours are contradictory across genres, it could be confusing for men trying to construct their understanding of masculinity. Social constructionist thought is premised on the fact that individuals are actively involved in the creation of their own realities. These realities, and individuals' understanding of these realities,

are an amalgamation of experiences and interactions with external influences (whether family, friends, role models or media representations). If this be the case, then it is possible that masculinity as a construct is created by individuals according to their experiences of masculine representations.

Symbolic interactionism, the second theory discussed in this chapter, is premised similarly on the effects of outside influences on individuals' construction of meaning with regards to their reality, which in this case refers to notions of masculinity. Masculinity, is argued to be a construct that individuals develop a meaning for based on the influences of significant others, role models, and in the case of men, the perceptions others have of them. Men could then be defining their own masculinity based on the portrayals of masculinity that they are exposed to in the media; while at the same time comparing themselves to the perceptions others have of masculinity, which have also been taken from the media.

The importance of gaining an understanding of the representations of masculinity in film then starts to become evident. These representations could be an indication as to the ways in which people are constructing their own meaning of masculinity, which is then being internalised and used to construct their realities. As masculinity is a construct, and as previously mentioned, constructs are ever changing as individuals give them new meaning based on their changing interactions within the social world, it is important to discuss theories of masculinity. These theories have not only noted the changing definitions of masculinity but also serve to highlight the different meanings that are currently being attributed to the construct.

In Chapter Three the above mentioned theories of social construction are discussed further, but with specific relevance to gender. Particular focus is placed on masculinity and the possible consequences of societal constructions of masculinity, namely, gender role conflict. Furthermore the hyper-and hypo-masculinity continuum is introduced, along with an inventory that makes use of theoretically derived norms to identify masculine characteristics that are befitting either side of this continuum.

CHAPTER THREE: MASCULINITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Masculinity, hyper-masculinity (and conversely hypo-masculinity), the romantic comedy and action genres, and media representations, it could be argued, are commonly referred to concepts that individuals generally have some understanding of. However, it is important to contextualise these concepts with regards to this study and will therefore be discussed in the following two chapters. It is within this chapter, however, that gender, the social construction of gender, masculinity and the various understandings of masculinity will be explored. This exploration will take place within the context of media representations in film as an element that assists with the social construction of masculinity.

Character representations in film are an important area of study, because as previously discussed (in Chapter Two), certain constructs are defined according to the interaction and observation individuals have with their social environment. Film, is then one element of the social world where individuals are being exposed to characteristics that could influence their definition of certain constructs. As audience members of mass media, individuals experience a manufactured reality that looks and sounds familiar, without actually being 'real'. As such the media play an important part in the lives of individuals as a source of insight in a complex existence (Hardt 2004:99-100). A textual analysis of film could then offer some insight into the messages expressed in film and help determine the kinds of representations audiences are being exposed to. This is particularly true when discussing masculinity which, as Ruddell (2007:494) explains, has been the topic of much discussion with regards to film and television theory. Where this particular study differs from previous research is the attempt to identify those masculine characteristics that are most prevalent within and across genres. What masculine characteristics are used to develop the action hero in one genre and the romantic leading man in another?

It has been indicated in a review of numerous papers on masculinity that the construct needs to be understood in plural and in motion (Taylor 2008:128). The

plurality of the construct is explained by the need to understand that masculinity is not just a binary to femininity but rather is inclusive of hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is described by Johnson (2008:386) as the configuration of different male gender practices that are promoted within the individual's current cultural context that legitimise patriarchy and heterosexuality and will thereby guarantee his position as a man.

The difference between counter-hegemonic and subordinate masculinities being that some men still adhere to many hegemonic masculine norms but because of certain characteristics are subordinated. Subordinate masculinities, therefore refers to those groups of men who are argued to be oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations (for example young men, effeminate men and homosexuals), and whose experience of subordination is considered related yet different to the subordination experienced by women (Carrigan, Connell & Lee 1985:587). Whereas men who have characteristics that are in direct violation of the norms espoused by hegemonic masculinity, are categorised as counter-hegemonic. For example, homosexuals accept effeminacy, support same-sex sexual pleasuring and discourage hostility towards homosexuals in general; all of which are behaviours vehemently argued, within hegemonic masculinity, to be non-masculine (Donaldson 1993:648).

It is important, however, to differentiate between sex, sexuality and gender, because masculinity is not a term used and constructed only by heterosexuals. Homosexual men also attempt to construct their understanding of masculinity, with some men attempting to adhere to the heteronormative ideologies of masculinity. Manley, Levitt and Mosher (2007:109) explain that the homosexual sub-culture, referred to as the "bear movement", adhere to heteronormative masculinity, with the only exception being their acceptance of same-sex sexual pleasuring. Although often overlapping, the concept of masculinity is then separate from sexuality, and biological sex. An individual's understanding of masculinity and adherence to hegemonic masculine norms is not dependant on the individuals biological sex, nor the individual's sexual preference.

It is argued that masculinity is highly contingent on historical and personal context and is therefore unstable and constantly changing (in motion) (Taylor

2008:128). This is evident by the fact that masculinity is not necessarily an essential aspect of men but is rather routinely constructed “in” and “through” discourse (Edley 2006:601). Masculinity is therefore a social construct without meaning, until an individual, whether through interaction with other people or through the media, begins to develop an understanding of masculinity (Allen 2005:36).

The following chapter will therefore be a discussion of gender, with particular focus on masculinity, the social construction thereof and the particular problems that have arisen in contemporary westernised societies because of the conflicting and changing expectations placed on men. The effects of media on society are often subtle, but still prevalent; a basic example being the inclusion of a term taken from the 1980’s action film *Rambo* (1982). Now included in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term ‘Rambo’ is used to denote an individual who is considered to have the same characteristics as the film’s protagonist; macho, self-sufficient and violent (Tasker 1993:92). The discussion of masculinity will then include a discussion on the social construction of masculinity with regards to how film influences, and is influenced by, social context. Finally an overview of the Male Role Norms Inventory will be given as an exemplar of the characteristics ordinarily associated with being male, and the variations thereof.

3.2 GENDER

Gender is, in most instances, discussed as a dichotomous construct. Building on the biological divide of male and female, gender is defined as the social and psychological differences between the sexes (Connell 2009:9). In their attempt to define gender, Jackson and Scott (2002:1) explain that the term gender was adopted in order to highlight the social construction of both masculinity and femininity. As such, their definition of gender places emphasis on the hierarchical division between men and women, which they argue has been embedded socially and is produced, negotiated and sustained during daily social interactions. Butler (2008:97) reaffirms this position by stating that gender is an identity that is contextually specific and instituted through “a stylised repetition of acts”. Butler’s (2008:97-98) position is based on the argument that gender is not a stable identity from which behaviour stems, rather, the behaviour of an individual is a performance that others use to

perceive the gender of the individual, and the individual comes to believe is appropriate.

An important point raised by Connell (2009:10) regarding a definition of gender that relies on dichotomy is that it can be argued to be overlooking the gendered differences between individuals of the same gender. Therefore it is important to note that gender is not something that can be considered outside of cultural context. Understanding of masculinity and femininity is different across cultures and, with regards to race and sexuality, can be different within cultures as well (Jackson & Scott 2002:2). Gender roles are the result of the dominant gender ideology, which is operationally defined by gender role stereotypes and norms imposed by cultural transmitters (parents, teachers and peers) (Levant 1996:260).

With regards to masculinity in particular, Connell (1993) summarises the progression of how the construct is defined. This progression mirrors much of the discussion on defining gender in general. There are two polarised positions on gender. The first is biological essentialism, where it is argued that social roles and psychological attributes are a direct product of biological factors. While the social constructionist view holds that the social roles and psychological attributes are the product of socialisation (Stanley 2002:31-36). The definitions for masculinity range from masculinity as a psychological essence to masculinity as a social construction through role models, and finally as cultural representations through discourse.

The problem with masculinity being defined as an internal essence that is present from birth, Connell (1993:599) explains, is that it “obliterates questions about social structure and the historical dynamic of gender relations”. Prevalent in the 1970’s and 1980’s was the idea that masculinity was something male’s learnt from role models, stereotypes and expectations placed on them by society. As Connell (1993:599) states, this definition does not take into consideration the institutional organisation of gender and focuses mainly on the individual. The third definition, describes masculinity as constructed through discourse and cultural representations thereby including the institutional organisation of gender (includes political motivations of gender roles) (Connell 1993:600).

It is debated amongst feminist theorists whether or not to be concerned with innate gender characteristics, or the perception others have of, and thereby the social pressures placed on, individuals from either gender. Crotty (1998:179) explains that certain feminist theorists focus their discussions, not on the innate qualities of femininity and how these differ from masculinity, but rather seek to understand how the two genders are perceived to be different and how each is socialised to do different kinds of work, behave differently, and develop different characteristics. Furthermore, Crotty (1998:179) highlights the point that gender is considered to be a social construction and the traits and behaviour of either gender are constructed according to the historical and cultural context of the individual.

Using social constructionism as the theoretical base for this study, it is argued here that the concept of gender and more specifically masculinity is considered to be a construct that will ultimately be defined by the individual. Culture, historical context and social interactions will have an impact on the way in which an individual makes sense of and defines masculinity. For men, their behaviour and understanding of self will be guided by their social environment. Their own adherence to masculine standards, and indeed the standards themselves, will be dependent on how the individual has amalgamated their experience of masculinity from family, friends and role models, including media representations.

3.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

Culture, family and peer relationships have an effect on the understanding individuals have of themselves and the roles they are meant to fulfil in society. This is what is referred to as gender-role socialisation, where men and women are taught to display distinct sex-typed behaviours and attitudes via interactions in social environments. These attitudes include; norms, expectations of how individuals should behave, and generalisations as to what men and women are like (Mansfield, Addis & Mahalik 2003:93).

The development of these norms, expectations and generalisations can be explained using Barthes (1972) theory of myth. Barthes (1972) posits that there are

constructs, like gender, that have throughout history been constructed and re-confirmed to such an extent that they have become naturalised. Societies have adopted the understanding of the construct to such an extent that it is no longer perceived as a construct, but considered to be reality, or 'just the way things are'. A characteristic of the naturalisation process being that the origination of the construct has been so long forgotten that the understanding of the construct has become ingrained. It is the communication and sharing of the understanding of the construct that is the myth (Barthes 1972:142). Applying this to the construct of masculinity, there are certain roles, norms and expectations that have become so synonymous with masculinity that these characteristics are considered to be natural, and considered the norm to which all men should adhere in order to be masculine. The myth of masculinity is then the communication, sharing and resultant expectations placed on men that adhere to the historical formation of the construct.

Rubin (2008:13) used the concept of a sex/gender system to explain that there are a set of arrangements through which biological sex is transformed into products of human activity. What Rubin is alluding to is the fact that men and women are allocated different roles within society. For example, Macnamara (2006:23) explains that the terms masculinity and femininity were used previously to describe gender traits; however, the definitions of these traits were influenced by biology. The 'traditional' roles of men in society were, therefore, said to be family protectors and providers based on physicality. These traits were then the measurement tool by which the masculinity of a man was judged.

In his paper entitled *The New Psychology of Men* Levant (1996:259-260) differentiates between the biological characteristics of female and male, and the socially constructed understandings of femininity and masculinity. It is similarly reiterated in discursive psychology where it is argued that a construct like masculine identity is constructed through discourse, thereby refuting the essentialist arguments regarding identity in general (Edley 2006:602). Butt (2004:71) states discursive psychology is 'light' social constructionism because of the focus on the ways in which individuals interact on a daily basis, and the effects of these interactions on the construction of their personality. Butler (2008:98) explains that feminist theorists dispute a causal link between the biological sex of an individual and the resultant

social meaning of a women's experience.

It is important to note that although feminist studies are, for the most part, concerned with the roles that women play in society, and the affects of patriarchy on these roles, feminist theorists have contributed extensively to masculine studies as well. Macnamara (2006:21) explains that feminism has impacted on men's studies in three ways. First, feminism has assisted by introducing the language and vocabulary which theorists now use to discuss men and women. Second, during their attacks on patriarchy, feminist theorists, by questioning female identities and their roles in relationships, have at the same time raised questions about male identities and their roles in relationships. Last, there are elements of feminism that have assisted in advancing the specific views of masculinity, particularly with regards to the media's role as a form of social interaction wherein messages are communicated about gender.

In her analysis of Merleau-Ponty's and de Beauvoir's discussions on gender, Butler (2008:98) explains that gender is a historical construction and is therefore a process of appropriation of cultural and historical influences. Social interactions are helping to not only teach individuals what is expected of them and others, with regards to gender, but is also a factor influencing what it is individuals are being taught. Butt (2004:70) reiterates Butler's argument by explaining that in order to understand people it is necessary to take into consideration their social and historical context. In defining constructionism Crotty (1998:42) states,

...all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent on human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

(Crotty 1998:42)

An example is given by Mansfield et al. (2003:93) who explain that gender is a social construction, created through human interactions and is dependent on the social context of the interaction. Race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation, Mansfield et al. (2009:93) argue, effect the individuals' definition of masculinity. The

examples that Mansfield et al (2009:93) use are that of an individual from an upper middle-class home who will demonstrate his masculinity by working long hours and asserting career dominance over his spouse thereby taking very little responsibility over domestic chores. Alternatively a working-class individual would be more inclined to adhere to patriarchal ideology, asserting that it is natural for a woman to be subservient to a man, but would take on more domestic responsibility than his upper middle-class counterpart (Mansfield et al. 2003:93). The understanding that these men have of what it means to be masculine is a result of their social landscape, their interactions with other men, their families, and the media that they are exposed to.

The ‘social’ aspect of social constructionism emphasises the way meaning is generated and shared rather than the actual object that has meaning (Crotty 1998:55). It is within hermeneutic theory that attempts are made to explain the generation of meaning with regards to media texts. In hermeneutic theory it is argued that individuals approach media texts with certain pre-conceptions, these combined with the messages in the text aid in the individuals’ production of meaning (Barker 2000:271). The in-text messages are shared using symbols that Crotty (1998:54) likens to a lense through which individuals view the world. This ‘lense’ then acts as a means to bring new ideas or ways of being into focus, but at the same time has the ability to blind individuals thereby encouraging the status quo. In relation to discursive psychology this ‘lense’ is constructed through discourse.

Edley (2006:601) argues that individuals’ understanding of the world is constructed to the point where objects and events are brought into being because of discourse which will have consequences for these individuals. Tasker’s (1993:1) discussion of the masculine representation in films from the 1980’s can be used as an example of how media representations are a reflection of what is happening in society, while at the same time affecting societies understanding of gender. Tasker (1993) explains that the films of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone were argued to signify concerns about the past and the future of masculinity. These muscular action heroes’ were said to be invoking images of a fascist idealisation of the white male body prevalent before feminism. As such the action heroes’ were argued to be a backlash against the ‘new man’ who was seen as a product of 1980’s advertising images and the changes brought about by feminism. Hardt (2004:100)

explains that the difference between a mass-mediated reality and an individual's personal reality is different in terms of complexity of social, political or economic issues; however, the media do play a significant role as a source of insight into a complex contemporary existence.

In an analysis of the construction of masculinity in the film *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002), Stanley (2006:236) explains that it is within film that social norms are both perpetuated and critiqued. With regards to gender in particular, Stanley (2006:236) explains that the representations of gender in film are a construction that both shape and are shaped by 'real' life. Masculine representations in film are then a construction, an amalgamation of real world understandings of masculinity, which audiences watch and learn from.

Livingstone (1998:30) uses the theoretical underpinnings of social constructionism in an attempt to understand the possible effects of television media on audiences and to explain the circular involvement of cognition in television viewing. Livingstone argues that sociocognitive knowledge and processes are used in the interpretation of television, but this knowledge and these processes are also affected by television. Barker (2000:269) reiterates this view by explaining that watching television is a "socially and culturally informed activity which is centrally concerned with meaning". Barker further explains that audiences are active in their interpretation and understanding of the television medium, however, the methods used to interpret and gain understanding is acquired through social relationships and cultural competencies. Viewers are not only interpreting the messages shared by the medium (whether it is television or film) they are also being taught by the medium as to how to process the information being shared (Livingstone 1998:30).

The resultant understanding and experience of a film is then a combination of the discourse and symbols used within the film as well as the pre-conceived ideas from social interactions and previous media exposure. Hall (2006:261) states that the way in which, and extent to which, an individual's attitude, beliefs, and behaviour will be influenced is determined by the material the individual chooses and the way in which they engage with the material. The media is argued to impersonate the ordinary, so that audiences look to the media for self-awareness, and thereby use it for

purposes of identification with regards to class, gender, race and ethnicity (Hardt 2004:106). This view is reiterated by O'Day (2004:204) who explains that films offer audience members the opportunity for fantasy identification where individuals can either confirm or question their gender identity. Applying this to the social construction of gender, individuals are making use of the symbols and discourse in films, in combination with their previous understanding of gender roles learnt from social interactions and media texts to either reinforce their current understanding or produce a new understanding of gender.

The representations of masculinity in the media, it can therefore be argued, will play a role in the formulation of the identities of the audiences viewing the media. If men are using the media (whether consciously or not) as an element of social influence from which roles, norms and expectations are being learned, then analysing these representations will not only offer insight into the possible influence of how masculinity is being constructed, but will also be an indication as to this definition of masculinity being propagated in society.

3.4 GENDER ROLE STRAIN

The socially constructed idea of what it means to be a man, or rather to be masculine, has created problems as many men are finding it hard to reconcile their lifestyles, and desires, with what they believe society expects of them. It has been argued that most men are unable to live up to the expectations they themselves and society have placed on them, and are therefore not fulfilling their own personal dreams, nor are they contributing to the social order (Harris 1994:103).

In research done on adolescent males undergoing counselling for behavioural problems; this pressure to adhere to the different expectations of their masculinity (placed on them by parents, teachers, peers and siblings) resulted in the boys' trouble with law enforcement. Richmond and Levant (2003:1243), after many hours of group therapy, discovered that the boys were receiving mixed messages about what was expected of them as young men. Discrepancies between their masculine roles at home, at school and amongst their friends resulted in a breakdown of their own self worth leading to a disregard for their own and others personal safety. Pleck,

Sonenstein and Ku (cited in Richmond & Levant 2003:1237) indicate that in adolescent males greater endorsement of traditional notions of masculinity lead to higher instances of alcohol and drug use, suspension from school, sexual activity and legal infractions. In older men, Blazina (2001:257) describes the indicators of this gender role conflict as depression, anxiety, anger, substance abuse, loneliness and general interpersonal problems, while Mansfield et al. (2003:93) found a negative correlation between gender role conflict and self-esteem, intimacy and marital satisfaction.

Mansfield et al. (2003:93) define gender role conflict as a result of gender socialisation where there are cognitive, affective and behavioural consequences of the prescribed roles placed on men by society. Further complicating matters, as Blazina (2001:257) describes, is that in most cases where men are experiencing gender role conflict they are comparing themselves and others' gender identity dichotomously; either they fit in with the masculine ideal or they do not. Understandably, Blazina (2001:257) goes on to explain, this results in a gender identity that is impossible to sustain.

Gender role conflict can be identified through four specific patterns. Firstly there is a pre-occupation with power; interpersonal, sexual and financial. It is from this that the stereotypical male competitiveness arises, they feel obliged to be successful at whatever they do, and success requires being better than their counterparts. Second is the avoidance of emotional expression, remaining stoic when faced with situations that can be described as emotionally tense. Third is restrictive affectionate behaviour between men, where men feel threatened and uncomfortable with loving or erotic behaviour between men. The last pattern is the work/family conflict, where men are torn between spending time at work in order to be successful at the expense of spending time with family and loved ones (Mansfield et al. 2003:93; Blazina 2001:257).

Gender role conflict is evident when male behaviour is restricted to these stereotypical norms and the individual begins to feel 'unmanly' because they are either unable or unwilling to adhere to these norms (Blazina 2001:257). Taking an example from the above patterns, a male who has little interest in power or competing

against others may feel conflicted, because his desires are in direct conflict with his socialised gender role. Harris (1994:103) gives another example explaining that men are often living lives of quiet desperation because they are unable to realise their dreams nor contribute to the social order, purely because they feel so driven to build their careers. They feel they are unable to meet the high standards that they have placed on themselves.

This discrepancy between the actual lived experience of the individual and the expectations they feel have been placed on them, Levant (1997:221) refers to as the masculinity crisis. Levant argues that there is a crisis of masculinity because of the collapse of the good provider role specifically and more generally with the intensification of the gender role conflict. Nystrom (2002:41) describes how feminism assisted in allowing men to distance themselves from the breadwinner role previously expected of them. The expectations placed on men were that they were to be married and offer financial security to their spouse and offspring. At the time women who worked were considered to be of a lower class, and were often underpaid in comparison to their male counterparts and therefore relied on men for survival. Feminism not only brought changes to the rights of women freeing them to provide for themselves if they so wish but also freed men from their responsibilities of being the sole breadwinner. However, it could be argued that these changes and freedoms were the beginning of what Levant (1997:221) has called the contemporary “masculinity crisis”.

Kimmel (1987:223) explains that a crisis in masculinity is potentially the result of social disorder. Changes within society, the economic and/or political circumstances of the time, result in a reconfiguration of what it means to be either a man or a woman, with individuals reconstructing their understanding of their gender roles. Changes in society result in gender roles being redefined with regards to gender relations. “Masculinity was a relational construct and was to be reconstructed, reasserted, or redefined in relation to changing social and economic conditions and the changing position of women in society” (Kimmel 1987:153).

Kimmel (1987:123) identifies two era’s where changes in society resulted in masculinity being redefined. The first era discussed is that of the period over the late

17th century and early 18th century. Changes to the British economy over this period led to many men feeling a loss of autonomy as their small businesses and farms closed down forcing individuals to seek employment within larger organisations within large cities like London. As a result men were renegotiating their role within society, with particular emphasis on marital roles. Men were waiting longer to get married as they felt that women were only looking to get married for financial gains and were becoming too aggressive in their drive to find a suitable husband. At the same time, women were arguing for more rights within the marriage and were concerned that men were becoming “soft” and weak. Kimmel (1987:137) argues that these changes led to a crisis in gender relations as women felt that men were starting to become “less masculine”.

The second era discussed by Kimmel (1987) is that of the late 19th century in America. Similar to the economic changes experienced by the British, American individuals were experiencing a change in the economic structure of the country. Small businesses were closing down and industrialisation was reducing the autonomy of men who once relied on themselves to earn money and provide for their family. Men now became part of larger industrial companies, with little to no say over their own day to day activities. A result of these economic changes was a separation of home and family life that resulted in women being responsible for the socialisation of the children. Women were teaching boys how to be men, with little help from the men of the family. This raised concerns among many men who felt that the roles that women were fulfilling in society were becoming more dominant, and masculinity was being threatened by the feminisation of male children (Kimmel 1987:143).

Men’s reaction to the growing dominance of women in society, according to Kimmel (1987:143-153), manifested three different reactions. Firstly there were those men that fought against women’s new roles in society by encouraging a return to “traditional” family roles where women were subservient to men. These men were concerned that their masculine roles were under threat of extinction and espoused that a change in gender roles would be going against the natural order (Kimmel 1987:143-146). The second reaction to the changing gender roles in the late 19th century resulted in a faction of men who considered the increased dominance of women in society as symptomatic of cultural changes. These men were not opposing the women’s

movement of the time, but felt that it should encourage men to become less sentimental and more masculine with regards to their actions and behaviours. Groups and fraternities were created where men could socialise with other men, developing their masculinity to become the men they believed society needed them to be (Kimmel 1987:146-149).

Showalter (1991:9) also recognises that the men at the end of the 19th century were redefining their roles in society, the anxiety being that gender roles were changing which required men to suppress any feminine feelings of nurturing and affection. This suppression of feelings was an attempt to regain a sense of equilibrium between the genders. Women were becoming more dominant and in order to return the balance of power, men were attempting to become more masculine by refuting any stereotypically feminine behaviour. Showalter (1991:9) argues that individuals were beginning to understand that gender is mutable and that there are stages between being a complete male and a complete female. The crisis that men were experiencing was a fear that the stage they found themselves in was too close to the feminine (Showalter 1991:9).

The final reaction was from those men who supported the women's movement of the time, arguing that society in general would be more prosperous with the inclusion of women in politics and the economy. These men joined the suffragette movement and were often criticised and ridiculed for supporting the movement, but continued to support women by taking on previously feminised roles (cooking, cleaning) in order to assist the women fighting for gender equality (Kimmel 1987:149-153).

These three different perspectives and reactions to changing gender roles of the late 19th century are indicative of a crisis in masculinity because men had to decide how to react to the changes happening within society. Men had to decide whether or not they should be refuting the women's movement because this would be in opposition to the natural order, should they instead be adopting more masculine behaviour to counteract the increase in feminine influence in society, or rather should they be accepting of a more inclusive society where men and women share the burden of raising and providing for a family. This is not to say that all theorists agree with the

concept of a crisis of masculinity.

Halberstam (1998:2) argues that the understanding of masculinity is still considered to be one of legitimacy and privilege while symbolically referring to the power of the state and uneven distribution of wealth, thereby refuting the idea that masculinity is in crisis. As such Halberstam (1998:2) argues that masculinity is still a construct created by an understanding of power over others. However, Halberstam (1998:2-5) also indicates that there are different kinds of masculinity, referring specifically to excessive masculinity, epic masculinity and gay masculinity. Excessive masculinity refers to the physical bodies of hyper-masculine men; epic masculinity refers to the masculinity of white males, and gay masculinity refers to the masculinity of homosexual men. The crisis of masculinity however, does not refer to a complete loss of power experienced by all men, rather, as is argued within this study, as the increase in options provided to men to define their own masculinity while at the same time having to adhere to others expectations of what it means to be masculine.

With regards to film and the representation of the masculinity crisis, *Fight Club* (1999) and *Gladiator* (2000) have both been identified as having characters that are supposedly representing 'modern men' and the crisis of masculinity they are currently enduring (Fradley 2004:236; Jones 2006; Ruddell 2007). This is almost 10 years after Levant's 1997 article and almost 100 years after the change in gender roles experienced by men in the late 19th century; indicating that perhaps a crisis in masculinity is something that has not completely abated as yet, or at least the concept of masculinity as a changing and varied construct in both academia and within film representations still exists. Macnamara (2006:187) argues that media representations will not only have an immediate impact on audiences, but a long term cumulative impact as well. Thusly the study of masculinity, the representation of masculinity in the media, and the effects of these representations require continuous study. This is particularly important as the range of masculine representations varies.

Ruddell (2007:499) explains how in some films the male form can be viewed as hyper-masculine in its muscle-bound form (body builder physiques) as in films like *Universal Soldier* (1992), *The Terminator* (1984) and *Rambo* (1982), while in other films the male form has morphed into less masculine representations of masculinity

by reducing the autonomous nature of the male lead character. Ruddell (2007:499) argues that this is exemplified in films like *Videodrome* (1983) where the male lead character is manipulated and controlled by others for their own personal gain, thereby reducing the autonomy of the lead character. A film that shows both the less masculine male form (the Narrator), as well as the hyper-masculine form (Tyler Durden) in one character is that of *Fight Club* (1999) (Ruddell 2007:499). *Fight Club* (1999) is interesting in that not until the end of the movie does the audience realise that the two main male characters are actually one person. In doing so, it can be argued; the film is showing the inner struggle of those men dealing with a crisis of masculinity, by reflecting the struggle through the two main characters.

Ruddell (2007:502) asserts that these characters are an allegory for the ego struggling with dominant gender myths. Tyler Durden and the Narrator are the two extreme sides of the battle said to be taking place within modern men, with one trying to make sense of the expectations placed on him by society, while the other is meant to be the epitome of American white male heteronormative masculinity. Some masculinity ideologies are thought to be more prevalent than others. In particular, ideologies stemming from white, middle-class, Protestant, and heterosexual subcultures are thought to be most dominant in United States culture and are typically referred to as traditional masculinity ideologies (Mansfield et al., 2003). Tyler Durden encourages the Narrator to take part in activities that are perceived to be masculine, for example, fighting, having sex with Marla (the only female character in the film), being destructive and living without comfort (Ruddell 2007:499). Ruddell (2007:499) states the relationship between Tyler and the Narrator highlights the damage that can be caused by “gendering” emotions and behaviour.

Tyler Durden is hyper-masculinised throughout *Fight Club* (1999) as is exemplified by his physical appearance which is hard and intensified by his muscular physique. Tyler is also the character who starts fight club, and is generally the most violent of any of the characters barely stopping short of killing any of the men that he fights. Tyler is shown to be un-emotional as he shows a complete disregard for Marla’s feelings and is often rude and emotionally distant from her; resulting in Marla leaving him. Tyler’s appearance is unhygienic (or at least has the appearance of being unhygienic) which is an indication that he avoids any stereotypically feminised

behaviour like grooming. Tyler is the extreme alternative to the life that the Narrator lives. The result of “gendering” of emotions and behaviour is that these characteristics are adopted by the Narrator in order to be more like Tyler with destructive consequences. The Narrator participates in violent acts and lives in squalor in order to masculinise himself, to be more like Tyler Durden. At start of *Fight Club* (1999) The Narrator is more emotionally aware than Tyler as his continuous attempts at “feeling something” at the start of the film indicate. The film is premised on the fact the Tyler is everything that the Narrator is not, which is what interests and attracts the Narrator to Tyler.

Both Jones (2006:111) and Fradley (2004:235) identify *Gladiator* (2000) as a film that represents the masculinity crisis. Jones’ (2006:111) and Fradley’s (2004:235) reading of Maximus in the film, *Gladiator* (2000), indicates an expression of the anxiety and paranoia of the perceived growing power of women and non-masculine (homosexuals and metrosexuals) movements being experienced at the time of production. What Jones’s (2006:111) and Fradley (2004:244) argue is that Maximus is a disavowal of these changes and revisiting of the 1950’s style masculinity of the white, male heterosexual power. This is exemplified in the characters Maximus (protagonist) and Commodus (antagonist). Jones (2006:113) maintains that Commodus’s slightly effeminate character (his cowardice and his tendency to be over-emotional) and less-masculine appearance is the ultimate signifier of evil with regards to masculine fantasy. Also, Fradley (2004:239) explains that a film like *Gladiator* (2000) highlights the paranoia that men feel about progressive change and loss of power. Commodus is a feminised male taking control away from, and ruling over, the appropriately masculine Maximus. This supports Bennett’s (1982:296) argument that deviant behaviour is used in the media to encourage the status quo, by demonising the characters labelled as deviant. As the film’s antagonist Commodus’s feminine behaviour is demonised via his role as usurper and rival of the film’s hero. Portraying Commodus as a feminised male insinuates to audiences that men with feminine characteristics are not the norm, and should be considered enemies to heteronormative masculinity.

A study of the likeability of characters in homosexual/heterosexual dyads in film indicates that men who conform and endorse heteronormativity would rate a

heterosexual character less favourably if that character associated with a homosexual character (Jefferson & Bramlett 2010:409). It stands to reason then, that the alternative would be likely. If a heterosexual character disapproved of the homosexual character (or in the case of Commodus, a character with highly effeminate characteristics) it would explain the heteronormative male audience members being more inclined to support Maximus. Jones (2006:114) postulates that characters like Maximus (and possibly Tyler Durden) represent a 'traditional' masculinity because the introduction of new forms of masculinity in postmodern society makes Western audiences anxious. In contrast Buchbinder (2008:243) attributes the hegemonic masculinity (men who have physical size and strength who prefer action over talk and violence over negotiation) represented in the spate of action and dramatic films (*Unbreakable* (2000), *Gone in Sixty Seconds* (2000), *American Psycho* (2000)), released over the same time period as *Gladiator* (2000) and *Fight Club* (1999), as not truly representative of the actual lived experience of men from this time period.

The excessive nature of the masculinity represented in these films, Buchbinder (2008:243) argues, suggests anxiety for some men that a familiar form of masculinity is perhaps fading. Perhaps this anxiety stems from what Fradley (2004:236) calls the "the death of the Great White American Male". Fradley (2004:236) states that after the liberationist era (an era that includes the women's movement, gay and lesbian rights movement and civil rights movement) it was argued that white males began to feel decentred, disenfranchised and disempowered. The result being that contemporary cinema interpreted this change in society by creating films permeated with hysteria, complaint and paranoia about the changes of masculinity. Fradley (2004:236) uses the film *Falling Down* (1993) to exemplify this statement as the film is about a man who turns psychotically violent in protest against injustices he perceives in society. Characters like Tyler Durden and Maximus are then masculinised to a certain degree as a reminder of what was once considered to be 'true' masculine behaviour.

The argument here is two-fold. Firstly, the representations of masculinity characterised by the male lead characters in film, could arguably be a reflection of what society expects of men. Also, men could be using the characters in the construction of their own understanding of masculinity. Due to the fact that it is

beyond the scope of this study, no audience members were questioned about their use of these characters in their identity formation, and therefore no assumptions will be made as to whether or not this is the case. However, by analysing the characters and the kinds of masculinity being represented, one can begin to understand the possible influences these characters may have on male audiences. The films discussed above (*Falling Down* (1993), *Fight Club* (1999), *Gladiator* (2000), *Unbreakable* (2000), *Gone in Sixty Seconds* (2000), and *American Psycho* (2000)) are an indication that masculine representations should be examined as there are underlying ideological messages being propagated to audience members. For example, discrepancies in the kinds of representations of masculinity could be both an indication that there is a crisis of masculinity, as well as a possible contributing factor, if the representations are vastly different.

3.5 MASCULINITY

Shugart (2008:280) attributes the “crisis in masculinity” to an “erosion of masculine privilege in recent decades”. The powerful and historical discourse of normative masculinity was once distinguished by practices of strength, power, control and domination with particular emphasis on the distinction between the masculine and the feminine (Shugart 2008:280). Harrison (2008:56) furthers the definition of traditional masculinity with constructs such as self-efficiency, activity, mastery, courage, toughness, autonomy, rationality, competitiveness, technological skill, stoicism and emotional detachment. Contemporary discourse on masculinity indicates a change where men are encouraged to commit to relationships, to communicate innermost feelings, to nurture children, to share in housework, to integrate sexuality with love, and to curb aggression and violence; all of which are traditionally feminine characteristics (Harrison 2008:56).

Levant (1996:259) argues that these “new” expectations “have shaken traditional masculinity ideology to such an extent there is now a masculinity crisis in which many feel bewildered and confused”. This confusion could be the result of what Edley (2006:603-604) describes as the ‘defensive’ nature of masculinity. It is argued that proving one’s manhood requires a continual distancing from the feminine. Referring to Psychoanalytic theory, Edley (2006:63-604) explains that this distancing

is rooted in an “active repudiation of an original identification with the mother, which for most men is never completely broken”. As a result men who have desires or thoughts that are in line with the female gender roles project these thoughts on to others and result in either homophobic discourse or bullying.

Shugart (2008:281) attributes, at least in part, some of the crisis in masculinity to the commercialisation of masculinity, arguing that contemporary culture is infused with male objectification and the commoditisation of masculinity, which is posing challenges to conventional, normative masculinity. Harrison (2008:56) asserts that men have been, and are, undergoing a social change as many men re-position themselves as consumers of fashion, style products and in the process re-evaluating their appearance and by extension the idea of what it means to be male.

The change in the male aesthetic began in the 1980’s with the fashion industry targeting men, the advent of men’s fashion and lifestyle magazines, as well as new aesthetic codes for the representation of men in advertising and film. These changes brought with them an objectification of the male body, not experienced before, and that to date is argued to becoming more pervasive and significant (Shugart 2008:282). This objectification of the male body, it is argued by Tasker (1993:79), has led to a similar phenomenon often discussed in relation to women and the media. Men, Tasker (1993:79) posits, were being asked to compare themselves to the images of masculinity in the media, resulting in the commodification of the male body. Men were being ‘sold’ an image of masculinity that they would then buy products or service (gym services for example) in order to obtain. An example of these changes can be taken from Harrison (2008:56) who explains the dichotomy in the advertising of male grooming products.

Advertisers of male grooming products carefully attempt to encourage sales by convincing men to pay closer attention to their aesthetics (hair, skin, face, body) while at the same time trying not to alienate the male consumer by keeping to what they consider to be traditional male roles. Shugart (2008:283) describes the kind of men targeted by male grooming advertisements as metrosexuals. Men, who from a distance, would be described as having contemporary masculine characteristics, wear vintage T-shirts, tattoos, wallet chains and drive “muscle cars” and motorcycles. On

closer inspection, however, they appear to have had extensive skin treatments, Botox and exfoliations, their nails are buffed, and their eyebrows tweezed. These men are unashamed to partake in spa treatments, beauty care, and shopping.

Research conducted by Pompper, Soto and Piel (2007) explores the male aesthetic and the interpretation that different male groups (variables being age and ethnicity) have of the images of masculinity gained from different magazines. Participants were asked how many, and which magazines they read, and the frequency of the readings. They were then asked what they believed the ideal male aesthetic to be. Variations were identified across generations as well as ethnic groups. What Pompper, Soto and Piel (2007:538) ultimately argue is that the images in magazines offer romanticised standards of perfection that, even though the participants themselves were able to identify the images as unrealistic, still inspired feelings of inadequacy. The result is that many of the participants reported a fear of both aging and an inability to compete with other males, because of the emphasis that the images place on youth and muscularity (Pompper, Soto & Piel 2007:538). The feelings of inadequacy felt by these individuals could be explained by the 'have me' and 'be me' axes described by O'Day (2004:204).

O'Day (2004:204) explains that there is a phenomenon where identification with a character in a film is said to be linked to one of two categories. First, the audience member identifies with a character because the character is an attractive fantasy mate, the 'have me' axes. Alternatively, audience members are able to identify with the character because they want to be that character, the 'be me' axes. O'Day (2004:204) explains this axis with attractive female action heroes and the male audiences who want to 'have them' and the female audience members that want to 'be them'. Application of this to male audience members and male film characters could be an indication as to why men feel inadequate when exposed to certain images of masculinity. The male audience member wants 'to be' the action hero, wants to emulate the masculine characteristics represented by the character, but at the same time feels inadequate because his lived experience does not match these characteristics.

The disparity is not only with masculine aesthetics, but social behaviours as well. Levant (1996:259) argues that men have been experiencing incongruence with regards to perceived traditional masculine roles and the societal pressures they are currently facing. Over the years certain changes in society have brought with them changes in the perception of the male role in society. Noted examples are the women's movement and the anti-war movement of the 1960's. Disillusionment with the American military and by extension the "traditionally masculine role of the soldier", along with the increasingly popular women's movement, the male role in society began to shift (Ivy & Backlund 2000:492).

Cleaver (2002:3) reasons that with the introduction of women to the work force, along with economic changes that have resulted in men losing the status of family provider, men's supposedly fundamental identity has been called into question. As an African example, Kandirikirira (2002:119) discusses how apartheid-like work conditions found in Namibia affected Namibian men who would attempt to escape the oppressive work environment and reaffirm their masculinity in the home. However, they were further emasculated when they discovered their wives and mothers were successfully fulfilling the traditional male gender roles. In order to compensate for their loss, these men began to define their masculinity with sex and money. Demonstrable wealth and multiple lovers became their definition of manliness. Studies on the effects of poverty and economic change indicate that the lack of alternative roles can lead to dysfunctional and anti-social behaviour (Cleaver 2002:3).

The male lead character (Barry Egan) in the film *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002) is an example of this dysfunctional and anti-social behaviour. Barry is a character whose life is dominated by the female characters in the film; his sisters, the call-girl blackmailing him, and his girlfriend (Stanley 2006:237). Stanley (2006) uses Barry to draw attention to the result of men's changing role in a post-patriarchal society; a society where men are no longer the sole breadwinners for the family, are not the only individuals who own property, and are not the only defenders of women and children. Referring only to patriarchy on a domestic level; Stanley (2006:238) states that men no longer exert influence in family and marriage relationships as they once did. The result of this, as Stanley (2006:241) alludes to, is a masculinity that is confusing, socially impaired and dominated by female individuals.

Ruddell (2007:494) contends that the continuous attention to the study of masculinity is because of the changing [aesthetic] shape of men (from muscle-bound to feminised), as well as the concomitant shifts in meanings of the construct. Ivy and Backlund (2000:37) argue that men are identified as “actors, doers, leaders and decision makers in many aspects of life, such as in relationships, work and politics”. This socially constructed idea of men, or rather masculinity, is in line with the definition of masculinity given by Benshoff and Griffin (2009:422) who state that masculinity includes the roles and behaviours associated with being male, and that within the contemporary Western culture, this includes strength, leadership ability, and the restraint of emotional expression. Within the study of masculinity ideologies focus is placed on these types of characteristics and men’s tendencies to endorse them. Emphasis is placed on self-reliance, competitiveness, emotional control, power over others and aggression. Although it is stated that the extent to which these characteristics are endorsed differs between cultures and contexts, it is argued that some are generally more common than others (Mansfield et al. 2003:93).

3.6 HYPER- VS HYPO- MASCULINITY

Hyper-masculinity, according to Levant and Richmond (2007:131) is an internalisation of cultural belief systems and attitudes towards masculinity and men’s roles in order to fulfil socially constructed expectations of male behaviour while at the same time vehemently avoiding certain proscribed behaviours. Extreme examples of hyper-masculine behaviour is often indicated by a need to exert control over others (both men and women) through violence, as well as over the self through the appearance of ‘toughness’ (Zaitchik & Mosher 1993:230). Violence, Galliano (2003:308) contends, is a highly gendered activity and may be considered as the behaviour of a hyper-masculine individual when he feels his masculine power and/or privilege has failed.

Alternatively, hypo-masculine men adhere less to the socially constructed expectations of male behaviour and are less likely to avoid proscribed behaviours. Berger and Luckman (1966:168) explain that women and men ‘inhabit’ different roles within society. During socialisation these roles are transmitted to children, with children of both genders learning not only their role, but also the role of their gender

counterpart. Ordinarily male children will identify more with the masculine roles that he is being socialised to fulfil. Problems arise however when for whatever biographical reason the male child identifies more with the roles of the female gender. For example Berger and Luckman (1966:168) argue that a male child raised without a masculine role model may begin to identify with the female role models he is being raised by. The result is that there is asymmetry between his social-assignment and his subjectively real identity; the male child becomes more effeminate than masculine. Hypo-masculinity, for the purpose of this study, could then be described as those behaviours that in a heteronormative sense would more likely be associated with femininity than masculinity. Therefore a hypo-masculine male would have characteristics like passivity, low aggression, and would be more emotional.

3.7 MALE ROLE NORMS INVENTORY

In terms of masculinity, masculine ideology is defined by Levant and Richmond (2007:131) as an individual's internalisation of cultural beliefs and attitudes towards masculinity and men's roles. Pleck (cited in Levant & Richmond 2007:131) admits that masculinity ideologies are diverse, but notes that there is "a common constellation of standards and expectations associated with the traditional male role in the Western world". It is with these common constellations in mind that Levant and colleagues developed the gender role strain paradigm and Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI) to assess traditional and non-traditional masculinity ideologies.

Avoidance of femininity, fear and hatred of homosexuals, self-reliance, aggression, achievement/status, non-relational attitudes towards sex, and restrictive emotionality are the seven theoretically-derived norms of traditional masculinity ideology measured by the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI). Developed to measure traditional and non-traditional attitudes towards masculinity, the MRNI uses 57 normative statements measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Of the 57 statements higher scores on 45 of the statements indicate adherence to traditional masculinity ideology, while the remaining statements belong to the non-traditional subscale for masculinity ideology (Levant & Richmond 2007:132; Levant et al 1992).

Research using the MRNI has revealed differences in gender norms across ages, genders, sexual orientation and race (Levant & Richmond 2007:134). This further emphasises the importance of the cultural and social aspects of how masculinity is defined. In Levant's studies African American men scored highest on the traditional sub-scale of the MRNI thereby endorsing the traditional masculinity ideology more than Latin American men and European men, who scored lower respectively (Levant & Richmond 2007:134).

The higher scores indicate a tendency towards hyper-masculinity, while lower scores indicate a tendency toward hypo-masculinity. As an example, men whose scores indicated fewer identifiable indicators within the seven theoretically derived norms and therefore less likely to endorse traditional masculinity ideology, are more likely to be accepting of racial differences, gender equality, and paternal involvement in child care (Levant & Richmond 2007:142). If society and culture play a role in the way in which men (of all ages) understand masculinity (Levant & Richmond 2007:141; Levant 1996:259; Zaitchik & Mosher 1993:230), and film is a part of modern culture, it is important to analyse how much leading men in film are conforming to traditional masculinity ideology.

It is because the seven norms of masculinity for the MRNI have not only been theoretically derived but also tested by Levant et al (1992) that these norms were chosen to be used for this study. Also, with regards to the use of the MRNI to analyse fictional characters, no other research was found that indicated the MRNI norms had been used for a purpose similar to this. It is only the norms and the definitions of these norms that are taken from the MRNI to analyse the leading male characters from the chosen sample of films. The reason for using these norms is that in order to effectively compare the characters and their masculine traits, 'real' traits and behaviours would be required to form the baseline off of which each character could be compared. If the MRNI is used to determine a person's place on a continuum of masculinity (from hypo- to hyper-masculinity) then it seems appropriate to use these same criteria to determine the kind of masculinity being represented by male characters in film. Do these characters have the same characteristics of masculinity as described in the MRNI and if so where on this same continuum do male characters within and across genres fall?

3.8 SUMMATION

Gender role conflict indicates that there is a discrepancy between the lived experience of men and the roles, norms and expectations that, either they place on themselves or that are placed on them by society. A contributing factor to this discrepancy could be a result of the representations of masculinity perpetuated through the media. Quite possibly the media are offering representations of gender roles that men feel are quite different from their lived experience and they are unable to live up to. This is particularly relevant considering that masculinity is arguably a social construction, with the understanding of masculinity being dependant on individuals' experiences of masculinity learnt through interactions with others and through role models.

Further complicating matters is that masculinity, or rather the representation of masculinity, has changed in the media over the years (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four). This could either be indicative of the fact that masculinity is being redefined in society, or is a contributing factor to the redefinitions. Neale (1993:11) describes film, and the audiences' identification with the characters within film, as a tool through which socially defined and constructed categories of male and female are specified.

It is important to re-iterate that it is not within the scope of this study to determine the effects of film and the representations therein on audiences. However, it is important to determine what kind of representations are being shared with audiences, firstly as an introduction for further effects research and secondly to understand what kind of socially constructed messages audiences are being exposed to. By investigating the male lead characters in film and how masculinity is represented by these characters, the possibility arises for questions to be asked about aspects of gender that are not readily spoken about (Stanley 2006:236).

Therefore, the norms of masculinity introduced by Levant et al (1992) will be used to guide the analysis of the sample of film texts. Representations of masculinity expressed in the sample of romantic comedy and action films will be compared to the seven theoretically derived norms in order to establish what kinds of masculinity are

being communicated with audiences in order to understand the discourse of masculinity in contemporary western culture.

In order to begin the exploration of masculinity in the media, the following chapter includes a discussion of the representation of masculinity in film. However, the discussion is narrowed to the ways in which films are compartmentalised into different genres, the expectations this raises in audiences, and the possible consequences this may have on the way in which masculinity is represented within and across genres.

CHAPTER FOUR: GENRE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been argued (in Chapter Three) that constructs like gender and masculinity are a social construction with individuals learning and understanding the constructs through their interactions within society and social artefacts like film. Within film, however, there are different methods used to tell a story and depict characters. Arguably then, within these differences, different ideas and understandings of society are expressed; making it important to analyse and determine what is being expressed to, and about, society through these films. Are there perhaps different understandings of the construct of masculinity within and between different genres with the different conventions of storytelling? These conventions are said to help audiences determine what to expect when viewing a particular film (Dick 2002:117) and are different for each genre (Bordwell & Thompson 2001:97).

Trbic (2007:104) describes film genre by explaining that filmmakers make use of a set of established conventions to ensure the film's story line is recognisable and to some extent predictable, so that the audience will recognise and understand the film. Hayward (2000:170) lists four essential components of genre: technology, narrative, iconography and stars. Different genres use different kinds of technology during film production; for example the use of specific colours, cinemascope and wide screen scenes are typical of the western genre, while special effects are expected in the science fiction genre (Hayward 2000:170). Narrative refers to three different components of storytelling in film: firstly there is narrating, which is the enunciation or the actual utterances of the actors on screen; the diegesis being the order of events and the variations thereof that will result in specific storylines and visual *mis-en-scène*; and finally the narrative which is the film as a whole being a complete telling of an event (Hayward 2000:257).

Different genres will also make use of different iconography or visual motifs and styles. Iconography can refer to everything from the smallest unit of meaning expressed to the generic qualities of the film in its entirety. Iconography can also refer

to the images and dress codes used within the film (Hayward 2000:191) or, as put by Benshoff and Griffin (2009:28), the look and sound of the film. The fourth essential component described by Hayward (2000:170) are the actors (or stars) of a particular film who are described as the 'vehicles' for the film's genre, as they assist in fulfilling the demands, codes and conventions for the genre. They are, in effect, the tool through which the narrative and iconography of the genre are expressed. Therefore in order to classify a particular film into a genre, it is suggested that an analysis is required of the technical ways in which the film is produced, the way in which the story is told, the look of the film and the way in which the actors tell the story. It is within this study that this fourth component of genre is analysed. It is the stars, or more specifically, the characters the stars portray that have been analysed and compared to determine if any differences are apparent in how masculinity is represented within and across the romantic comedy and action genres.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that genres are not stagnant, as they change with time. Attempts are made in some films to combine elements of different genres to make new ones, or some genres evolve adding new elements to offer audiences a different perspective on the genre (Dick 2002:119; Bordwell & Thompson 2001:96; Hayward 2000:171). Film genre is explained by Tarancón (2010:14) as a combination of repetition and difference. For example, Hollywood cinema is often labelled as genre cinema (because of the formulaic, conservative and repetitive styles used in Hollywood film) while independent or art house films (characteristics being creative, radical and innovative) are considered to fall outside of genre, subverting genre (Jancovich 2000:26). Genre films are recognised by audiences because of the highly formulaic, repetitive characteristics associated with each type of genre. However, attempts will be made to be innovative within films by bringing in new elements that audiences will understand by relying on their knowledge learnt through previous films of that same genre (Tarancón 2010:14). These new elements, Bordwell and Thompson (2001:99) argue, could be a reflection of social trends. These social trends could then be affecting the representations expressed through films, and an analysis thereof could offer some indication as to what is happening in society at this moment.

More specifically, by studying film genres one can get an indication as to what

current ideologies are being perpetuated in media through the representations of masculinity. If these representations across genres are inconsistent perhaps this could be a contributing factor to the crisis of masculinity (as discussed in Chapter 3) said to be prevalent among men at the moment. The relevance of looking at film and film genres for this kind of information being that, as previously stated, masculinity is a construct that is said to be learnt through social interactions as well as social artefacts like film. Within this chapter is a discussion of film, genre and the characters portrayed in them, with particular focus on the romantic comedy and action genres, and the ways in which these genres are arguably gendered to particular audiences.

4.2 GENRE THEORY

Originating from the French word for 'kind' or 'class' the term genre is used to denote the process of referring to different texts (Chandler 1997) and was introduced into Anglo-Saxon film in the 1960's (Hayward 2000:165). Schatz (2004:691) explains the difference between film genre and genre film; where a film genre is a tacit understanding, by the audience from the filmmaker, of what can be expected from a genre, a genre film is a film that fulfils those expectations. The practice of classifying texts into different genres, however, is theoretically difficult as genre theorists argue different definitions and characteristics for the construct (Jancovich 2000; Chandler 1997). As a textual analysis is going to be undertaken with a comparison between two genres, the romantic comedy and the action genres, it is therefore relevant to examine the complexities discussed with regards to genre analysis.

Hill (2008:436) contends that there are two major phases of genre theory that are distinctively binary as the film text itself went from being studied as a singular generic entity (in the 1970's and 80's), to being studied in relation to the audience, fans, critics and reviewers watching the film (from the 1990's onwards). The first of these two phases (genre-as-contract) is a structuralist approach centred on a contract between film producers and consumers. The film text would be analysed with regards to the semantic and syntactic elements in order to specify the genre to which it belongs. The second phase (genre-as-discourse), however, is a post-structuralist approach where the genre of the film text is a matter of competing discourse between

viewers of the text. It is here that the film text is decentred as an object of analysis, with focus shifting rather to the generic discourse of audiences, theorists and film reviewers (Hill 2008:436-439). These two phases can then be segmented further using the three types of classification, Jancovich (2000) states, which are argued for and used by, different theorists.

4.2.1 Audience classification of genre

The first classification method discussed by Jancovich (2000:24-25) is aligned to the post-structuralist approach to genre theory as it is argued that genres are culturally constructed by the audience, if the audience classifies a film as an action, comedy, drama or musical then that is its classification. This is akin to what Altman (2004:682-683) refers to as the ritual approach to genre studies, where it is argued that Hollywood filmmakers' ultimate goal is to satisfy the needs of the audience as consumers, and as such the audience is able to designate the kinds of films they want to see.

Genre is then a reinforcement of the expectations and desires of the audience so as to entice the audience (as consumers) to keep coming back for more. If this is the case, then the characters in film would be represented in such a way as to fulfil certain generic requirements as set out by the audience. This, however, could mean that the male protagonists are less a reflection of society and more an amalgamation of audience expectations. This is similar to the ideas expressed within hermeneutic theory, where it is argued that audiences approach media text with certain pre-conceptions which they use to make sense of the text (Barker 2000:271). Audiences then bring with them certain understandings of masculinity when viewing a film; these same understandings are used by film makers so as to meet audience expectations. Applying this to genre studies, perhaps then audiences have different expectations for the leading men, across genres. If comparing male protagonists across genres results in recognisably different representations, it could be an indication that film makers have recognised that audiences expect their leading men to look and behave differently depending on the genre of the film.

Chandler (1997) discusses how genre theorists like Robert Hodge, Gunther Kress and Andrew Tudor, who have looked at genre theory from a social semiotic perspective, maintain that a genre can only be defined by what individuals as a social group believe that genre to be, and will only continue to exist if the audience declares and enforces the rules that constitute that genre. The problem with this particular classification of genre's can be taken from Jancovich (2000:25) who discusses how even self-identified fans of the horror and science fiction genres are unable to formulate a 'collective belief' as to which films belong to which genre. One particular example used by Jancovich (2000) to exemplify the difficulty in distinguishing what characterises the horror and science fiction genres is the film *Alien* (1979). A story of an alien monster, hunting and killing humans on a space ship has fans arguing over whether or not the film is a horror that just happens to be set in space and has a multitude of special effects, or a science fiction film (because of the special effects) whose characters it just so happens are eliminated in a gruesome 'horror film' like manner. A contributing factor to this problem is the fact that genre's are not generically pure; they are mutable, constantly changing and 'borrowing' from other genres thereby changing the codes and conventions that once were used for classification (Haywood 2000:167).

4.2.2 Semantic classification of genre

The changing codes and conventions for the horror and science fiction genres in the above example, are dealing specifically with the semantics of the two films; which is the second method of classification discussed by Jancovich and can be aligned with the structuralist approach to genre theory. Some theorists argue that genre categories should be defined by the films semantics: common traits, characters, attitudes, locations, sets, or shots that are characteristic to a specific genre (Schatz 2004:691; Jancovich 2000:24-25). Audiences of film and television, Visch and Tan (2007:59) declare, are able to categorise movies and programmes quickly and without much effort when quickly going through numerous television channels. A contributing factor to this is that there are certain semantic criteria that each production needs to include in order to be categorised within any particular genre.

Trbic (2007:106) identifies the following areas that assist in the classification of film: plot, characters, opening and closing sequences, point of view, camera, editing, sound (including music), costumes, lighting, props and organisation of time. Focusing primarily on the use of characters as a method of classification of genres; this leads one to think that there must be differences across genres. If during genre classification one is to use the characters (the male protagonist being one of those characters) to identify the genre, there must be distinctive differences between the male leading characters so that audiences can easily identify the genre of the film. With regards to this study, once again, an analysis of masculinity within the films of the same genre should show recognisable differences when compared to the masculinity represented in the films from the second genre. However, as mentioned above, one can already foresee problems with the above classification method as, like with the horror and science fiction genres, there is some overlap in the semantics used by each genre. Also, as far as clarification of genre is concerned, the use of semantics to classify a film into a specific genre is problematic as this does not take into account the sub-genres in which the film might be placed (Hayward 2000:167). A range of films from different sub-genres may share all the same semantic characteristics of the main genre, but will be different in that the over-riding themes of the movies will be different. This leads to the final of the three methods of classification methods discussed by Jancovich (2000:24-25).

4.2.3 Syntactic classification of genre

The third classification method is a syntactic approach which is defined by the structural relationships (and as such can also be aligned with the structural approach) between elements that carry thematic and social meaning (Jancovich 2000:24-25). The syntactic approach, as described by Altman (2004:684), allows for the isolation of a genre's specific-meaning bearing structures. Rubinfeld (2001:xviii) makes use of film scholar, Barry Keith Grant's definition of genre which is based on the assumption that genres are a system of conventions that are based on cultural values. Tarancón (2010:14) contends that genre is more complicated than just a matter of classification but is rather a matter of communication and meaning, a critical category that assists audiences to cope with unrecognised social challenges. As Grant (2007:6) states, "whether they are set in the past or in the future, on the mean streets of New

York, or long ago in a galaxy far away, genre movies are always about the time and place in which they are made”.

The idea that genres are carriers of sociological meaning can be understood in two different ways. Firstly, there is the ideological approach to genre studies which, as Altman (2004:683) discusses, argues that genres are set of generalised and identifiable structures through which Hollywood (filmmakers) manipulate the audience to its own business and political interests. So ideological messages expressed through the film are those belonging to the filmmaker and the film making industry.

The second viewpoint has to do with the ideological standpoint of society in general. Chandler (1997) discusses the possibility that genres are developed by the social conditions of the time and are therefore able to draw attention to crucial ideological issues and assist in shaping the values of the audience. It is for this reason that a comparison between genres is currently being undertaken. If each genre has its own ideological standpoint, a textual analysis would be the first step in identifying these beliefs. This is particularly important considering different genres are targeted at different segments of society. With regards to this study, a textual analysis of the representations of masculinity will give an indication as to how film producers believe society views masculinity, and could be an indication as to how film producers use different understandings of masculinity to segment their audience and their films (according to who the film’s target audience is). Furthermore, if the representations of masculinity are different across genres and are inspired by differing sociological understandings of the construct, it could be indicative of the increasing expectations placed on men in society which, as already discussed, is leading to the crisis of masculinity.

As Hayward (2000:168) explains it, genres are a “barometer of the social and cultural concerns of cinema-going audiences”. Rubinfeld (2001:xix) supports this view, arguing that a genre is more than just “a group of popular stories consisting of well-known characters, formulaic plots, repetitious themes, and satisfying resolutions”. He continues by stating that a genre does more than entertain an audience; they imitate and create world views that have implications for the audience

both socially and politically. Perhaps the first step in identifying these implications is determining what views are being expressed to audiences; how are these world views being imitated and created? In this study, the masculinity of the male protagonists is being textually analysed to determine firstly how masculinity is being represented in the sample of popular American films, and secondly if these representations in the action film and romantic comedy genres, with their distinct styles and conventions are different.

Audiences are drawn to, expect, and can identify certain elements within films (semantics) that they associate with certain genres. However, at the same time, it is required that the film be contemporary, and make use of current social and political trends (syntactic) to keep the audiences entertained and coming back for more from that genre. Basinger (2001:109) asserts that as much as genre's have to fulfil certain criteria and stay within certain frameworks in order to be classified within any particular genre, in order to remain popular, they have to adapt and change. "To be a true genre that lives and is repeated, a story must be able to represent new issues without losing the basic pattern that inspired its popularity in the first place. After it undergoes the process of presumed accumulative meaning it must evolve" (Basinger 2003:110). Where Altman (2004:685) argues that the syntactic and semantic methods of genre analysis are complimentary and should be used together, it is argued by Hayward (2000:166) that genre classification should be understood as a tripartite process of production, marketing and consumption and as such genres are not static; transforming for economic, technological and consumption reasons. In order to classify a film to a particular genre, it is important to take all elements of the film process into consideration (Hayward 2000:166).

Perhaps then a more inclusive method of genre classification is possible taking all elements into consideration: semantics, syntax (production) and audience discourse (consumption). Not only should one be cataloguing those elements that are characteristic of a particular genre, but also to whom the film was marketed, and how the audiences themselves are classifying the film. When a genre becomes successful, it is because the film is not only appealing to the audiences' ideal; it is also fitting with the Hollywood enterprise (Altman 2004:688). Although a more inclusive approach to genre analysis has been suggested, it is beyond the scope of this particular

study to incorporate all three approaches in the analysis because the analysis is purely textual and audience perspective will not be questioned. Therefore, the masculinity of the male protagonists will be discussed while taking only the following under consideration; what semantic criteria are used to ensure the male protagonist fits with the generic requirements for the film (semantics), and the masculinity of the male protagonist as an indication of current gender sociological issues (syntactic). The word current is used because, as is discussed in the following section, the representations of masculinity have changed over time and are often a reflection of the lived experiences of men in society at any given point in time.

4.3 MASCULINITY IN FILM AS A REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL ‘REALITY’

As this study of masculinity within and across the romantic comedy and action genres will be making use of the syntactic approach to genre classification, it is also important to take into consideration that as time goes by so do the challenges faced by society. For example, overtime the roles of men in society have changed; therefore the representations of men in film would have changed. This can be explained with the concept of thematic myths, which are the ideological concerns of a particular genre. Similar to differing cultures, each genre has a different set of conventions to make sense of society and reflect ‘reality’ (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:28). As an example of thematic myth, Benshoff and Griffin (2009:105) state that the thematic myth of the western genre could arguably be about bringing civilisation to the Western wilderness. The strong individual protagonist uses righteous violence to protect the American way by taming the indigenous people of the western frontier, thereby nullifying any threat to the expansion of American civilisation. The thematic myth of the film is what will make a genre relevant or irrelevant depending on its significance to the social concerns audiences are experiencing at the time.

In a discussion of action films, Jones (2006:110) explains how action films often reflect the anxiety of empire and masculinity. Using the film *Gladiator* (2000) as an example, Jones (2006:110) describes the film as an expression of masculine and imperial American. The underlying ideology of the storyline is that of a hard-working man who has lost everything (his wife, son and home) for reasons beyond his control

yet still remains honourable with the result being that he receives justice for his family. The underlying ideologies perpetuated within the storylines of most films are often relevant to happenings within society and as a result change as society changes. If a film's thematic myth is valid to the lived experience of the audience and correlates with their sociological interests, the film (and genre) will be successful (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:28). This concurs with Basinger (2001:109) who, as stated above, explained that in order for films to remain popular they have to adapt.

It stands to reason then that genres will change with time, as the sociological interests of the audience changes. A current example of this can be seen with the number of films released after the September 11 attacks in the United States. Films like *War, Inc.* (2008), *Syriana* (2005), *Jarhead* (2005), *Body of Lies* (2008) and *Brothers* (2009) (to name a few) are all films that have themes based on war; some being specific to the war in the Middle East, some reflecting on the politics of war, while some deal with experiences of soldiers during war time (an issue of concern during this period). What Ayers (2008:45) explains, is that as one examines film and the era of its release, one can begin to see the way in which the characters in film are reflective of the social and political issues of the time. Benshoff and Griffin (2009:28) explain how there is a feedback loop between the audience and the producers of film, with certain genre's 'dying out' when the thematic myth is no longer relevant.

Historians can, when studying genres, learn about the culture that produced them (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:28). As an example of this Bordwell and Thompson (2001:100) make use of the 'reflectionist' approach to genre analysis and genre innovations and makes use of the film *Aliens* (1986) to explain the theory. The film's premise is that of an alien that boards a mining ship in space and proceeds to inseminate its young into the onboard crew members, thereby killing them. The female protagonist, Ripley, spends the majority of the film fending off attacks from the alien, and eventually begins to hunt down the alien in order to survive. Ripley, is argued to be a reflection of the 1970's Women's Movement as she epitomises the duality of independent warrior as she defends herself and others from the alien, and nurturing care giver (positive traits considered fundamental to femininity) as she takes on the role of protector of a young girl whose family was killed by the alien (Bordwell & Thompson 2001:100).

With regards to masculinity in film, Clarke (2006:19) asserts that the discourse within Vietnamese War films is indicative of the ideals assigned to masculinity at any given point over the last 30 years. Clarke (2006:22) reports that from the 1980's to 2000 the portrayal of male leadership characteristics changed from that of something that should be trained and instilled in men, to something that is inherent in men. Clarke (2006:22) compares the film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) to *Tigerland* (2000) to exemplify how in the 1980's there was an attempt to re-masculinise men in society by portraying the leadership qualities of the characters in films like *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) as something that they could learn to have; this re-masculinisation being a consequence of the confusion about the war, as well as a reaction against feminism that was building in popularity at the time. Connell (1993:599) states that in 1970's and 1980's the popular belief was that masculinity was something that could be learnt from role models. In the film *Tigerland* (2000), however, these same qualities were portrayed as something inherent, which Clarke (2006:22) argues indicates that the concept of re-masculinisation had not been successful and therefore had disappeared and replaced with the idea of 'natural heroes' with natural abilities that men understood and used. If trends or social changes are being used to develop characters; previous and current representations of masculinity by male protagonists should be analysed in order to determine what is being represented through leading men.

4.3.1 Character representations as social constructions

Benshoff and Griffin (2009:426) define representations as the process of presenting an image of something in order to tell a story or communicate an idea. Films are argued to be a 'window on the world' and thereby reflecting 'reality'; however, the selection of representations is complex and selective and arguably reinforcing, according to feminist theory, the values of a patriarchal society (Nelmes 1999:273). Lacey (2009:147), in contrast, argues that within media studies it would be naive to think that the world has no effect on meaning. It is for this reason that Lacey (2009:147) supports the constructionist approach to representation; explaining that representations in the media are able to construct meaning, but this meaning is based on some form of material reality. This is supported by Barker's (2000:390) definition of representation as he states that representation is the depiction of another object or practice from the 'real' world, and these representations are constitutive of culture,

meaning and knowledge. Jones (1999:308) explains that representation is a social process that takes place as an interaction between the reader of the text and the text itself. It is a production of signs that reflect ideas and attitudes. These representations can be attributed to the organisation of editing, *mise-en-scène*, narrative patterns, and sound (Jones 1999:308). Film texts are then structured in a specific manner, and the representations being expressed are viewed and understood by the audience when making sense of the combination of elements that constitute the structure of the film.

Igartua (2010:368) argues that individuals will experience more enjoyment from a film, and are more severely affected cognitively and affectively if they identify with a particular character. Therefore it is important to analyse and understand the different characters portrayed in film so as to begin to understand how representations of masculinity are constructed by the medium of film. This understanding could then lead to future research on the effects these characters may have on the audience. The importance of studying the characters in film is reiterated in Cohen's (2001) research of audience identification with characters. Cohen (2001:246) explains that identification with television and film characters plays an important contribution to the development of self-identity; which is defined as an individual's perception of them self and how they think others perceive them. Cohen (2001:246) explains this by stating that individuals, through viewing media, are able to experience social reality from different perspectives, which then assists individuals in developing their own identity and social attitudes. What ideas then are being communicated by male lead characters in recent releases of the romantic comedy and action genres? In order to answer this question, one would first have to determine what forms of masculinity these representations are taking through the male characters in film. Characterisation can be described as those characters in films that are similar in type with regards to roles, personal qualities, motivations, goals and behaviour and are sometimes stereotypical in nature (Chandler 1997).

Masculinity has been a subject of much discussion with regards to television and film, particularly with the changing shape of the male form and masculinity (Ruddell 2007:499). Over the last 60 years there have been changes in the lived realities of men in westernised society, all of which it can be argued, have been mirrored in the changing thematic myths of film and the protagonists therein.

Benshoff and Griffin (2009:259) give examples of the kinds of male characterisations in different genres: the lone cowboy bringing justice in the western genre; the violent criminal success seeker in gangster films; and the man dealing with his morals under the hardship of battle in war films. Lacey (2009:167-172) illustrates the evolution of the representation of masculinity in film, using one story within one genre (the western) re-made 50 years apart. *3:10 to Yuma* (1957; 2007); was a film first released in 1957 and represented the male protagonist as a family man struggling to prove his 'manhood' to his wife. Remade in 2007, the film depicts the male protagonist as having to defend his 'manhood' to his son. This change is attributed to a 21st century, post 9/11 American need for men to return to 1960's-70's patriarchal values (Lacey 2009:169). A comparative analysis of the representation of masculinity between these two films, Lacey (2009:169) argues, brings to the fore the evolution of masculinity; where once men had to prove their manhood to their wives; they now have to prove it to other men as well. The inference taken from this evolution is that men no longer take masculinity for granted, masculinity is not something that is automatically attributed to all men; they have to prove themselves worthy of it. The evolution, however, spanned over 50 years. During this time different representations of masculinity were expressed across different genres and in different films.

4.3.2 Evolution of the representations of masculinity in film

As explained earlier, as society changed so did the kinds of genres that were popular at any given time, along with the change in genre popularity came a change in how masculinity was presented. For example, during World War II, there was a shift in popularity from the western genre to the war genre which included in it a change in the way in which male characters were portrayed (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:267). No longer were the male protagonists' lone justice seekers; they were men who were expected to change their cocky, streetwise persona's to become team players who suppressed their masculine individuality. A change that reflected the need for young men to become team players with regards to whatever military unit they had been placed in (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:268).

Post World War II saw the advent of film *noir*, a genre depicting the male character; it is argued, as trapped and emasculated by their social situation

(exemplified by films like *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Lady from Shanghai* (1946)). This Benshoff and Griffin (2009:269) state is a reflection of how men felt when coming home from the war to find that women had taken over the previously considered male roles. These women proceeded to fight for their position, wanting to stay within the workforce so as to keep their independence. Grossman (2007:21) explains how demonising the female lead via the film *noir femme-fatale* (the female antagonist characteristic of film *noir*) was a patriarchal necessity in order to re-establish heteronormative masculine ideologies. It was not until the 1970's with films like *Jaw's* (1975), *Rocky* (1976), and *Star Wars* (1977) that 'old-school' masculinity was revisited and the classical Hollywood genres, where women were passive love interests and men were strong action heroes, were once again popular (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:287).

These representations of action hero masculinity continued and evolved into the 'hardbody' films of the 1980's. In his analysis of the action films of the 1980's and 1990's Ayers (2008:45) explains how the male lead characters in what he refers to as 'hardbody' action films of the era were directly reflected from the ideals of masculinity espoused by the Reagan administration. President Ronald Reagan, himself an actor before turning to politics, capitalised on his image of a tough talking cowboy to gain favour with voters and win the presidency (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:287). Ayers (2008:45) explains that the male lead characters in the action films of the 80's were used to interrogate the crisis of masculinity by negotiating the active/male and passive/female traits of the heroes. The active/male traits being those 'sold' to the public, and advocated by, the then president of the United States.

Ayers (2008:57) continues by explaining how action films then evolved from being a genre of lone, muscle bound, tough guy lead characters of the 1980's to films, that in the 1990's, incorporated romantic subplots where not only did the lead character save the world he also got the girl, for example, *Titanic* (1997) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). These romantic subplots could be explained by the fact there was a new kind of masculinity being introduced in film during the 1990's. Films from this particular era introduced a masculinity that was represented as kinder, gentler, more sensitive and capable of change from the muscle bound, lone men of the 1980's (Williams, 2004:169; Jeffords 1993:197). Male characters were becoming more

family orientated and less prone to excessive acts of violence on screen. Jeffords (1993:199-200) explains this change with one particular film, *Kindergarten Cop* (1990). Arnold Schwarzenegger, a 'hardbody' action hero of the 1980's, plays John Kimball a character that echoes the transformation of masculinity during that time period. Kimball, at the start of the film, is the epitome of the tough guy police officer that by the end of the film is 'reformed' to a gentle masculine figure that would prefer to be a family man and kindergarten teacher than the tough guy police officer he once was. These representations, Jeffords (1993:1998) argues, were a reflection of the changing ideals of gender as a result of feminism and the civil rights movement of the time.

There is, however, a dichotomy in late 1990's and early 2000's of the kinds of male characters represented in film. Ayers (2008:57) states that in 2000 a range of superhero action films were introduced, which he argues, is a relation to the 'hardbody' film because of the characterisation of the male leads. These characters too, are often lone, muscle bound men on a mission. While Benshoff and Griffin (2009:298) argue these films stay true to the patriarchal ideologies expressed in the 1950's, with the female characters either being damsels in distress (as in 2006's *Superman Returns*), or only a part of a crime fighting ensemble (as in *X-men* (2000) and *The Fantastic Four* (2005)). However, Rubinfeld (2001:149) argues that the male characters of the romantic comedy are, on average, a lot less dominant than those that came before them. Attributing the change to a modification in cultural attitudes about men, Rubinfeld (2001:150) acknowledges that the male characters in the romantic comedy genre are more gentle and loving with audiences drawn less and less to the muscle bound brutes of yesteryear.

Buchbinder (2008:231) refers to a different kind of masculinity growing in popularity and that is represented in a selection of films (most of which are comedic). Films like *There's Something About Mary* (1998), *Mystery Men* (1999), *Meet the Parents* (2000), *American Pie* (1999) and *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004) offers a representation that Buchbinder (2008:243) calls a 'schlemiel' and describes these characters as "inadequately or incompetently masculine male". The definition Buchbinder (2008:229) gives to the term 'schlemiel' only serves to highlight how different these characters are from their action hero counterparts. Depicted as accident

prone and ineffectual, these characters have to undergo frustration and humiliation through embarrassing circumstances as they try to take an active role within the film. The result at the end of each film, however, shows these characters succeeding in their goals, whether it is 'getting the girl' or gaining approval from themselves or others. These representations are, it could be argued, undermining conservative norms of hegemonic masculinity thereby offering an acceptable discourse of masculinity for men who do not feel they fit with traditional definitions of the construct (Buchbinder 2008:243).

Linking the above dichotomy back to the discussion of the syntactic approach to genre analysis the relevance of this study becomes evident. If there are differing representations of masculinity being expressed through film, what does this infer about what is happening in society at the moment with regards to masculine ideologies? Although this study will not be addressing the social impact on these representations, it is a starting point for future studies, where the similarities and differences of character representations can be analysed with what masculinity is understood to be in society at the time. Transferability of knowledge is expected from research done within the interpretivist paradigm (Greene 1990:236), although this study will be context specific (another expectation from interpretivist research) it is important that other researchers are able to use elements of the findings from this study to further their own research goals. This study is the first step in this process; by determining the kinds of representations that are currently being presented, and secondly the extreme to which these representations are differing across genres, further research would be able to compare and contrast these findings with current issues in society. The premise of this study is based on the understanding that if societies understanding and expectations of men are being reflected in film, then findings of contradictory representations could either be the result of, or a contributing factor to, the crisis of masculinity. Taking into consideration that genres are produced for specific types of audiences, and often targeted at specifically either male or female audiences, it is assumed that the representations of masculinity would differ across genres.

4.4 MEN'S VS WOMEN'S FILM

Barker (2000:277) states that men and women have different viewing styles, when it comes to media texts. Men tend to have a more attentive viewing style than women and as such different media texts are preferred by the two genders. Harris, Hoekstra, Scott, Sanborn, Dodds, and Brandenburg (2004:259) state that violent films are stereotypically associated with men, while romance films are stereotypically associated with women. Even the gender of the actors are associated with specific genres, as Williams (2004:170) implies that the action genre is a 'foreign genre' for female actors and comedy or softer, character focused drama are foreign to male actors. Tasker (2004:9) also states that the action film is a masculine arena, by stating that they are films created by men, about men, for men.

Hall (2006:260) asserts that when producing media texts, the producers have certain assumptions about the audience, and it is these assumptions that are implicit in the different genre categories. As such different genres are often targeted at either male or female viewers. Furthermore Hayward (2000:215) explains that from very early on, back in the early 1900's when film venues were in departments stores, film goers were not considered as just audience members, but were considered as consumers as well. Therefore, films were intentionally produced for specific markets, two such markets being the female audience and the male audience. Grant (2007:80) reiterates this view stating that generally action genre films are addressed to male audiences while musicals and romance films are marketed to female audience members.

Applying this to this study; if the male protagonist was created as an expression of the sociological conditions of the time, and was created in such a way as to fulfil the requirements of the genre and the expectations of the audience, with the desired audience being marketed as either male or female, then the representations of masculinity should differ across genres. For example, masculine genres are often considered to be war films and westerns, while musicals and soap operas are regarded as feminine genres (Chandler 1997). Often films that depict relations between men, or where there is a struggle between a hero (gender not relevant) and a male villain are considered "male genres" (Neale 1993:16). Rubinfield (2001:xiv) contends that the

majority of the audience of romantic comedies are women and attributes the popularity of these films amongst female audiences to the stories told in their childhood. Rubinfeld (2001:xiv) likens the storylines of romantic comedies to those of the fairy tales (*Cinderella*, *The Frog Prince*) shared by parents with their daughters during the parent/child bonding moment of pre-bed time stories.

Although this study is not research done on the audience's perspective of the sample of films, it is important to note that the two genres are gendered with male and female audiences having specific proclivities towards either genre. A possible reason for these proclivities, Hall (2007:260-261) postulates, is that audiences affiliate themselves with certain media in order to be seen as having a certain lifestyle or attitude. As discussed above, genres are created with the sociological interests of the audience influencing the conventions of the genre. If the sociological interests of men and women are different, then this could be a possible explanation as to why the male protagonists across the two genres are different. Hall's (2007:260-261) point is that individuals are judged based on the media texts that they consume. Using Uses and Gratifications theory, Hall contends that audiences will associate themselves with certain media in order to project a certain image of the self or to reinforce their own sense of identity or reinforce their membership in certain social groups. For example, Hall's (2006:269) research indicates that men would lower their expectations of someone when discovering that the individual liked romance films, whereas women's expectations of that individual would increase. It could be argued then that men would not only avoid the romance genre, but will look unfavourably on other men who do admit to watching the genre so as to reinforce their membership in the male social group and to reinforce their own male self identity.

Rubinfeld (2001:xiv) highlights that there are male audience members of the romantic comedy, with some films scoring well with male audience members. These films, it can be argued, have elements of the storyline that are more inclined to the male audience. This is possibly because of the type of 'gross out' humour that is popular with teenage males (Buchbinder 2008:239) and expected from directors of the film, Peter and Bobby Farrelly. Benshoff and Griffin (2009:300) state these films are a subset of the comedy genre and are referred to as 'dumb white guy' comedies. The male characters in these films are represented as undermining and satirising

hegemonic masculinity. They show that 'normal' men cannot live up to the ideals of masculine prowess exemplified in films like *Troy* (2004) and *300* (2006). The romantic comedies produced in the late 1990's that were popular with both male and female audiences then included elements of both the 'dumb white guy' film, as well as elements of heterosexual romance (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:300). Films like *There's Something About Mary* (1998) and *Jerry Maguire* (1996) in the 1990's proved popular with male audiences of different ages; with *There's Something About Mary* (1998) being particularly popular with teenage boys (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:307; Buchbinder 2008:239).

While in *Jerry Maguire* (1996), the story is told from Tom Cruise's character's point of view which would have possibly attracted interest from the male audience, not only because of his supposedly masculine career as a sports agent, but also because the character was reportedly based on 'real-life' sports agent Leigh Steinberg. It could be argued then that the romantic comedy genre is not just for women, if the leading men have certain attributes then male audiences will be more willing, it seems, to view the film. An analysis of the male characters in the romantic comedy, and comparing this analysis with one done on the leading men of action films, could help in identifying these attributes. What characteristics of the male protagonists in action films are absent in the characteristics of the male protagonists in the romantic comedy films? Again, it is important to note that this study will not be taking into consideration the audiences' point of view; however, by undertaking a textual analysis, possible differences in the characters could become evident which could lead to further research that can focus on audience perception. In order to appropriately analyse the male characters in the sample of films, according to the genres to which they belong, the romantic comedy and action genres require definition with a discussion of the conventional characteristics of these genres.

4.4.1 The romantic comedy

The romantic comedy has been one of the most enduring genres coming out of Hollywood, outlasting once popular genres like the western and the musical (Rubinfeld 2001:xiv). The romantic comedy genre, Neale (1992:286) argues, is one of 'coupledom', compatibility and romance; which is probably the reason that the genre

has become popularly known as a 'date night' movie, just as much as the horror genre is considered a cultural rite of passage for teenage males (Jancovich 2000:33). Romantic comedies are defined by the social conditions, practices and discourses that characterise romantic heterosexual relationships (Neale 1992:286). This is reiterated in the definition of a romantic comedy taken from Rubinfield (2001:70) who lists four specific criteria of the dominant structural form of the genre. First, there has to be a meeting between a hero and heroine who have the potential of forming a heterosexual romantic relationship; second, there needs to be some sort of internal or external obstacles to the recognition, declaration and ultimate coupling of their love; third, these obstacles need to be overcome; and fourth, a happy ending with either a wedding or at least the promise of wedding. Over and above these criteria, the film, Rubinfield (2001:70) argues, must be from Hollywood, and should have romantic and comedic elements, with the romantic elements outweighing the comedic ones. Quite possibly because of the romantic elements of the plot structure of these films, Benschhoff and Griffin (2009:300) label these films as 'chick flicks'.

As discussed previously genres are always changing so as to not only keep audiences entertained but also because they reflect the sociological issues of the time. As an example of this, one can look at the change to the 'new romance' films of the 1990's as an evolution from the previous 'nervous romance' films, as discussed by Neal (1992). Neal (1992:287) discusses four features that are characteristic of what he calls 'new romance' films; 'new romance' being the cycle of romantic comedies being released in the 1990's. Before the introduction of these new romance films, Neal (1992:286) argues that there were a number of romantic comedies referred to as 'nervous romance' films that had storylines questioning the previous ideological certainty that sex and commitment and marriage were synonymous with one another. The first feature of the 'new romance', however, was a distancing from these ideals regarding heterosexual relationships (Neal 1992:297). This first feature is then closely related to the second feature, where the storylines introduced in 'new romance' film ultimately featured characters that, by the end of the film, were always conforming to 'old fashioned', 'traditional', pre-nervous romance conventions of coupledness (Neal 1992:297). For example, the film *You've Got Mail* (1998) features two characters who, although living in different cities and dealing with very different relationship problems of their own, meet in a romantic scene atop the Empire State building and

ultimately fall in love. The lead female character falls in love with the leading male character because of his 'traditional' (pre-nervous romance) ideals of love, sex, commitment and marriage.

The third feature stated by Neal (1992:295) is that all 'new romance' films included some sort of "evocation and endorsement of the signs and values of 'old fashioned' romance". For example the reference in *Pretty Women* (1990) to a knight in shining armour saving a princess, or the poetic inclination of the hero in the film *Roxanne* (1987). The final feature discussed by Neal (1992:293) is that of a transformation of the main character from eccentric and or neurotic to that of a conventional rational character. This transformation, it is argued, begins to take place on meeting the hero or heroine of the story. This is exemplified in the film *One Fine Day* (1996) where the female lead character, who comes across as somewhat neurotic and overwhelmed by being a single mother, after meeting the lead male character, finds a new strength in herself and her abilities to be a working mom. Although these features are separable, they do however, interact, support and reinforce one another (Neale 1992:294).

Benshoff and Griffin (2009:293) argue that although the female leads in the romantic comedies of the 1990's have changed from those in the past, the roles allocated to male and female characters still had to adhere to the patriarchal system Hollywood was founded on. This is despite the introduction of a number of female directors from the 1980's onwards. Penny Marshall, Diane Keaton, Barbara Streisand and Jodie Foster are just some of the female directors who began their directing careers in the late 1980's and 1990's (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:288-292). In contrast, Rubinfeld (2001:150-151) has also identified changes in plot structure and characterisation in romantic comedies. In his comparison of films released in the 1970's to those released in the late 1990's early 2000's, Rubinfeld (2001:150) states that the female protagonists are more economically and sexually liberated, are typically better educated and wealthier, and are not ashamed of their minds or bodies; characteristics typical of their 1970's counterparts. This means then that the male protagonists have also undergone changes since the 1970's. Rubinfeld (2001:151) explains that the leading men in these later films are, on average, less dominant and are based on a gentler masculine ideology. Gentle, yet not weak, strong, yet not cruel,

loving and good, and those men who were unable to love in the past are encouraged to learn to love now as they will be better off for it such as in *Ghost* (1990), *Pretty Woman* (1990) and *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997).

If there are changes in genre, and these changes are a reflection of the sociological issues of the time, how are the leading men of current romantic comedies being represented? Shugart (2008) and Harrison (2008) have both stated that there have been changes to the lived realities of men arguing that masculinity has become a commodity and men are repositioning themselves as consumers of fashion and styling products which has brought with it the objectification of the male form that is more pervasive and significant than in previous years. Have these changes then permeated into the characterisations of the male leading men of current romantic comedies? If so, have these same changes permeated into other genres, where stereotypically, the leading men are expected to be more macho, more aggressive, more hyper-masculine; such as in the action genre?

4.4.2 The action film

Action films are described as being a complex interaction of narrative, spectacle and masculinity with many, for the last 30 years, being some of Hollywood's top box office successes both within America and internationally (Ayers 2008:41). There are a number of characteristics that Neale (2004:71) explains are synonymous with films from the action genre, some of which include: spectacular physical action sequences, narrative structures involving fights, chases and explosions, and an emphasis on athletic feats and stunts.

Possibly the simplest way to define the action film is to describe some of the semantic characteristics of the genre, particularly the plot structure and types of characters presented. The basic plot structure of the action film, as explained by Ayers (2008) is that at the beginning of the film a hero is introduced, following which an event is triggered (ordinarily a calamity of some sort) which requires intervention. This calamity can be described as the triggering event that causes a disruption to the initial equilibrium of the narrative. Rowe (1999:118) explains that the narrative structure of many action films involves a disruption of equilibrium which can be

either an external threat (such as the arrival of the antagonist *Die Hard* (1988)), or the protagonists own personal goal (for example The Terminator's drive to save the world by saving a young Jon Connor in *The Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991)). The bulk of the film has audiences witnessing how the hero must overcome an array of obstacles in order prevent further calamities and to regain equilibrium (Ayers 2008; Rowe 1999:119). The opposition to equilibrium, Rowe (1999:119) explains, is the villain and the greater the challenge for the hero to restore equilibrium the greater the ultimate triumph for the hero. The film then closes with the hero saving the day; proving not only his own personal worth, but also the worth of whatever he was tasked to save (Ayers 2008). Often there will be a temporary equilibrium the villain is perceived to be defeated, only for the villain to return in a sequel where once again the hero's equilibrium is disrupted with new challenges to deal with (Rowe 1999:119).

With regards to the characters within action films, the hero often chooses violence over negotiation, and physical action rather than dramatic monologues (Buchbinder 2008:243). The leading character in action films, or rather, the action hero of a film, is constructed almost exclusively through his physicality, with bodily displays being a characteristic of the action genre (Tasker 1993:35). Benschhoff and Griffin (2009:259) describe the male protagonists of action films as becoming mythic masculine heroes on a journey or quest. This is reiterated by Ayers (2008:41) discussion of the 'hardbody' film which were prevalent in the 1980's and 1990's. The 'hardbody' film follows the same plot structure described above but places particular emphasis on the physique of the hero with scenes explicitly displaying the protagonist's body within sequences of martial arts or choreographed fighting. The heroes' in these types of films are referred to as 'macho' men engaged in various feats of heroism; and are generally played by body-builder type actors. Neal (2004:71) discusses the emphasis on bodies in action film, with particular reference to the emphasis on the 'hyperbolic bodies' and physical skills of actors like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis and Dolph Lundgren, in action films. While fitting formally within the traditional Hollywood action/adventure genre 'hardbody' films are also notable for depicting the unclothed male form, excessive use of violence and hyperbolic action sequences (Ayers 2008:41).

It could be argued that the depictions of the unclothed male form is fitting with

Shugart's (2008) statement that the male body has become an object to be viewed and admired by audiences. Harrison (2008:56) argued that changes in the male aesthetic began in the 1980's when the fashion industry specifically started targeting the male consumer. However, there is an overlap in this time frame. At the same time as men were being targeted as consumers of fashion, the 'hardbody' film was offering audiences a view of a supposedly 'perfect' body. A body that could withstand whatever punishment that was inflicted on it, and still be successful in the tasks placed before it. By looking at the presence of the naked male figure in film in opposition to the same occurrences of women in film, one can begin to understand and decipher the kinds of messages presented to the audience. Benshoff and Griffin (2009:254) identify the difference in female and male nudity in film, explaining that, generally, when female characters undress it is to stand passively before the camera; while the undressing of male characters is either during or followed by an action sequence.

Contrary to the argument of Benshoff and Griffin, O'Day (2004:203) argues that within action films, both the male and female forms are objects of visual spectacle. What O'Day (2004:203) explains is that in patriarchy the assumption is that men look at women, and women are objects to be looked at. Within action films, however, it is both the male and female action heroes that are being put on display. In action films then, irrespective of the action hero's gender, he or she fulfils an active and passive role; actively participating in the action, but at the same time being made passive by having their bodies put on visual display. The aesthetics of the male form are then admired just as much as those of the female form. How does this affect the masculinity of the character if he is being made a passive object being admired for his physical appearance? If physical objectification is ordinarily the realm of female characters, perhaps the hyper-masculine characteristics of male action heroes are an attempt to compensate for the passivity imposed on them by the objectification of their visual form.

The male body is represented as something to admire, not only for its aesthetic value but also for what it can do, its ability to take and give out punishment. What Jones (2006:111) argues is that the representation of men as physically strong, as leaders, as courageous and honourable gratifies both men and women who prefer a conservative notion of gender politics. Jones (2006:111) is referring to the film

Gladiator (2000). The protagonist, Maximus, is the embodiment of these characteristics while the antagonist, Commodus, is slightly effeminate and has a less-masculine appearance as he is portrayed as concerned with his appearance as only women are stereotypically thought to be. It could be argued that the more effeminate characteristics of the antagonist places emphasis on the conservative notions of masculinity embodied by Maximus thereby ensuring that the audience supports his journey, as opposed to the goals of Commodus. This is counter intuitive when considering that the representations of masculinity in the romantic comedy genre, as described by Rubinfield (2001:151), have less masculine characteristics than their action genre counterparts.

The conservative notion of masculinity as described by Jones (2006) and Ayers (2008) is similar to the description of hyper-masculinity given by Levant and Richmond (2007:131) and Zaitchik and Mosher (1993:230). Hyper-masculine men are, as previously discussed, argued to have characteristics; including, but not limited to, the need to exert control over others through violence, as well as over the self through the appearance of 'toughness'. These characteristics are similar to the characteristics discussed above, in the representations of the male characters in action films. However, have the changes in aesthetic and gender roles of the lived realities of men, permeated into the characters of current action film heroes? Also, if audiences are being offered less masculine leading men from the romantic comedy genre, and this genre is still popular with audiences, are characteristics from these representations manifesting themselves in the representations within action films? If they have, how similar are the representations of masculinity in the action films as compared to those from the romance genre?

4.5 SUMMATION

With a particular focus on the fourth of Hayward's (2000:170) four components of genres, stars, this study is an analysis and comparison of the kinds of representations of masculinity presented to audiences by male protagonists across genres. As previously mentioned the semantic and syntactic elements of genre classification will be taken under consideration to not only enrich the analysis of the data but also assist with the comparison between the genres. As such the following

will be taken under consideration; the male protagonists fit with regards to the generic requirements for the film (semantics), and the masculinity of the male protagonist as an indication of current gender sociological issues (syntactic).

Analysing current film and comparing two currently existing genres is particularly relevant considering each genre is produced with an established set of conventions to make sense of society and reflect 'reality' (Benshoff & Griffin 2009:28). Furthermore, genres are argued to be a reflection of the sociological concerns of the time and are therefore tending to change as the concerns within society change (Dick 2002:119; Bordwell & Thompson 2001:96; Hayward 2000:171). A final consideration with regards to genre is the fact that genres are considered to be gendered with certain films being produced with certain types of audience members as the target market. Stereotypically violent films are considered men's films and any films with a romantic narrative are considered women's film (Harris et al 2004:259).

If genres are adapted and produced based on current sociological issues, then it stands to reason that those genres produced with either a male or female audience as its target market, will be dealing with the sociological issues most pertinent to that market. What will be discussed within this study is a comparison of the representations of masculinity in the romantic comedy and action genres. A possible contributing reason for any differences could then be attributed to the possibility that the films were produced with different sociological issues being represented in either genre. According to the above literature there should be a difference between the two genres with men being represented as more sensitive, caring, gentle and non-violent in romantic comedies and more prone to violence and physical expression in films from the action genre. Differing representations offered to men in contemporary cinema could be a possible contributing factor to a contemporary crisis of masculinity as men are being exposed to numerous and differing gender roles that they may feel they are expected to fulfil. This is similar to Kimmel's (1987) discussion of the crisis of masculinity, where it is argued that at end of the 19th century men had differing opinions to what it means to be masculine

The argument here is twofold; firstly it has been argued that masculinity is a social construction with individuals learning what it means to be a man through social

interactions, including forms of media like film. What individuals are learning from, are the characters on film. Secondly, films genres are created based on the sociological issues within society at the time of production. The characters in the different genres are then one component used to express these sociological issues. The result is a feedback loop. In keeping with the focus of this study, films are offering representations of masculinity that are manifesting society's current concerns with regards to masculinity. While at the same time, individuals are learning what it means to be a man from these representations. Complicating matters further, is the fact that the sub-divisions of film, the different genres, are possibly offering different representations of masculinity in order to fulfil the conventions of the genre. It is therefore important to analyse films to determine what kinds of representations are being offered to individuals across genres, if elements of their identity are going to be defined based on these representations.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to interpret the representation of masculinity in film, a textual analysis is required to ascertain the degree to which the main male characters from the sample of films adhere to the norms of masculinity as set out by Levant and Richmond (2007:132). As the unit of analysis for the study is media texts in the form of films which fall within the romantic comedy and action genres, and that have male lead characters, the sample of films is purposively chosen. This is to ensure that each of the films fit with the required genre and that each film includes a male lead character to analyse. The sample of films includes the following: from the romantic comedy genre, *Just Go With It* (2011), *Killers* (2010), *The Back-up Plan* (2010), and from the action genre, *The Tourist* (2010), *Knight and Day* (2010), *Unstoppable* (2010).

Making use of the purposive sample and working from a qualitative research framework, the research question being addressed within this study asks what differences, if any, are apparent in the representations of masculinity from the male lead character in the purposive sample of action genre films, when compared to the purposive sample of romantic comedy genre films, thereby identifying the masculine characteristics prevalent in each genre type.

In order to answer the above question, two sub-problems need to be addressed. These sub-problems are delineated according to the two chosen genres being analysed. Using the norms as described by Levant and Richmond (2007:132) the representations of masculinity in the sample of films will be analysed to determine the extent to which the male lead characters conform, within each particular genre, to these norms. These representations of masculinity from each genre will then be compared to answer the research question.

Babbie (2005:394) explains that the aim of data analysis is to discover patterns that will assist the research in developing a theoretical understanding of social life. Coding the data and then relating concepts together from these codes will assist the

researcher to develop this understanding. However, Babbie (2005:394) explains that it is necessary to use a refined system to accomplish this goal. Therefore the textual analysis to be undertaken in this study will be completed by combining two processes which will be explained later in this chapter; the first a directed qualitative content analysis as explained by Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115) and the second a three-stage coding process as discussed by Neuman (2007:330).

5.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Babbie (2007:378) describes the purpose of qualitative research as discovering of underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. These patterns and the underlying meaning of social phenomena are analysed through language. Durrheim (1999:43) states that qualitative data is collected in the form of ‘language’, whether it is written, spoken or visuals translated into ‘language’, as opposed to data collected in numerical form within quantitative research. An analysis of media texts is then, by definition, grounded within the interpretivist paradigm, as Crotty (1998:87) states that a characteristic of interpretivism is the study of texts, in order to gain an understanding of the meaning within texts. Texts, in the form of films, are analysed within this study, and are analysed by making notes of the masculine characteristics of the male leading characters. Therefore this study is using ‘language’ not only as a tool to ‘read’ and make sense of the text but also to gather the data so as to interpret the text.

In contrast to qualitative research, quantitative research focuses not on language, but rather condenses what is being studied into quantifiable variables, the purpose of which is to find relationships between variables that can be generalised to explain “general features of social life” (Daly 2003:193). However, quantified variables offer a limited view of human characteristics, and with quantitative research emphasising the absence of personal insight, the understanding gained of the ‘features of social life’ is limited (Daly 2003:193). For example, by converting the presence of masculine characteristics into a numerical format, the scope of both the analysis and findings will be reduced. An in depth analysis of the characteristics used to represent masculinity in film, requires the use of ‘language’ so as to understand, describe and compare the leading men in the purposive sample of films.

Neuman (2003:139) states that qualitative researchers emphasise the human factor within research, and do not attempt to distance themselves from the subject of study. The subjective characteristic of qualitative research is perceived as a criticism of this type of research, as subjectivity is argued to lead to careless data collection, and influences the results with arbitrary personal opinions. Rather, qualitative research makes use of the researcher's "personal insight, feelings and human perspectives to understand social life more fully" (Neuman 2003:141). In order to ensure research integrity, qualitative researchers make use of volumes of detailed notes and descriptions of evidence, all of which is well documented for referencing purposes. The presentation of the data is done in such a way as to show the interlocking details of the evidence, so as to place the reader within the context of the research (Neuman 2003:142). Together the volumes of notes, the presentation of interlocking details, as well as the researcher's personal insight, makes for research full of detailed descriptive evidence.

5.2.1 Basic research

The investigation and development of theories to explain or understand communication phenomena, Du Plooy (2002:48) argues, is the goal of pure or basic communication research. Applying this definition to this study requires the understanding that the media (which include film) are used by individuals when attempting to make sense of their social world (McKee 2001:144). To do this combinations or patterns of symbols are used to share meaning (Crotty 1998:103). The actions and intentions of the characters are communicated via different patterns of symbols which viewers then use to make sense of their own social world. A key assumption of basic research is that the world is patterned and that these patterns can be identified (Patton 2002:224). It is the patterns of symbols used to represent masculinity in different film genres that are identified and analysed within the study, and because these patterns are being communicated to the audience, the study falls within the field of communication and that of basic research.

5.2.2 Exploratory research

Durrheim (1999:39) states that the goal of exploratory research is to make a preliminary investigation into a relatively unknown area of research thereby possibly generating new questions, hypotheses and speculative insights. In order to accomplish this goal an open and flexible approach is required to complete the study (Durrheim 1999:39). Explored in this particular study are fictional character representations using ‘real’ world norms derived from Pleck’s “common constellation of standards and expectations associated with the traditional male role in the Western world” (Levant & Richmond 2007:131). To date, little to no analytical research has been done on masculinity in film that compares representations of masculinity between genres using these ‘real’ world norms. Furthermore, in order to complete the study, a textual analysis coding system is employed to develop themes for each unit of analysis. The construction of the codes and development of the themes require a flexible back and forth process in order to make connections between concepts (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006:289). The open, flexible nature of the methodology used within the research as well as the fact that an analysis is made on a relatively new topic in genre research means that the study can be considered as exploratory.

5.2.3 Descriptive research

Descriptive research, Du Plooy (2002:49) notes, requires that the results of the study include a description of the “characteristics of a phenomena, or relations between a number of variables, as accurately as possible”. The unit of analysis for this study are the male lead characters from each sample film. Once analysed according to Levant et al’s (1992) seven theoretically derived norms of traditional masculinity the sample of male lead characters from each action genre film were compared to the male lead characters from each romantic comedy genre film. This comparison includes a description of the type of masculinity (whether hyper- or hypo- masculine, or both) represented in either genre. Du Plooy (2002:49) also states that it is not enough to just describe the relations between variables; one must also describe the degree of difference between the two variables. Therefore included in the analysis is a description of the identified similarities and differences between the sample of male lead characters from the action genre films and the romantic comedy genre films.

5.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Textual analysis is used to interpret texts. These texts can be television programmes, magazines, advertisements, clothes and even film. The interpretation of the text will assist in making sense of the ways in which particular cultures at a particular time have made sense of the world around them (McKee 2003:1). Texts, McKee (2003:15) argues, are “the only empirical evidence we have of how other people make sense of the world”. It is important to reiterate that this study is not an audience study and is therefore not an attempt to understand how the audience makes sense of their world. Rather, as Larsen (2002:119) explains, textual analysis is used to discover ‘meaning’ in a text, and how that ‘meaning’ has been constructed. A textual analysis of the male lead characters in the romantic comedy and action genres is then an attempt to ascertain how masculinity is made sense of through the construction of meaning and, therefore, understood in the context of contemporary American film. In order to accomplish this and complete the textual analysis of the chosen sample of films, in a thorough and structured manner, the process described in the following sections is used.

5.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The following is an explanation of the population parameters for this study, as well as the sampling process and identification of the unit of analysis.

5.4.1 Population

The target population for a study can be defined as the group of units to which findings from the study can be generalised (Du Plooy 2002:53). Applying this definition to this study with the stated unit of analysis, the target population includes all films made that are categorised within the action and romantic comedy film genres. In order to minimise problems with drawing a sample from such a large population and to ensure that the chosen sample is accessible to the researcher, the population was reduced to an accessible population. Du Plooy (2002:101) suggests the use of an accessible population to ensure ease of access to the population, as well as to minimise cost, time and personnel. Therefore the population has been reduced

from the large general population of action and romantic comedy films to those listed on the website of Ster-Kinekor's advertising company, Cinemark.

5.4.2 Sampling

Cinemark has created a revolving list of the top earning films distributed by Ster-Kinekor throughout South Africa (Cinemark: rolling top 50 [sa]). By using this particular list of films as the population for the study it was assured that the final sample films were screened in South Africa, and will have had a relatively large viewing public. Also, because media texts are used, as opposed to human subjects, the sample is easily accessible through the purchase of digital video discs (DVDs).

The films analysed were drawn from the accessible population as a nonprobability sample. The small accessible population and explorative nature of the study, are characteristics that Du Plooy (2002:113) asserts are befitting of a nonprobability sampling method. Patton (2002:230) states that nonprobability based purposive sampling allows for a sample of information-rich pertinent texts that can be comprehensively studied allowing for in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations. The purposive sampling method allows the researcher to decisively select those texts from the population that fit the parameters required for the study (Du Plooy 2002:114). The resulting sample is therefore six of the top earning films (three action and three romantic comedy films) selected from the previously mentioned accessible population.

As the study is explorative and there is no intention for the research findings to be generalised beyond the chosen sample of films, the sample is small. Patton (2002:245) encourages smaller sample sizes when the information will be gathered from information rich sources. A small sample is also essential in order to complete the required analysis within a limited time frame. Each film has to be watched and re-watched numerous times in order to ensure the identified codes are comprehensively analysed. The final purposive sample size includes six films in total; three of the top earning action genre and three of the top earning romantic comedy genre films which include male lead characters, selected from Ster-Kinekor's list of top earning films to date. As long as the findings are not over generalised and the advantages of in-depth

purposive sampling is maximised, Patton (2002:246) reasons that a small sample size can be an apt sampling choice.

The purposive sample of films was chosen on the 8th of June 2010, and as such were the top grossing films within the action and romantic comedy genres up to this date, according to Cinemark (Cinemark: rolling top 50 [sa]). The films from the action genre are *The Tourist* (2010), *Knight and Day* (2010), *Unstoppable* (2010). Certain films, *Thor* (2011) and *Inception* (2010), also belong to the action genre were not selected as part of the sample because of the fantasy element to their storylines. The three films chosen for the romantic comedy genre include: *Just Go With It* (2011), *Killers* (2010), *The Back-up Plan* (2010). Once again, certain films like *Sex and the City 2* (2010), which is rated higher in the top 50 and could be considered a romantic comedy, was not selected because the film has a predominantly female cast and as such does not have a male lead character to analyse. Therefore the chosen sample of films was carefully selected according to the criteria required for the study.

5.4.3 Unit of analysis

The units of analysis within this study are media texts in the form of films which fall under the romantic comedy and action genres, which have within them, male lead characters.

5.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The method used to conduct the analysis for any study needs to fit with the theoretical and substantive interests of the researcher and the objectives of the study (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:110). It is for this reason that a combination of data collection methods is used for this qualitative analysis. By combining two data collection methods a 'best fit' can be ensured and the resultant analysis will be thorough. Also, some of the limitations of the one study can then be compensated for by the use of the second data collection method thereby increasing the trustworthiness of the research study.

Data collection, for this study, involves the use of Hsieh and Shannon's (2007:115) directed qualitative content analysis and Neuman's (2007:330) three-stage coding process. The combination of these methods should ensure a thorough analysis of the data, as the bulk of the data is reduced into more manageable pieces by coding the data. The methods used to reduce the data into manageable pieces are that of the directed qualitative content analysis and then Neuman's three-stage coding process. The following is an explanation of how these methods are used within the context of this particular study.

The goal of qualitative content analysis is to examine a text and provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being studied within that text (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:111). Placing emphasis on the content and contextual meaning of the text (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:111), qualitative content analysis, provides a more in-depth 'reading' of the text, as opposed to the statistical quantitative content analysis where the final analysis is represented as graphs and tables (Neuman 1997:31).

There are different methods of qualitative content analysis from which a researcher needs to choose. Again, it is important that the right method is chosen to suit both the researcher and the research. For the purpose of this study, the directed content analysis has been chosen in order to allow the researcher to make use of the research done in the literature review and apply it as a guideline during the first stages of the analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115) explain that directed content analysis is different from other methods of qualitative content analysis because the initial stages of the analysis is based on existing theory and is used to validate and extend the existing theory.

As previously mentioned, the second method of textual analysis used for the study is that of Neuman's (2007:330) three stages of coding. Figure 5.1 is a visual representation of how this second method is incorporated into the directed qualitative content analysis explained above. Coding is used in order to identify and retrieve a certain portion of the field (Jensen 2002:246); the field being the raw data, which in this case is the behaviour, interactions, possessions and aesthetics of the male lead characters. The three stages include open coding, axial coding and selective coding

(see fig 5.1). Important to remember is that the completion of these three stages does not happen in a linear progression, but rather are such that they allow for a flexible back-and-forth progression between the data and the analysis (Neuman 2007:330-331). The result being that the final codes have been re-worked to ensure a ‘best fit’ with the data and not just the pre-determined themes from the first stage of the directed qualitative content analysis.

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:65-67) explain that by combining two data collection methods in one study the research process is more likely to have rigor and be considered trustworthy. This is particularly relevant in this study as the two data collection methods being used, each offer different processes that can be undertaken while creating themes, categorising the data, and the final analysis. With regards to reliability, Neuman (2007:119) explains that researchers need to record their observations consistently not vacillating throughout the data capturing and analysis, which can often happen if the research is based on processes that change over time (see section 5.6 for further explanation of validity and reliability in qualitative research). However, as films are finalised products that have already been released to consumers they can be considered a stagnant sample, or rather each film within the sample can be considered as complete and unchanging over time. Furthermore, by combining the two data collection methods and following the steps described later in this chapter the researcher can ensure that each of the films in the sample will be coded, data recorded, and analysed in a stable and consistent manner.

Figure 5.1 is a visual representation of the combination of the directed qualitative content analysis described by Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115) and the three-stage coding process described by Neuman (2007:330). Each of the grey columns represents each of the stages of the qualitative directed content analysis as explained by Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115-116). Column one includes each of the themes used in the analysis which will be explained further, later in this chapter. In column two and three is where Neuman’s (2007:330-332) three coding stages have been inserted in order to enhance the process of analysis of the directed qualitative content analysis. Finally column four is the last stage where non-coded elements of the data are examined in order to determine if there are any additional codes or sub-codes that need to be included in the analysis.

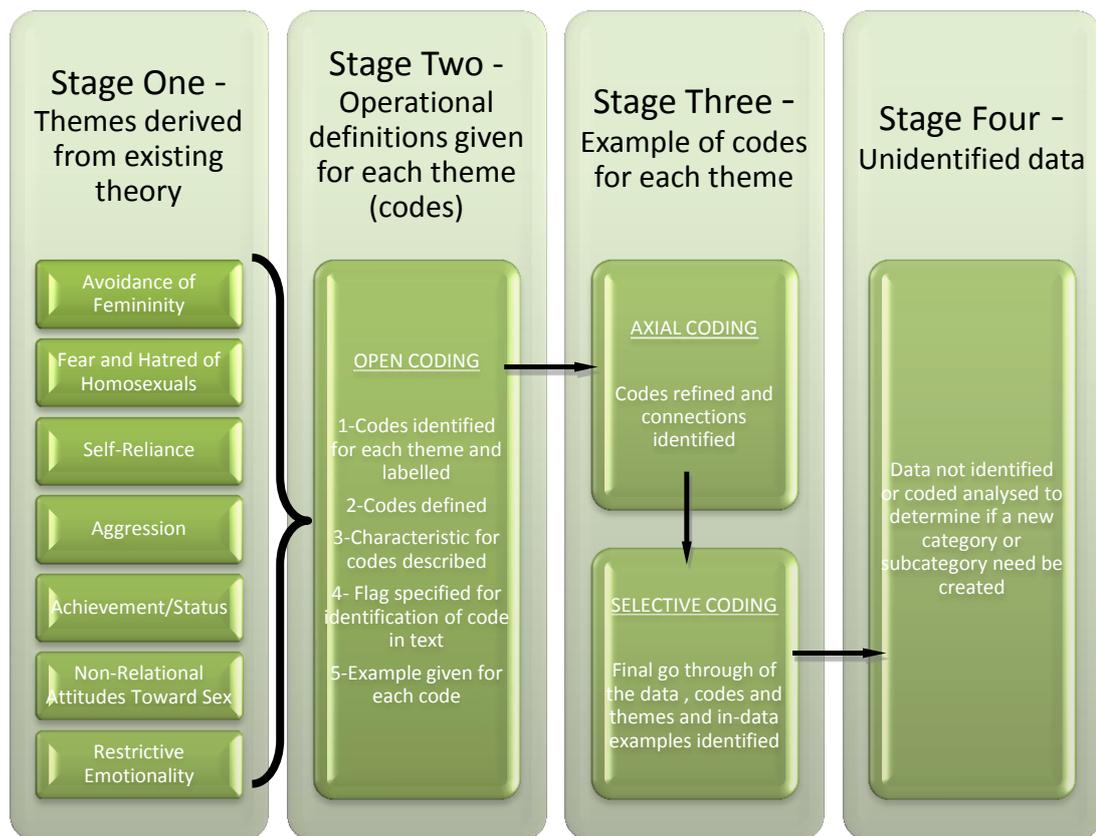


Figure 5.1 Conceptual framework of the combined data collection methods

Adapted from Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115-116) and Neuman (2007:330-332)

The result of the combination of the two processes is a step-by-step guideline that is not linear but rather flexible enough for the coding and analysis to take place during the viewing of the films, data collection as well as interpretation of the data. The benefit of this is that the final collection of data and the resultant analysis are comprehensive. The combination of the two processes then results in a systematic procedure for the researcher, to ensure that the research process and resultant analysis is structured, understandable and holistic.

Another reason for the combination of the two methods is that there are some challenges that come with using a directed qualitative content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2007:117) state that by having the themes at the start of the analysis the researcher might become biased and find data that supports rather than opposes the theory. Second, it is possible that an overemphasis on the theory could blind the researcher to the contextual aspects of the data. For example, there may be character

nuances that are not specified in the existing theory that may provide insight into the characters masculinity. It is for these reasons that Neuman's (2007:330-331) three-stage coding process is used.

Relying only on the themes it is possible that bias and the over-looking of context is possible. However, the process of coding as described by Neuman (2007:330) reduces this risk because there is an emphasis on reducing all the data into manageable pieces, and analytically categorising the data. Therefore, the final analysis for this study is based on the codes and the connections between these codes and the data, with the themes only guiding the researcher in making the connections between the character's representation of masculinity and the chosen themes and not the creation of the codes themselves. As an example, the codes might identify a character as being particularly violent, the character's actions would then connect to the aggression theme, indicating that the character has a more masculine nature. The connection of the codes, with the themes as a guideline during data collection and analysis, should reduce the risk of bias towards the themes and also ensure that each piece of data is analysed contextually.

5.5.1 Validity and reliability

In order to produce a study that can be considered a "rich and credible account" of their research, Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:63) argue that qualitative researchers continuously look for evidence that could be considered discrepant to the hypotheses. In this way credibility in qualitative research is continuously being established throughout the research process.

The chosen codes and resulting themes used within the study were shown to and discussed with qualitative research experts in order to determine their validity, as well as to determine that the themes were appropriate with regards to the study and not influenced by the personal prejudices of the researcher. The author also made use of bracketing, which Kelly (1999:405) describes as "suspending one's own framework and 'letting the data talk for itself'".

With regards to external validity, in constructionist research emphasis is placed on the transferability of the findings, where detailed accounts of the structures of meaning are developed in specific contexts. This detailed account will allow for the findings to be transferred to new contexts in order to provide a framework of understanding in other research (Durrheim & Wassenaar 1999:63). The description of the hyper- and hypo- masculine characteristics of male lead characters were developed slowly over the three stage coding process (see Chapter Six) thereby creating a detailed account of the structure of masculinity within the sample films, thus allowing for the findings from the context of this study to be transferrable to the contexts of future research.

Reliability within the constructionist paradigm does not rely on the same criteria as with the positivist paradigm in quantitative research. In fact, according to Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:64) rather than reliability, constructionist researchers ensure that their research has dependability, where the reader is assured that the findings occurred as is stated in the research. In order to achieve this, research conducted in the constructionist paradigm provides detailed descriptions of the stated actions and opinions so as to clarify how they are embedded in the context of the study.

5.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The following section is a stage-by-stage detailing of the data analysis process. It is here that the combination of the directed qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:115) and Neuman's (2007:330) three-stage coding process are followed and explained in the order of progression as illustrated in figure 5.1.

5.6.1 Stage one

In the initial stage of directed qualitative content analysis, the existing research is used to identify key concepts as initial coding categories or themes (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:115). With regards to this study the seven norms of masculinity, as derived from Levant's existing research (Levant & Richmond 2007; Richmond & Levant 2003; Levant et al 1992), are used as the key concepts of masculinity that the

male lead characters in the sample of films are judged against. As such these norms are identified as the themes for this study. By using Levant et al's (1992) seven theoretically derived norms of masculinity as the themes of the analysis theory on masculinity will be extended to incorporate how masculinity is represented in action and romantic comedy films. The research where Levant et al's (1992) norms have been used, has up to now, been on 'real' participants. It is in this study that the norms will be applied to fictional characters to determine how masculinity is represented in the sample of films.

The seven theoretically derived norms, as previously explained, are gleaned from the existing research of Levant et al (1992), and as such, can be operationally defined using this same research. Below is a list of the norms with a description of what each entails. The descriptions are adapted from the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI) questionnaire developed by Levant et al (1992).

- **Avoidance of Femininity:**
It is argued by Levant et al (1992:335) that men who rank higher on the scale of masculinity will avoid any traits that may be construed as feminine; for example, housework, wearing of makeup or nail polish, carrying a purse and participating in activities like needlework.
- **Fear and Hatred of Homosexuals:**
Men who befriend homosexuals, or are affectionate towards other men are considered less masculine (Levant et al 1992:336).
- **Self-Reliance:**
Masculinity, it is argued, will be greater in men who can make decisions independently, who do not rely on others to complete a task, who are realistic in their judgements, and are confident in their decisions (Levant et al 1992:336).
- **Aggression:**
Behaviours such as risk taking, adventure seeking, violence when provoked and protective behaviour are considered masculine traits (Levant et al 1992:335).

- **Achievement/Status:**
Levant et al (1992:335) also state that masculinity can be measured by a man's determination to reach his goals, his willingness to sacrifice personal relationships for career advancement, his ability to take control within a group, as well as his drive to win at whatever competitive activity he may participate in.
- **Non-Relational Attitudes Toward Sex:**
With regards to sex, masculine men are considered to disregard love in choosing a sex partner, should not be concerned with birth control, will not engage in sex without the opportunity to achieve an orgasm, and should always be ready for sex (Levant et al 1992:336).
- **Restrictive Emotionality:**
The more masculine the man the more emotionally detached he should be, he should not be seen crying in public, should not show pain, should not reveal his worries to others, should avoid acting depressed, and should hide all outward expressions of emotion (Levant et al 1992:335).

5.6.2 Stage two

As the themes have been identified it follows that the second stage of the analysis is the process of operationally defining each of the themes (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:115). Based on the theory, these definitions will assist later in the final analysis of the sample. It is within this, the second stage of qualitative content analysis, that open coding is inserted (see fig 5.1). Open coding assists the researcher in creating operational definitions of the themes so that any and all appearances of the themes in the data will be recognised. Also, a film consists of a lot of data and in order to place this large amount of data in more manageable parts, so that instances of these themes can be effectively recognised, the data needs to be coded. To do this the first stage of Neuman's (2007:330) three-stage coding process, open coding, is used.

The reason for using open coding is that, as Neuman (2007:330) explains, open coding assists with the identification of codes. As the themes have already been identified from the literature review, open coding is used to determine the codes for

the themes. Once open coding is complete, each of the themes is operationally defined and codes identified to assist the researcher in recognising instances of the themes in the text.

Creswell (2007:64) describes open coding as the process where the researcher looks for the major categories of information from the raw data. As such this stage takes place during the researcher's first viewing of the data. In this case the researcher's first look at the chosen sample of films. An analysis of six films includes a large amount of raw data that needs to be viewed and understood, even if the analysis is only of the one particular character from each film (in this case the main male character from each film). According to Neuman (2003:442), open coding is used in order to condense the raw data into more manageable pieces, by identifying and labelling the initial set of codes to be used.

In order to complete the open coding stage, Neuman (2003:442) suggests five steps that will guide the researcher in developing the codes for analysis. Firstly, each of the codes is labelled for identification purposes. Secondly, to ensure that the codes are mutually exclusive, each code is defined, and a particular characteristic of each code is described. Also, each code is given a 'flag', or a description of the code, which is used to identify the code whilst going through the data. Lastly, examples are given for each code, so as to precisely identify what kind of data is required for each code. Neuman (2003:442) argues that this process requires that the researcher remain descriptive at this point, avoiding being analytical with the data. In short the final result of open coding should be as Corbin and Strauss (2008:198) describe the process; blocks of data that have been delineated from the raw data. Applying this to this study, the codes are developed by looking at the verbal, non-verbal and behavioural characteristics of the male leading characters from the sample of films. Each of the characters' actions, interactions and dialogue that exemplify the created codes are recorded resulting in a spreadsheet with chunks of data allocated to each code. This delineated data is then further analysed in the third stage which combines the example stage of the directed qualitative content analysis and the axial coding stage of the three-stage coding process (see fig 5.1).

5.6.3 Stage three

It is from the third stage of the qualitative content analysis that connections start being made between the data, the codes and the themes. Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115) explain that following the creation of the codes the researcher can begin highlighting those parts of the data that fit with the created codes and begin linking these back to the themes. In this study this process is facilitated by making use of the second and third stages of Neuman's (2007:331-332) three-stage coding process (see fig 5.1).

Axial coding falls within the third stage of qualitative content analysis (see fig 5.1). Axial coding takes place during the researcher's second look at the data. During this stage, the researcher refers to the initial codes identified during the open coding stage. Focusing more on the codes than the data, the researcher now refines the codes looking for the themes and connections between codes (Neuman 2007:331). The identification of these codes requires that the researcher be knowledgeable of the raw data (O'Leary 2004:196), gaining a greater understanding of the text through every re-reading, or in this case re-watching, of the data. The knowledge of the raw data and the re-defined codes assist the researcher in making connections between, what Corbin and Strauss (2008:198) call, concepts. The connections come from relating the codes back to the raw data (Corbin & Strauss 2008:198). It is at this stage that the chunks of raw data recorded on the spread sheet is analysed according to the themes. By doing this, and by keeping the film themselves in mind, connections can be made between the recorded data, the codes, the themes derived from the seven theoretical norms of masculinity, as well as the films. The aim during this stage is therefore to determine the causes and consequences of, interactions between, and the process surrounding the codes (Neuman 2003:444).

The third and final stage of Neuman's (2007:332) three-stage coding process, selective coding, also takes place in the third stage of the direct content analysis process (see fig 5.1). This stage requires that the researcher, once again, go through the data, as well as through the previously identified and restructured codes and themes. The aim during this stage is to find examples of the themes and connections between codes identified by the previous stages. Those actions that exemplify and fit

with the themes, as well as those that are in a direct contrast to the themes are noted to be used as examples during the discussion of the findings. Therefore, the themes and codes guide the selective coding stage to allow the researcher to elaborate on the major themes by identifying instances from the raw data that exemplify the themes (Neuman 2003:444). Both the axial and selective coding stages fit with Hsieh and Shannon's (2007:115) third stage of directed qualitative content analysis, as it is in this particular stage that the researcher is encouraged to highlight those sections that fit with the codes. By making the connections between the codes and the data, the researcher is able to highlight those areas of the data that are relevant to the study.

5.6.4 Stage four

The fourth stage of directed qualitative takes place once all the data has been coded and connections made to the themes. This, the final stage of the analysis, is where the data is looked at one last time in order to ensure all the data has been coded and analysed. Any data not coded is further analysed to determine if new codes or sub-codes need to be created (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:116). It is from these new codes or sub-codes that it is possible to create new knowledge and extend the theories used during the analysis of the sample of texts.

5.6.5 Comparative analysis

Each film is analysed using the above combination of methodologies. This ensures that the each of the sample of films is analysed in the same way. The themes and codes derived from the first stages of the combined methodologies are used in each of the films in the sample. It is from the recording of the data from the films, the finding of the connections between the recorded data and the codes and themes that the analysis from each film may or may not differ. This is because each film is its own entity; the data collected from each film is different because each character is different. Although they are different, what is being looked for, is if there are any characteristics that fit with the chosen themes, and if so, are these connections similar to the connections made with the other characters from the sample.

Once each film is analysed the findings from each film is compared to the other two films within the same genre. Corbin and Strauss (2008:195) explain that in making comparisons during data analysis the researcher is looking for similarities and differences. Conceptually similar instances are noted and added together, whereas instances that differ are also noted and discussed. Instances of similarity include those instances where characters from different films have characteristics that represent masculinity in the same way. For example, if characters from two or more of the sample films make homophobic statements, this will be noted as a similarity. Once all three films are compared to one another, the findings from that analysis are compared to the combined analysis of the second genre. Once all three films from the romantic comedy genre are compared to one another and the three films from the action genre are compared to one another, the resultant comparisons are compared to identify similarities and difference between genres.

Figure 5.2 is a visual representation of the above explanation of how each film will be analysed then compared to the other films within the same genre, and finally compared between genres.

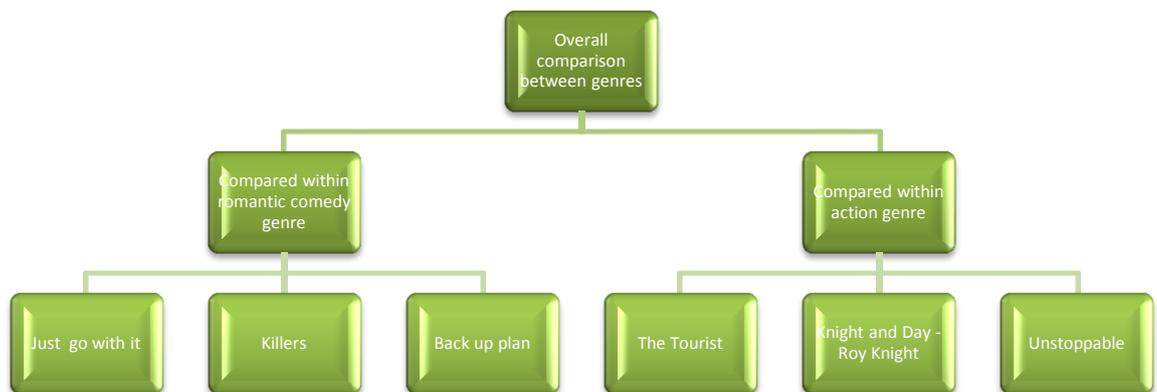


Fig 5.2 Visual representation of the stages of the comparisons

5.7 SUMMATION

In order to successfully analyse the sample of films purposively chosen to compare the representation of masculinity within and across the romantic comedy and action genres two methods of qualitative analysis are used. This mixed methods

approach is used in order to ensure that the resultant analysis is trustworthy, reliable and comprehensive.

As described by Babbie (2005:394) data analysis requires the researcher to identify patterns in the data. It is the aim within this study to do the same; to determine if there are connections between the data from the films that compare to the seven theoretical norms of masculinity. As the different stages of the methodology are undertaken patterns are sought out between the raw data, the coded data, and the themes. Similarities between the male lead characters' actions and dialogue and the definitions given for the seven themes will indicate the extent of the masculinity of the characters.

Chapter Six is the result of the implementation of the methodology described above. Each film from the purposive sample is described making use of a brief synopsis to contextualise the data collected. The codes required to operationally define the themes are identified and explained and applied to the purposive sample. The result being a discussion of the data collected with regards to the representation of masculinity within the action genre and the romantic comedy genre.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Making use of the combination of Hsieh and Shannon's (2007:111) directed qualitative analysis and Neuman's (2003:442) coding stages as described in Chapter Five, a textual analysis of the sample of films is undertaken to determine how masculinity is represented in the purposively chosen sample of films. A comparison is then done to determine if there are any differences in how masculinity is represented across the romantic comedy and action genres.

As is explained in the previous chapter, the analysis for this study is to take place over two stages. Firstly each film is analysed, or rather the main male character from each film is analysed, and then compared to the other films from the same genre. For example, Tom Cruise's character from *Knight and Day* (2010) is analysed to determine his masculine characteristics by comparing his verbal and non-verbal characteristics to the seven theoretical derived norms espoused by Levant et al (1992). The analysis of this character is then compared to the analysis of the other two characters from the same genre (action genre). This procedure is then completed for the romantic comedy genre as well. Once the combination of characters from each genre have been sufficiently analysed, these results are then compared to determine if there are any similarities or differences between the representations of masculinity between the two genres. It is this comparison that will indicate not only if the representation of masculinity in the action genre is any different to the representation of masculinity in the romantic comedy genre, but will also indicate which characteristics differ across the genres.

The first stage of the directed qualitative content analysis has already been completed (and explained in Chapter Five) as it requires that the first part of methodology is based and developed on existing research. Therefore, the themes on which the analysis will be based are taken from existing research. For the purpose of this study, a review of the research already done on masculinity was undertaken (see Chapter Three) and it was determined that the seven theoretically derived norms of

masculinity, as developed by Levant et al (1992), should be used as the themes for the analysis. The themes for this study are then: avoidance of femininity, fear and hatred of homosexuals, self-reliance, aggression, achievement and status, non-relational attitudes towards sex and restrictive emotionality.

In order to appropriately identify aspects of the leading male characters that fit with these themes, the first stage of Neuman's (2003:442) three stage coding process is used. This is the first actual stage to be undertaken during the analysis as it takes place during the researcher's first look at the raw data. This first stage is also when the codes are created that will segment the raw data (the leading male character) into more manageable pieces. This process is described by Neuman (2003:44) as the process of condensing the raw data. These pieces of condensed data are used to determine what aspects of the character fit with each of the themes.

6.2 CODES

In order to complete the open coding stage, Neuman (2003:442) suggests five steps that will guide the researcher in developing the codes for analysis; these five stages include, labelling, defining, describing, flagging, and then giving an example of each of the codes. In order to do this the raw data is viewed to determine what the codes should be. After viewing the sample the codes are identified and then labelled for identification purposes. Secondly, to ensure that the codes are mutually exclusive, each code is defined, and a particular characteristic of each code is described. Also, each code is given a 'flag', or a description of the code, which is used to identify the code whilst going through the data. Lastly, examples are given for each code, so as to precisely identify what kind of data is required for each code.

6.2.1 Description of codes

The following is an explanation of the codes, as well as the definition, flag, and an example of each of the codes.

Label: Action: physical actions of the character

Definition: Those physical actions of the leading male character that communicate a

semiotic meaning relevant to the study are recorded. What does the character do, how does he interact with the other characters, what skills does he have that he makes use of. The actions of the character need to be observed in order to determine if the character is physically violent (aggression theme), does he avoid stereotypical feminine behaviour (avoidance of femininity theme), does he behave aggressively towards homosexual characters (fear and hatred of homosexuals), to what extent does he trust and rely on other characters (self-reliance theme), to what extremes will he go to achieve his goal (achievement theme), how does he interact with his female companion in the film (non-relational attitudes towards sex theme). The characters actions are an indication of his masculinity and as such are analysed to determine if they fall under the scope of any of the themes. Each scene is viewed and notes taken on what the character physically does in each scene.

Flag: Any scene that includes the male characters is viewed and analysed. Step-by-step notes are jotted down indicating the characters actions in that particular scene. Therefore, only those scenes with the male lead character in the scene are viewed and his physical actions are recorded for this code.

Example: In the very first fight scene in *Knight and Day* (2010) Roy Miller is attacked by numerous passengers on an aeroplane. Roy manages to fend off each attacker making use of his hands, a gun, and a few objects on the plane (one example being a seat belt). The fight sequence is coded by taking note of Roy's actions. His propensity towards violence before conversation, and his ability to fend off each attacker on his own are indicators that can be linked to the aggression and self-reliance themes.

Label: Emotion

Definition: The emotion code is defined as; any and all emotions that are either expressed non-verbally (through facial expression or body language) or expressed verbally by the character himself. The emotional state of the character is recorded while taking into consideration the context of the situation within which that emotion is expressed. As one of the themes is that of restrictive emotionality, it is expected that the more masculine characters will limit their emotional expressions and be less expressive in situations than their female companions. This particular code has a direct link with the restrictive emotionality theme.

Flag: In each scene the emotions of the character are recorded. If the character

expresses an emotion that is recorded, or in instances that no emotion is verbally expressed the body language of the character is recorded, or finally if the character expresses an emotion but the body language does not suit the emotion that is recorded (for example, if perhaps the character is lying or attempting to deceive the other characters this is recorded).

Example: In scene one of *Unstoppable* (2010), Will Collson can be seen sitting in his truck attempting to make a phone call to a yet unidentified woman (the scene cuts back and forth between his phone and hers to indicate that she is the intended recipient of his call). The woman ignores the call by closing the phone. At this point the scene cuts back to Will sitting in his truck. His body language is noted as he is slumped over, holding his head. Once the call is rejected he throws the phone down on the passenger seat of the truck. This is an example of a non-verbal expression of emotion. Anticipation of the phone call to be answered by the woman is evident by his posture and then frustration is evident by the fact that he physically throws the phone down on the passenger seat once the call is rejected.

Label: Dialogue

Definition: Dialogue can be defined as any and all verbal utterances made by the main characters. The character's dialogue is the verbal utterances made by the character and are coded as these can be considered the direct link to what the character is thinking, while at the same time is an indicator of how the character socialises with the other characters. By recording the dialogue, examples can be given as to how the character interacts with the other characters indicating his relationship with them and his maintenance of these relationships (thus being a possible indicator for each of the different themes). For example, the character's dialogue will help identify those times when there is a discrepancy between the characters emotions and actions, which will be an indication of restricted emotionality.

Flag: In each scene the character is viewed and dialogue noted. Any utterance made, whether between characters or if the character is speaking to himself; the dialogue is recorded.

Example: In scene three of *The Tourist* (2010), Frank Tupelo is introduced to the audience when the lead female character, Elise, sits at his table. During the conversation Elise is very much in control as she is the person initiating each topic of conversation. Frank asks her permission to smoke an electronic cigarette, he makes up

a story about Elise at her request, and asks her to dinner at her request. She accepts his dinner request only after making him repeat the offer till it was expressed to her satisfaction. The tone of the conversation and the dominance of Elise in the conversation is in itself an indication that he is being submissive to her, which can therefore be linked to the status theme.

Label: Social artefacts: Clothes, Transportation, Communication Devices, Other

Definition: Any instances where objects are used to identify characters to be of a certain status, or to have certain characteristics, or to distinguish the character from the other characters in the film, are recorded. Examples of such objects include the character's house, car, clothes, jewellery, art or cellular phone. Social artefacts are the material possessions individuals use to express their individual identity. They are also a way in which the creators of a narrative like film can allude, in a short period, to the type of traits and behaviours viewers can expect from the character. With regard to this study, if one is to determine the type of representation being portrayed, it is important to take into consideration the social artefacts used by the characters to express their individuality.

Flag: All scenes are viewed and the characters social artefacts are recorded. If a character uses a cell phone to make a call, changes clothes, drives a particular car these instances are recorded.

Example: The articles in Roy Miller's possession in *Knight and Day* (2010) include a highly sophisticated cell phone which he uses in the second scene of the film. The sophistication of the cell phone indicates that Roy is well versed in technology, while at the same time the screen on the cell phone is shown to the audience so that they can see that Roy is monitoring someone.

Label: Physical appearance

Definition: The characters' physical appearance is noted during each scene. Over emphasis on bodily appearance (hair, skin, clothes and so forth) is recorded. Attention to bodily appearance is considered a feminine characteristic and as such will align with the avoidance of femininity theme.

Flag: All scenes are viewed and the character's physical appearance and maintenance or lack thereof is noted. His appearance includes his hair, body (including the appearance of the body and the maintenance of the clothing worn on the body).

Example: In the film, *The Tourist* (2010), the character Frank Tupelo wears suits stereotypically befitting of a mathematics lecturer. In the third scene in the film (the scene in which this particular character is introduced) Frank is wearing a brown suede jacket, brown shirt and blue waistcoat. The dress code is indicative of the control and propriety stereotypically expected of someone in academia and especially of a lecturer in a field considered as ‘uptight’ as mathematics.

Once identified, each film is viewed and the raw data condensed by noting the relevant information under each code. The identification and explanation of both the themes and codes, as well as the summarisation of the raw data to more manageable pieces is an indication that the second stage of the directed qualitative content analysis and the first stage of the three stage coding process is complete. The third stage of the directed qualitative content analysis (the examples stage) is broken down by making use of the last two stages of the three stage coding process. These two stages are the axial and selective coding stages. It is here that firstly, in the axial coding stage, links start being made between the raw data and the themes. These links assist in determining which of the themes are most prevalent in each character. The more links to the themes, and the more themes the character embodies the more masculine the character (see Chapter 5.6).

6.3 ACTION GENRE

The sample of films belonging to the action genre include; *Knight and Day* (2010), *The Tourist* (2010) and *Unstoppable* (2010). Each film is purposively chosen as each film is listed on Cinemark’s rolling top 50 films in South Africa (Cinemark: rolling top 50 [sa]) (the population for this study) and are all classified as action films by the Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com). Although each film has characteristics of other genres (romance, thriller, comedy) each film was chosen because the action genre is the dominant genre for each film. *Knight and Day* (2010), and *The Tourist* (2010) for example, each incorporate elements of the comedy and romance (respectively) genres within each storyline. However, these elements are secondary to the films storyline.

In *Knight and Day* (2010) the focus of the storyline is about a man on a dangerous and action packed mission to save his friend. Any comedy that appears in the film is complementary to, and not essential to the storyline. The same applies to *The Tourist* (2010) any romantic elements to the film are secondary to the evasive actions taken by both leading characters. It is for these reasons that both films are categorised as action films for this study.

Before the analysis can be discussed, a synopsis of the plot for each film in the action genre is given in the following subsections, so as to contextualise the character and the story in which he takes part. This will assist in contextualising any examples used to link the codes and themes during the analysis.

6.3.1 *Knight and Day* (2010)

Tom Cruise is the actor who plays a man named Roy Miller in *Knight and Day* (2010). The film's premise is that of a spy trying to protect a young genius named Simon and his invention (a battery source with unlimited power called a Zeffer) from both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and a Spanish arms dealer. In order to do this, Roy meets a woman named June who he uses to inadvertently get the Zeffer past a customs official at an airport. On stealing the battery back from June, the exchange is caught on camera causing June to get embroiled in Roy's mission. This one act of Roy's therefore escalates June's role in keeping the battery from those who are trying to get at it, as well as finding and keeping Simon safe from the same people. Throughout the film Roy and June are consistently pursued; requiring death defying escapes, high speed vehicular chase sequences and fights. The result at the end of the film is that the Zeffer is actually a faulty battery which over heats and is destroyed during the final confrontation between Roy and Fritz (the FBI agent who it turns out is a double agent also working for the arms dealer). In the end Roy is successful in his attempts at keeping Simon and the Zeffer safe.

6.3.2 *The Tourist* (2010)

Frank Tupelo, played by Johnny Depp, is introduced as a mild mannered mathematics lecturer on vacation in Italy. After meeting a woman named Elise, who is

attempting to avoid capture from Interpol agents; Frank gets involved seemingly unwittingly, in an Interpol investigation into Elise and a man named Alexander Pearce. Elise purposively leads the Interpol agents into believing that Frank is Alexander so as to derail their investigation. However, the Interpol agents are aware that some sort of deception is taking place and continue to pursue Elise, as well as Frank. The audience is lead to believe that Frank is an innocent bystander in the Interpol's pursuit of Elise and Alexander. It is in the final scene of the film, however, that the truth is revealed that Frank really is Alexander and the entire rouse has been carefully planned and executed with the result being that both evade capture.

6.3.3 *Unstoppable* (2010)

The film, *Unstoppable* (2010) is premised on the true story of a runaway train. The train is, due to incompetence of a train engineer, placed on an open track without a driver managing the train. The result being that the train increases in speed and travels through numerous small towns endangering the lives of the people in the towns, as well as the lives of the people on other trains travelling on the same track. One such train has two men on it, Will Collson (Chris Pine) and Frank Barnes (Denzel Washington), who take on the responsibility of stopping the runaway train. Will Collson is the character analysed as he is introduced from the beginning of the film. He is introduced by giving the viewer a little back story about his private life, which indicates to the viewer, that he is having some trouble with his wife and is being kept from seeing his son. Will is a newly trained engineer who is being mentored by Frank Barnes during his first day on the job. It is on this first day that Will has to deal with Frank (a train engineer who is being forced to retire), the runaway train and win back his family. By the end of the film, Will is considered a hero for his part in stopping the train, has come to terms with his new job, as well as the problems he is facing in his personal life.

6.4 ROMANTIC COMEDY GENRE

The sample of films belonging to the romantic comedy genre includes; *Killers* (2010), *The Back-up Plan* (2010) and *Just Go With It* (2011). Each film is purposively chosen as each film is listed on Cinemark's rolling top 50 films in South Africa

(Cinemark: rolling top 50 [sa]) (the population for this study) and each is classified as a romantic comedy film by the Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com). *The Back-up Plan* (2010) and *Just Go With It* (2011) are only listed as being romantic comedies on the Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com) website, while *Killers* (2010) is also classified as having characteristics belonging to the action genre.

Killers (2010) was chosen as a romantic comedy because the IMDB website categorises the film as a romantic comedy. Although *Killers* (2010) has elements of the action genre, the action is only secondary to the relationship between the two main characters. The action is the stressor that tests their relationship with the storyline ultimately being about how these two individuals overcome the action in order to stay in their romantic relationship. It is for this reason that the *Killers* (2010) is included in the romantic comedy sample.

The following three subsections is a synopsis of the plot for each film in the romantic comedy genre so as to contextualise the character and the story in which he takes part. This will assist in contextualising any examples used to link the codes and themes during the analysis.

6.4.1 *Killers* (2010)

Ashton Kutcher plays Spencer, a part assassin part spy, who on meeting Jen (played by Katherine Heigel) chooses to settle down and give up his previously successful career for a more settled life in the suburbs. After a brief period in the suburbs, both Spencer's and Jen's lives are disrupted when 'a hit' is put on Spencer, resulting in a number of different assassins attempting to kill Spencer to claim the bounty that has been placed on him. The action of the attempted assassination then plays in the background to what the movie is ultimately about: Spencer and Jen's relationship as they attempt to evade killers, come to terms with the news that she is pregnant, and deal with the fact their relationship will no longer be the same now that Spencer's true identity has been revealed. In the end it turns out that Jen's father is also a spy, and is the individual who requested Spencer's assassination. The final scene shows that Jen and Spencer have overcome the challenges they have had to face, as they fawn over their new baby, alongside her parents.

6.4.2 *Just Go With It* (2011)

Adam Sandler is Danny, a man jilted by love at a young age when he finds out, on his wedding day, that his fiancé is cheating on him. Danny then undergoes both a physical and personal transformation becoming a plastic surgeon who pretends to be married so as to get women to have sexual relations with him, but not to form any emotional attachment to him. That is until he meets Palmer. Danny falls in love with Palmer, who thinks that he is married and will not date a married man. As a result Danny, along with Katherine (his office assistant played by Jennifer Aniston) and her two children, undertake an elaborate ruse to convince Palmer that he is in the middle of an amicable divorce. As the film progresses a more intimate relationship between Danny and Katherine, begins to form to the point where the final scene of the film shows them celebrating on their wedding day.

6.4.3 *The Back-up Plan* (2010)

Zoe (played by Jennifer Lopez) is a single woman who decides that she does not have to be in a relationship in order to have children. On the day that she is artificially inseminated, she meets Stan, played by Alex O'Loughlin. After vehemently pursuing Zoe, the two fall in love and begin a relationship – at which point Zoe tells Stan that she is pregnant. The film then follows their relationship as each of them comes to terms with the reality of Zoe's pregnancy and the effect this may have on their future. Stan's progression through the film is his acceptance of the choice Zoe had made for her life, and how he fits into the consequences of her choices. Ultimately the film concludes with the pair being very much in love, with their individual and combined dreams for the future coming to fruition.

6.5 SUMMARY OF CODED DATA

As this particular study is based on the social construction of gender, the masculinities of the characters are analysed as a construction. Constructed through their actions, dialogue, emotions and the social artefacts they possess. It is the combinations of characteristics from these different aspects that assist the viewer in determining who the characters are. As such, it is these aspects of the character that

are used to determine how the characters are represented, with particular focus on the characters' masculinity. In Chapter Three it is concluded that masculinity is a construction based on an individual's historical and social context. The story line for each film is a snapshot out of the characters life, giving only enough background information to inform the viewers about who the character is. Therefore, one cannot infer how the character defines masculinity. However, by looking at the characters behaviour and interactions with other characters, the characters' masculine traits can be isolated and compared to each other.

NAME OF CHARACTER & FILM (GENRE)	CODES				
	Action	Dialogue	Emotion	Social Artefacts	Physical appearance
Roy Miller – <i>Knight and Day</i> (Action genre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distances himself from his previous employer (the FBI) to protect Simon, June and the Zeffer. • Later revealed that he is also separated from his family. • Manipulates situations without June's or the FBI's knowledge – fiercely independent. • Fights numerous enemies single handed, using both weapons and personal skill. • Undertakes the majority of the challenges placed before him independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reveals little about himself (his past, his career, his emotions). • Reveals little about how he intends to protect the Zeffer or June. • Does attempt to reassure June on many occasions. • Is highly goal orientated and conversations are limited to achieving these. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roy is emotionally unavailable to June. • It is implied that he is emotionally attached to family as he provides financially for them after many years of being separated from them; and has surveillance cameras watching their home, however this attachment is never discussed. • He reveals very little with regards to whether he is feeling happy, in love, stressed or angry to anyone in the film. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carries state of the art technology with which he tracks his parent's whereabouts. • Is highly skilled at using the weapons used to protect himself and those in his charge. • Has knowledge of weapons use • Is highly capable and trained at operating numerous transportation vehicles – planes, helicopters, cars, motorbike. • His home is never seen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is well built, • Is seen partly unclothed when he is walking out the ocean on the deserted island and when he changes his shirt after the plane crash. • He dresses casually throughout the film (jeans, shirts, aviator sunglasses). • Is only formally dressed on one occasion – to meet a contact linked to a potential threat to the Zeffer. • No facial hair. • Hair mid length – side path – always neat.

<p>Will Collson - <i>Unstoppable</i> (Action genre)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins a new job as a train driver where he starts off being impatient and argumentative with colleague. • Agrees to help colleague stop a runaway train. • Is physically active in his attempt to stop the runaway train, placing his own safety at risk. • Is instrumental in stopping the runaway train, even after suffering a serious injury. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is initially argumentative with his work colleague, and family, • Insists that he is capable of doing the work placed before him. • Gradually begins to become more communicative with colleague as the relationship between the two grows and the situation becomes more serious. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is visibly angry at the beginning of the film, • Is aggressive with family member. • Throws a phone in frustration. • Is argumentative with work colleague. • Is revealed later is that the anger stems from remorse for his bad behaviour. • There is no discussion of emotions. • Is visibly happy when he is reunited with his family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has little in the way of possessions in the film as for the majority of the film he is seen on the train. • Is seen sitting in a vehicle – a pick-up truck, and throwing a cell phone. • Rest of film he is in a train with no interaction with personal belongings. • The house he once shared with his wife is typical of his blue collar worker persona – household possessions are not expensive, not bought for aesthetics but rather for function. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appearance gives the impression that he is blue collar worker. • Wear’s uniform (yellow jacket), hard hat, gloves. • Is seen briefly in underwear at start of film. • Had facial hair– the unshaven look. • Hair short.
<p>Frank Tupelo – <i>The Tourist</i> (Action genre)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reluctantly accepts invitation from Elise to stay in her hotel room (a supposed stranger to him). • Is drawn in by Elise’s advances but does not follow through on them. • Only physical action is when he is attempting to evade capture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial conversations with Elise are dominated by her. • Reveals a little about his past - he is a mathematician - which turns out to be a lie. • Much of the dialogue involves trying to convince others of his fake identity and prove 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He does not reveal much emotion – even when discussing his ‘past’. • He seems to be interested in Elise but little is revealed about that. • It is revealed that he is in love with Elise when he risks his own safety and freedom to help her. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smokes an electronic cigarette on the train – which he asks Elise if it is okay to smoke in her presence. • His house is not shown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is well groomed and neat. • Wears suits, waist coat, scarf, long jacket. • Wears long blue striped pyjamas to bed. • Is never seen unclothed. • Wears a white tuxedo when trying to make contact with Elise again.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does little to help Elise during his rescue from captors or assist during their pursuit. • Accepts when Elise leaves him behind to be apprehended by Interpol agents. • At the end of the film he makes an attempt to assist Elise when she is in trouble. • He and Elise sail away into sunset having successfully manipulated and fooled Interpol agents. 	<p>he was not previously connected to Elise and her work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is reserved in his dialogue. • He does not argue, or shout. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is always neatly dressed • Has facial hair neatly trimmed. • Has shoulder length hair.
<p>Spencer Aimes – Killers (Romantic comedy)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is introduced while on a mission to assassinate an undisclosed person. • He completes his mission successfully. • He meets Jen in the hotel and flirts with her in the elevator. • They meet for dinner where he is flirtatious. • At the end of the date he tells her all about his secret life. • He leaves his life as an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early on he tells Jen of his secret life – although she is asleep and does not hear his confession. • He then keeps his past secret from her. • He tells Jen’s father how much she means to him. • He expresses resistance when Jen wants to go back to the hotel where they once met. • He refuses a night out with the boys when offered by his colleague 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is open about his feelings for Jen with her father. • He is visibly jumpy while they are trying to determine who has placed the bounty on his head – arguing with Jen, and reaching for his gun when strangers approach. • He is visibly upset when Jen explains that she may not want him to be the father of her child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He has numerous weapons (guns) which he is trained to use. • He is also capable of setting up an explosive device – which he uses on his last mission. • He is introduced driving a red sports car. • Once married to Jen he is seen driving an SUV. • House is very homely, more feminine than masculine – pale colour scheme – well furnished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is introduced wearing a suit. • However, spends most of the film in jeans and a collared t-shirt. • He is seen unclothed when he is at the hotel and on the way to the beach to complete a mission - he is wearing small fitted swim shorts. • He has stubble for most of the movie. • Hair short and neat.

	<p>assassin to marry Jen and join her in suburbia where he renovates her office for her as a surprise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He drives Jen from one location to another while they attempt to confirm who placed the bounty on his head. • He fights many assassins – both with weapons and without. • However, he is often helped by Jen when being attacked by the assassins. • Once it is revealed that it is Jen’s father who placed the bounty on his life, Jen, her family and Spencer reconcile their differences. • He has a child with Jen and becomes overly conscious of his child’s safety. 	<p>– expressing the need to confirm with Jen first.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once his past is revealed to Jen, he is honest with her about the details. • Argues with Jen with regards to her need to go to her father for help. • He is very protective of Jen, continuously telling her to be safe, when she is doing something that could put her safety at risk. • Majority of film is made up of action sequences, with witty banter between Spencer and Jen in-between these scenes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is expressive of his feelings for Jen to Jen. 	<p>- both aesthetics and function evident in possessions.</p>	
<p>Stan – <i>The Back-up Plan</i> (Romantic comedy)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets Zoe while catching a taxi cab in the rain • Relentlessly pursues Zoe, even though she at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the dialogue takes place between Stan and Zoe. • The only other character he really talks to is a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is expressive of his emotions. • Throughout the film he either verbally expresses a range of emotions, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He owns a farm, so he is seen with the equipment to run the farm – when Zoe arrives he is seen driving a tractor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He alternates between very casual with jeans and t-shirts to casual suits depending on the occasion.

	<p>first does not seem interested.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is very romantic – sets up a private dinner for them both. • When he finds out she is pregnant he continues the relationship even though they are not his children. • Supports Zoe through the pregnancy. • He goes to doctors appointments with her, even though they seem to make him uncomfortable. • He runs a farm that his parents used to own. • He has a stall at a flea market where he sells cheese. • He contemplates giving his studies up (for the second time) to support Zoe and the twins. • They have an argument and they break up, after he is honest about his fears. • After they break up and Zoe comes back to win 	<p>father he meets at the children’s playground - who he discusses his fears about fatherhood with, and takes advice from.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is very expressive with Zoe. • He is unafraid to tell her how he is feeling. • He is also unafraid to verbally fight with Zoe to get his point across. 	<p>physically expresses emotions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear, • Love, • Excitement, • Passion, • Stress • He tells Zoe when he is in love with her. • He also tells her when he is scared of their future. • During his exams, he is visibly stressed about his study load, work load and figuring out how he is going to afford to support Zoe and the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm house kitchen decor is typical of American style farmhouse – not much of the house is seen. • He attempts to purchase a pram for Zoe, but is overwhelmed – relies on sales assistant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is seen partly unclothed when on the tractor-shirtless. • His hair is neatly trimmed. • Is unshaven – but neat.
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	<p>him back, he accepts her apology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the end he opens the store he dreamed of opening and he proposes to Zoe. 				
<p>Danny Maccabee – <i>Just Go With It</i> (Romantic comedy)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced on his wedding day were he finds out that his fiancé has been cheating on him. • He lies to women about being married so that he can have sexual relations without getting emotionally attached. • Falls in love with a girl named Palmer who he then needs to convince that his marriage is over so that she will form a relationship with him. • He manipulates his assistant Katherine to pretend to be his estranged wife. • They then pretend to be in a middle of a divorce. • He manipulates Katherine so that she will let her children get involved and they too 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the dialogue is between Katherine and Danny. • These conversations are about Katherine’s unease at lying to Palmer and the inconvenience this deception is on her and her children. • He is mostly trying to convince her to keep up the pretence for a little longer until their ‘divorce’ is through. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is supposedly very much in love with Palmer, but eventually realises that he is actually in love with Katherine. • He does not express much of his emotion verbally or physically. • His irritation with the children is often expressed through sarcastic comments to and about the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is not seen with any personal social artefacts. • Home and car not seen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He wears a doctor’s coat when at work. • Otherwise he is mostly dressed in casual clothes that are loose fitting. • He is seen once unclothed when he is in the pool wearing bathing shorts. • He is clean shaven. • Hair is very short.

	<p>become a part of the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He watches as Katherine shops after he insists that she appear appropriate when pretending to be the wife of a plastic surgeon. • He then gets manipulated into taking the children, Katherine, Palmer and his friend to Hawaii on a short vacation. • He tries to assert himself but is often ignored as Palmer tries to get him to 'bond' with his 'children'. • He realises his feelings for Katherine and chooses to leave Palmer at the altar. • He and Katherine ultimately get married. 				
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Table 6.1 Summary of coded data.

The above summarised information gathered by using the codes was then analysed to identify if any of the themes were present. By identifying the themes in the data collected under each code, the masculine characteristics of the characters can be identified. Below is a discussion of the masculine traits identified in each character with regards to the seven theoretically derived norms of masculinity (Levant et al 1992) that make up the themes for this particular textual analysis.

6.6 THE ACTION GENRE ANALYSIS

The following is the analysis of the themes identified within the data collected from the purposive sample of action genre films, using the above codes.

6.6.1 Fear and hatred of homosexuality

The character Roy Miller from *Knight and Day* (2010) is employed as an FBI agent who is thought to have gone rogue. Of the seven themes (see 5.6.1), Roy has characteristics from six of the seven. The fear and hatred of homosexuals theme seems to have no bearing in the case of Roy. This is because there are no references to homosexuals in the film. Roy does not come across any homosexual characters and there are no references made to homosexuals in the dialogue between Roy and the other characters. Therefore no inferences can be made as to Roy's propensity towards, or objections to, homophobia.

The same can be said for the characters of Frank Tupelo (*The Tourist*, 2010) and the character of Will Colson (*Unstoppable*, 2010). Neither of these characters have any indications of having a fear of homosexuality. Similar to the film *Knight and Day* (2010) there are no homosexual characters in these two films. As such there are no conversations where the sample of characters discuss or are exposed to any homosexual characters. Therefore no inferences can be made with regards to these characters' acceptance or fear of homosexuality. It could be argued that the lack of homosexual characters, or references to homosexual individuals, is an indication in itself that the producers are trying to avoid the topic of homosexuality. By avoiding the subject the producer's are avoiding alienating those audience members that are either pro- or anti-gay. However, a statement like this is beyond the scope of this

study, as there is no way to infer from the research methodology what the producer's intentions were regarding this subject. For the purpose of this study, it is just noted that no inferences can be made regarding the characters support for, or fear and hatred of, homosexuals.

6.6.2 Self-reliance

The second theme to be discussed is the self-reliance theme. As described by Levant et al (1992:336), scoring high in self-reliance means that the more independent men are in making their decisions, the less they rely on others for assistance, the more realistic they are in their judgments, and the more confident they are in making decisions the more masculine the man is reported to be. This is reiterated in Chapter Three where Harrison's definition of masculinity is discussed. Harrison (2008:56) reports self-efficiency as one characteristic of many that can be used to construct a definition of traditional masculinity. Masculine men, it can then be argued, prefer not to rely on others. Of the three characters in the sample of action genre films, two of the characters show evidence of this particular characteristic. The third is represented as having very little in the way of self-reliance.

It is indicated in the analysis that Frank Tupelo (*The Tourist*, 2010) is not particularly self reliant. The story line for *The Tourist* (2010) is a complicated one with Frank Tupelo revealing himself to be Alexander Pearce by the end of the film. Regardless of his name there is little in the way of self-reliance portrayed in the film as Frank relies extensively on others throughout the film. Firstly, in order to accomplish his goal of evading the Interpol agents, Frank relies considerably on Elise to implement his plan, with him becoming more of an observer of the events around him than an actual participant. Also, in the one scene where Frank has been captured and is being held hostage by an Italian police officer, Elise is the one who helps him escape. With regards to the ensuing chase scene, it is Elise that does the evading. Frank remains tied to a boat; only warning Elise if and when danger approaches. The only real evidence of the self-reliance theme is that Frank is confident in his plan. So much so that he does little in the way of getting involved in the implementation of the plan.

In the case of Will Colson and Roy Miller; they both rank higher in terms of self-reliance. Both characters have indicators of being able to accomplish tasks with little reliance on others. In fact both, it appears, try their best not to involve others in their tasks. From the start of his work day Will is informed by his superior (and trainer for the day), Frank Barnes, that if there is anything that he does not know how to do he must ask questions. However, he communicates little beyond what is required to do the job, and does not ask any questions. The result being that twice he makes mistakes that Frank Barnes has to confront him about. Also, later in the film, while both Will and Frank Barnes are in pursuit of the runaway train, Will offers to undertake two dangerous tasks by himself. The first is to connect two trains while both are moving; it is here that he gets badly injured. After having his foot crushed between the two train cars, he once again volunteers to go out and apply the individual breaks on each car on the runaway train.

It is Will's submission to Frank Barnes that reduces his masculinity. Frank Barnes is a veteran train engineer overseeing Will on his first day on the job. Although Will does attempt to assert his own independence from Frank Barnes by not asking questions and arguing about different decisions that need to be made; by the time the two men are chasing after the runaway train, Will has subsumed control over to Frank Barnes.

Roy Miller, alternatively, does not rely on anyone to make his decisions. Roy is almost obsessively independent, quite possibly because his profession as a spy requires him to be self-reliant. However, it is not only his decision making that increases Roy's fit within the self-reliance theme. He also relies very little on the other characters in the film. June, his female companion during the film, is just a passive observer to Roy's decisions, and sometimes she does not even observe these decisions as Roy renders her unconscious a number of times throughout the film so that he can continue with whatever he is doing. Roy is even so fiercely independent that he does not rely on his previous employer, the FBI, in order to help him keep Simon safe.

Finally, Roy shows confidence in all of his decisions. From jumping off a bike in mid air during a car chase, to manipulating June to hand him over to the FBI to keep her safe, to fighting off an international assassin single handed. Each of Roy's decisions are his own, and never seems to waiver with regards to these decisions. It is for these reasons that Roy can be considered the most masculine of the three action characters with regards to this particular theme. On a continuum of masculinity Frank Tupelo would be the least masculine, with Will and Roy on the opposite end of the continuum. However it must be reiterated that by making use of the definition of masculinity espoused by Levant et al (1992:336); Roy is the most masculine of the three.

6.6.3 Achievement and status

As per the definition of masculinity, with regards to achievement and status, Levant et al (1992:335) explain that a man's masculinity can be measured by his determination to reach his goals, his willingness to sacrifice personal relationships for career advancement, his ability to take control within a group and his drive to win at competitive activities. Once again Frank Tupelo has few of the above mentioned traits. Frank shows little control in group situations, choosing to rather observe his surroundings than get involved; as when he is being arrested and handed over by a Italian police officer. Frank remains a passive observer of the exchange happening before him. In fact throughout the film, Frank is a passive observer of the events happening around him. Although the plan was of his and Elise's design, it seems that is the extent of his involvement. He is portrayed as being disengaged with the events unfolding around him. Frank is also unwilling to sacrifice his relationship with Elise in order to successfully complete their plan; as can be seen during his first and only attempt at being proactive. When Elise is captured, he risks both the plan that he and Elise have implemented, as well as his own life, in order to save her. Gallant as the attempt may be, it does not rate him high on the achievement theme.

A similar pattern emerges under the achievement theme, as is seen under the self-reliance theme. Both Roy and Will have traits that fit with this theme, although Roy does rank higher than Will. Will does place his work and duty before his family; as can be seen from the first few scenes of the film. Although he has a court date to

have a restraint warrant against him lifted so that he can once again see his family, Will chooses to go to work instead. Also, Will places his life at risk, and thereby his relationship with his family to chase after the runaway train. He could quite possibly have lost his life, and thereby his family, by doing so.

Where Will ranks lower than Roy, is that he does not take control of the situation once he and Frank Barnes go after the runaway train. Will subsumes command to Frank Barnes, allowing him to make the decisions as to how they are going to accomplish the stopping of the train. Roy, however, shows consistent determination throughout the film. The most extreme example of this that can be taken from the film is that earlier in his career Roy faked his own death, alienating himself from his parents. He sacrificed a relationship with his parents entirely in order to pursue his career. His career, it seems, required that he no longer have personal relationships and he chose his career goals over his family. This can be seen as an indication that he places personal relationships secondary to the task he is trying to accomplish. Also, the fact that Roy is willing to sacrifice his own reputation and be pursued by the FBI in order to protect Simon and the Zeffer is an indication that he is highly determined to reach his goals. He is therefore not only willing to sacrifice his relationships with others, but also his own reputation in order to accomplish the goal he has set out for himself.

Once again then, with regards to this particular theme, Roy has characteristics that indicate him to be more masculine than the other two characters, although Will does rate closely to Roy. In a discussion of writings by Blazina (2001:257) and Mansfield et al (2003:93) it is discussed that men feel obliged to be successful at whatever they do, whether the activity is work or leisure related. These same authors explain that most men feel conflicted with regards to their career and their family. Will and Roy are examples of this as both are determined to be successful at what they are doing; even putting their life and their familial relationships at risk in order to do it. Frank Tupelo does not rate very highly on the achievement theme, nor does he rate highly on the next theme, aggression.

6.6.4 Aggression

It is argued by Levant et al (1992:335) that the more risk taking behaviour that is prevalent, the more protective the individual, the more adventure seeking the individual, and a tendency towards violence when provoked, are indicators of increased masculinity. Frank Tupelo barely has two of the characteristics mentioned above. The only protective behaviour that is evident from Frank occurs at the end of the film when he escapes from Interpol custody in order to protect Elise from the men who have her captive. Frank has opportunities before this to be protective of Elise but does not act on these opportunities. For example, after Elise helps him escape from the Italian police officer, he does little in the way of helping himself or Elise; with numerous opportunities to defend himself physically he chooses to rather run than fight. What can be said for Frank is that he does take risks; placing himself in the middle of the investigation, when he is truly the one being sought after. In effect he is placing his own freedom at risk.

This one incident, however, does not compare to both Will and Roy who participate in numerous activities that can be considered to be high risk. Will, for example, by attempting to stop the runaway train is risking his life. In order to stop the train he has to straddle the two trains as he attempts to lock them together. In the process he slips and almost falls under the second train. Also, he is badly injured when his foot gets caught between the two trains. Another example is that of the incident with him confronting his best friend, who he accuses of attempting to have an affair with his wife. His aggressive stance towards the man is an indication that he is willing to become violent with little reciprocated provocation. Also, by confronting the man, he explains was an attempt at protecting his relationship with his wife. Confronting the man, he is attempting to salvage his relationship with his wife, before he loses her to another man. Will's confrontation with his friend, and his decision to chase down the runaway train, are both indicators of a protective nature.

Roy also has this protective nature. The entire storyline of *Knight and Day* (2010) is about Roy protecting people. He protects his family from his career choices by faking his own death, and anonymously sending them money to ensure their financial security. He spends the majority of the film looking for Simon to protect

him, while at the same time protecting June, who has since become embroiled in his dilemma. His determination to protect June is to such an extreme that he manipulates her into turning him over to the FBI. The plan being to have the FBI take her into custody, while he escapes in order to complete his own task of protecting Simon and his invention.

In order to accomplish this goal of protecting those around him, Roy does become violent on more than one occasion. Often with little provocation and mostly without any outward signs of emotion; indicating that he is perhaps comfortable with being violent, even blasé about it. These acts of violence are what often lead to actions that require great risk to his life. Roy crash lands a plane, ramps a motorbike so that he can land on top of a car, he fights numerous people at once, he rides a motorbike through a small town in Spain while being chased by bulls, jumps off a roof in order to fake his own death, is involved in more than one high speed car chase, to name but a few examples. These are all activities that Roy partakes in that could be considered high risk behaviour.

On this particular theme, the same pattern emerges then. Frank Tupelo can be considered, with regards to the chosen themes, to be less masculine than his action companions Will and Roy. Roy, again, is more masculine than Will (although not by much) purely because he is exposed to more opportunities to exemplify his masculinity. A possible limitation to the study is that in each of the films, the storylines do not always place the characters in situations where examples can be identified to link with the chosen themes. The next theme, non-relational attitudes towards sex, for example, requires that the characters be placed in situations where there is the opportunity for them to have sex.

6.6.5 Non-relational attitudes towards sex

In *Unstoppable* (2010), Will is in a train with a fellow male employee for the majority of the film. There is little interaction between Will and any female characters. So to determine if he disregards love in choosing a sex partner, is not concerned about birth control, will not engage in sex without the opportunity to orgasm, or whether or not he is always ready for sex (all indicators for the non-

relational attitude towards sex as described by Levant et al (1992:336)) is not necessarily possible.

Frank Tupelo, however, is confronted with moments where he could participate in sexual intercourse with Elise. He does not act on these opportunities, seeming almost torn between acting on his desire and his need for propriety. Roy behaves in a similar manner with June. In one of the first scenes in the film, June kisses Roy on the plane. Again, later in the film, after she has been kidnapped and Roy rescues her, she is the one that initiates a physically intimate moment. Both times Roy is distracted during the kiss, seemingly paying more attention to his surroundings than he does to her. For this reason, both men rate poorly on the non-relational attitudes towards sex theme.

6.6.6 Avoidance of femininity

The one theme within which all three characters rank highly is that of the avoidance of femininity theme. According to Levant et al (1992:335) masculine men should avoid all behaviours that could be construed as feminine. All three characters do avoid these types of behaviours. All three men wear masculine clothes, do not attempt to wear makeup or nail polish at any point in the films, do not participate in any craft work that could be considered feminine, and do not carry any feminine accessories like a purse or hand bag. Perhaps the closest a character comes to a feminine task, would be Roy who cooks for June twice in the film. The second time, however, he cooks a fish that he caught himself and cooks it on the beach on an open flame similar to a rustic barbeque. This possibly masculinises the task a little more as the barbeque is traditionally considered to be a man's territory.

6.6.7 Restrictive emotionality

The final theme to which the characters are compared is the emotional detachment theme. Levant et al (1992:335) describe more masculine men as being less likely to show emotion. For example: he should not cry in public, he should not show pain, he should not reveal his worries to others, and should avoid acting depressed. All three of the characters analysed in the sample of action films are

limited in their expression of emotion. With regards to Frank Tupelo, it could be argued that this is a masculine trait given to Frank so that he at least has one masculine trait. Frank shows little in the way of emotion while being chased and arrested by Interpol or in the presence of Elise. If placed on a scale of masculinity, Frank does not have a lot of traits that would place him at the masculine end of the continuum.

Will is also very much controlled with regards to his emotion; showing mostly aggression with regards to his family situation and with his partner on the train. When Will receives the news that the restraint warrant that has been placed on him has been extended, resulting in him being unable to visit his wife and child, he is verbally abusive to the individual on the other end of the phone call. Also, his body language indicates anger as opposed to sadness. Non-verbal behaviour like tensed fists and erratic body movements indicate more of an angry emotion than that of a sad emotion. The only real expression of a positive emotion is at the end of the film when he finally gets to see his family again. However, this part of the film is brief in comparison to his stoic emotional behaviour throughout the rest of the film. With regards to the expression of pain, Will does express pain after having his foot crushed between the train, however, he is quick to try and overcome the pain. There are no tears, no complaints, he simply wraps his foot in duck tape and continues with the task placed before him.

Also on an extreme, Roy expresses very little emotion. Roy expresses no pain after being shot, and shows little emotion with regards to panic or stress in moments that could be considered normal for these emotions to be expressed. Although they are chased, shot at, kidnapped, and physically attacked on more than one occasion; Roy remains calm throughout each of these situations. Also, the fact that Roy shares little with June as to his plans for keeping them both safe, is also an indication that he restricts those around him (and by extension the viewer) from having access to his concerns and his plans. Being in control is so important to him that he does not share these emotions with others.

The only exception to Roy's emotional stoicism is his verbal expression of hurt (verbal because he does not show any physical signs of sadness or hurt) when June hands Roy over to the FBI. Used as bait, June gets Roy to meet her in a hotel room so that the FBI can arrest him. Once he realises that she has in effect betrayed him (even though it was his plan all along) he says that the act of her "betrayal" hurt, but as he says this he is calm, with no outward expressions of sadness or betrayal.

The avoidance of emotionality theme is then evident in each of the characters from each of the action films. This could possibly be because the genre is not intended to be about emotion but rather the action of the characters that will solve whatever problem they find themselves in. However the characters' emotional stoicism is in line with the characteristics of masculinity as described by Blazina (2001:257) and Mansfield et al (2003:93). These authors explain that men are expected to be stoic in emotionally tense situations. All three men exemplify this characteristic remaining emotionally controlled in rather extreme tense situations. However, Will and Roy are more inclined to physical action, Frank is not. Frank is emotionally restrictive but he is also not very physical.

6.6.8 Comparison of action genre characters

Taking each theme and looking at a comparison of the three characters holistically it becomes apparent that both Will and Roy are more masculine than Frank. Frank is consistently portrayed as a less masculine male right up until the truth is revealed that he is in fact Alexander. In Chapter Three (see 3.1) it is explained that there are those men that are considered to be less masculine than others and as such are treated as subordinates to more masculine men. The representation of masculinity exemplified by Frank Tupelo in *The Tourist* (2010) is then perhaps such that he is supposed to be less masculine so as not pose a threat to the Interpol agents who are in pursuit of Elise. The attempt at minimising Frank's masculine traits places him as a subordinate to the other men in the film; thusly reducing him as a threat and allowing for the Interpol agents to underestimate him as an adversary.

Will and Roy are very masculine with regards to the themes as both characters rank high on the requirements for masculinity as set out by Levant et al (1992). It seems as though both characters were formulated with a specific kind of masculinity in mind. A masculinity that fits with the themes of masculinity as explained in the chosen themes derived from the research of Levant et al (1992) on masculinity. They also adhere to the norms of hegemonic and traditional patriarchal masculinity as described by Buchbinder (2008:243), Harrison (2008:56) and Benschoff and Griffin (2009:422). Both Will and Roy prefer action over talk and violence over negotiation and have characteristics like self-efficiency, activity, courage, toughness, competitiveness, technological skill and emotional detachment. Furthermore, Mansfield et al (2000:93) assert that men from a working class background are more likely to adhere to patriarchal ideologies of masculinity and as such will assert that women should be subservient to men. The need for dominance is echoed in the definition of hyper-masculinity previously discussed (in Chapter Three). The little background information given on both Will and Roy indicates that they both come from a working class background and as such could explain their propensity towards exerting their dominance over others. This is exemplified by Will dominating his wife when thinking that she is having an affair, and Roy's consistent behaviour of domination over June. The characteristics described above allude to both Will and Roy being more hyper-masculine than hypo-masculine.

As previously discussed in Chapter Three (see 3.3), Harrison (2008:56) explains that contemporary discourse on masculinity indicates a change where men are supposed to be adopting more feminine characteristics. For example, men are supposed to be becoming more nurturing towards children, are supposed to integrate sex and love, are supposed to curb aggressive behaviour and should be able to communicate their innermost feelings. In the definition of hypo-masculinity given in Chapter Three (see 3.6), it is explained that men who have characteristics that are more likely to be associated with femininity than masculinity are labelled as hypo-masculine. The result being that contemporary discourse on masculinity alludes to a more hypo-masculine male identity as opposed to the hyper-masculine identity of males from previous generations.

Frank's propensity towards avoiding violence and aggression, once again reduces his affinity towards traditional masculinity. Also Frank's reliance on, and tendency to subordinate himself to Elise, is similar to the post-patriarchal masculinity espoused by Stanley (2006) where men are no longer considered the only individuals who can be the saviour of others. Benschhoff and Griffin (2009:8) define patriarchy as the belief that men are entitled to greater access to power than women. Frank is an example of post-patriarchal masculinity because he relies on Elise, who is herself a strong independent woman. This and the absence of traditional masculinity (as mentioned above) reiterates the fact that Frank is representing a subordinate masculinity or rather a hypo-masculinity. Will and Roy are arguably more hyper-masculine as they do not have these characteristics, alluding to the fact that they are of a more traditional patriarchal hyper-masculinity.

With regards to the gender role conflict described in Chapter Three (see 3.4), Will and Roy are portrayed as the kind of men; other men think they need to aspire to be. In effect they exemplify the kind of masculinity that Blazina (2001:257) argues results in gender role conflict when men are unable or unwilling to adhere to these characteristics. Men who do not feel the need to control others, or support gender equality in the workplace, family and relationships may feel conflicted when attempting to reconcile the patriarchal masculinity represented in the action genre. In their discussion of gender role conflict Blazina (2001:257) and Mansfield et al. (2003:93) discuss four specific patterns that are attributed to gender role conflict. In short the four areas include: power (interpersonal, sexual, and financial), avoidance of emotional expression, restrictive affectionate behaviour between men and the work/family conflict; Will and Roy adhere to each of these.

Neither Will nor Roy shows affection to another man, both choose work and success over their families, both are emotionally distant with those around them, and both are portrayed as men who insist on having power over those around them. On O'Day's (2004:204) 'have me, be me' axis, it would seem that these two characters are being portrayed as the kind of men that other men should want to be. The result being that when men are unable to adopt these same characteristics they feel inadequate. This is, however, an assumption that will need to be tested elsewhere as this particular study is only looking at the representation of masculinity and not the

affects of the representations on audience members. It is important to note however, that the masculinity that these two characters portray is remarkably similar to the kind of masculinity described by many of the writings on the crisis of masculinity and gender role strain (see 3.4).

As it stands, with regards to this particular sample of films, the masculinity portrayed across the action genres is dispersed across the hypo-hyper masculinity continuum. However, the characters of Will and Roy indicate that the action genre is more likely to have hyper-masculine leading men, limited in their ability for emotional expression, highly determined with regards to their social, and career standing and have a tendency towards high risk physical behaviour as opposed to communicative, emotional interactions. Will and Roy therefore adhere to an image of patriarchal masculinity that is premised on strength, leadership, self-reliance, aggression and restricted emotionality that Benschhoff and Griffin (2009:422) describe as a masculinity that is prevalent in contemporary Western culture.

It is important to note that the objective of this particular study is not to determine if the masculinity represented by the characters is true to what masculinity actually is. This would be hard to do considering it has already been argued in Chapter Three (see 3.3) that masculinity is a social construction dependant on an individual's context. However, by analysing these characters one can begin to see which forms of masculinity are prevalent across the genres. Will and Roy represent the kind of masculinity that men, as discussed in Chapter Three, aspire to be.

6.7 THE ROMANTIC COMEDY GENRE ANALYSIS

The following is the analysis of the themes identified within the data collected from the purposive sample of romantic comedy genre films, using the above codes.

6.7.1 Fear and hatred of homosexuality

The three characters from the romantic comedy genre are also different in their representation of masculinity. Each character brings to the fore different masculine traits that fit with the seven theoretically derived norms as identified by Levant et al

(1992). As was identified with the characters analysed in the action genre, Spencer (*Killers*, 2010), Danny (*Just Go With It*, 2011) and Stan (*The Back-up Plan*, 2010) also range in their masculinity. What needs to be reiterated for the characters from the action genre, is that no inferences can be made about the characters with regards to the fear and hatred of homosexuals theme. None of the characters are exposed to homosexual characters, and there are no discussions about homosexuality in the film; therefore no judgements can be made with regards to these three characters and their perceptions of homosexuality. The remaining six themes, however, are applicable.

6.7.2 Self-reliance

The first of the remaining six themes to be discussed is that of self-reliance. Both Spencer and Stan undergo a change with regards to this particular theme. As Levant et al (1992:336) explain, scoring high on this particular norm would require that the men are not reliant on others to make decisions, are confident in the decision that they do make and are realistic in their judgements. At the start of both *Killers* (2010) and *The Back-up Plan* (2010) the male lead characters are portrayed as being independent and self-reliant, however, this changes as the film progresses.

At the start of *Killers* (2010), Spencer is seen completing a mission as an independent assassin. He is seen completing the mission as he boards a ship; plants a bomb and defends himself from an attacker on his own. After meeting Jen this self-reliant, confident man becomes more reliant on those around him, and more prone to give in to the decisions made by others. He is seen numerous times having to rely on Jen to the point where other characters directly and indirectly imply that he cannot make decisions for himself. His friend tells him that Jen “has him by the balls” when Spencer declines an invitation to go out; and Jen insists that her father keep Spencer company when she is meant to be out of town on business. Jen does not seem to have much faith in Spencer’s ability to make decisions for himself, or for them as a couple. Once the assassins start to attack, Jen continuously undermines Spencer’s decisions throughout the film; each time insisting that they ask her parents for help with the situation that they have found themselves in.

His decrease in self-reliance is again indicated during the fight scenes in the film. During the numerous scenes where Spencer is attacked by a range of different assassins; in each incident it is Jen that helps him (whether inadvertently or not) defeat each assassin. Jen walks in as the first assassin has Spencer in a compromising position, she picks up a gun and the man surrenders. When Spencer's work colleague has him pinned to a boardroom table, Jen interrupts just in time; and when his office assistant is attacking him from her vehicle, Jen drives in just at the right time to help him defeat her as well.

A similar pattern can be seen with Stan. At the start of the film, Stan is confident to the point where he adamantly pursues Zoe, even though she insists that she is not interested in him. He is portrayed as a man who is confident with women and who owns his own business (a career choice that, it could be argued, requires a certain amount of self-reliance). While initially pursuing Zoe he even explains to her that he is a great catch and he does not understand why she would say no to at least going on a date with him. However, once the relationship starts and he finds out that she is pregnant, he is portrayed as becoming more reliant on Zoe. His confidence is shaken, quite possibly because his experience with pregnancy and children is limited. Nonetheless he becomes reliant on Zoe and begins to question his own life path as he starts contemplating giving up his dreams (to finish college and open up a deli of his own) to support hers. The reliance and sacrifice is a pattern of Stan's which is indicated by the story he tells Zoe about his past. Stan dropped out of college so as to marry his then girlfriend. Stan has a pattern of choosing the woman in his life over his own personal life goals.

Both Spencer and Stan, it seems, gradually become less self-reliant once they become romantically involved with their female character companions. Both men become completely ingratiated into the women's lives. The woman's friends become their friends; neither Spencer nor Stan are portrayed as having any close ties to another person before they met Jen and Zoe. Both Spencer and Stan relocate to live with their female partners (once the relationship begins, Stan is always seen at Zoe's apartment, and not at his farm). The result being that the women become the epicentre of the men's lives, with each decision being made by or for their significant others.

Alternatively, Danny shows no sign of self-reliance. From the outset of the film Danny is consistently relying on Katherine both professionally and personally. Katherine is introduced as she is reprimanding a delivery man for delivering the wrong medical supplies and is later seen interacting with a number of Danny's patients throughout the film. Once Danny becomes infatuated with Palmer, it is Katherine that gives him the idea as to how to solve his problem, and then later becomes instrumental in helping successfully implement the solution. Danny has numerous opportunities to take initiative and make decisions but is often undermined by the female characters in the film. During the scenes in Hawaii, Danny attempts to spend alone time with Palmer on a number of occasions, each time his plans are ignored resulting in Danny participating in activities that he disapproves of. Where Danny differs on this theme from the other two male characters is that he is never really portrayed as being particularly self-reliant; whereas with Spencer and Stan their growing reliance on Jen and Zoe is evident. Where Danny does rank high, is the following theme, achievement.

6.7.3 Achievement and status

Danny is portrayed as persistent with regards to his goal of getting Palmer to be his girlfriend, to the point where he is willing to place his working relationship with Katherine in jeopardy to get her to lie for him. Also, he places her children in a position where they too have to lie in order to help him. He continuously encourages them to lie, often getting agitated with them when the truth begins to slip out. One such instance is while playing a board game with the children; the boy begins to explain how his father does not have time for them. Obviously he is talking about his biological father, but Palmer is under the impression that Danny is his biological father. Danny then gets upset with the boy because he is inadvertently making Danny look like a bad father. Pulling the children aside, he reprimands them explaining that they only have to lie for a few more days. This persistence, and not the dishonesty, is in line with the definition of the achievement theme; the determination to succeed at the chosen goal even at the expense of others.

Where Danny does not rank high on this theme is the ability to take control in a group and to sacrifice personal relationships for career growth. His career is

secondary to his attempts to win Palmer over, and once Katherine and the children are involved in the ruse, Danny has little control over their actions and decisions. Danny often has to take part in activities that he does not want to, for example, having lunch at a children's restaurant, taking everyone to Hawaii (which he previously was adamant would not be happening), going on a nature hike, and having to spend quality time with the children. What could be said for Danny, however, is that he is willing to sacrifice his own plans, in order to achieve his ultimate goal of getting Palmer to accept his plea for a relationship.

In a similar pattern to the previous theme, Spencer and Stan both, at the start of the films, are portrayed as being very driven. Both men have personal and career aspirations that they are determined to achieve. Spencer had little in the way of personal relationships, and chose his career over building any close ties with others. Stan was going back to school and working part time so as to achieve his goal of opening his own deli. However, once they meet Jen and Zoe, respectively, their goals change and they replace these with goals that suit their new partners. Both men place their career objectives on hold for the women: Spencer retires from being an assassin and Stan contemplates leaving school to get a full time job to support Zoe and the babies. The only difference between these two men is that Spencer did want to have a life away from being an assassin, whereas Stan's short term goals did not include looking after twin babies. Either way, both men choose their female partners over their careers.

6.7.4 Aggression

The next theme is counter to what is expected from the romantic comedy genre; aggression. It is here that the male lead characters from the romantic comedy genre are analysed to identify risk taking, adventure seeking, violent behaviour as per Levant et al's (1992) theoretically derived norms. The context of a romantic comedy does not always allow for expressions of these behavioural characteristics, however, Spencer is in a romantic comedy and on more than one occasion behaves in a violent manor, but only to protect himself and Jen. It is important to note that he is never overtly aggressive, rather acting violent only at those times when he and Jen are in physical danger. Due to the premise of the film, they are placed in danger often as one

assassin after another attempts to assassinate Spencer. In the scenes where there are no physical scenes there are also no signs of aggression or violence. Even when Jen and Spencer begin to argue about how to handle the situation that they find themselves in, Spencer does not become aggressive. The result being that Spencer is characterised as being more protective than aggressive. Although he is aggressive and uses violence to protect Jen and himself he would not be considered hyper-masculine as per Zaitchik and Mosher's (1993:230) definition. His aggression is self-preservation rather than an overt need to control others. Stan is similar to Spencer in this regard.

Stan's storyline does not provide any situations for him to become violent or aggressive, and, as with Spencer, Stan also does not show any signs of violence or aggression even when he and Zoe argue. Where Stan does exhibit behaviour fitting the theme, is that he is very protective of Zoe, but more as a provider than a physical protector. Again, this is because the nature of the storyline does not require Stan to be physically protective of Zoe. The same applies to Danny. However, Danny does not seem concerned about the well being of others and shies away from any adventure seeking activities. Danny does not exhibit any protective behaviour; he on more than one occasion makes decision that would be adverse to the safety or happiness of someone else, in order to pursue his first goal of winning Palmer over. At one point he throws the boy into the pool to teach him how to swim and on the nature walk he drops the girl in a large mud puddle. His priority is not the children's well being, encouraging them to continually perpetuate the lie. It is for this reason that Danny, with regards to the aggressive theme, exhibits less masculine characteristics than Spencer and Stan.

6.7.5 Non-relational attitude towards sex

Levant et al (1992:336) explain that the more masculine the man the more likely he is to disregard love for sex, should always be ready for sex when offered and should not be concerned about birth control. Danny is the only character who is portrayed as having numerous sexual encounters without being emotionally involved with the women. His ruse of pretending to be married in order to have un-emotional sexual encounters is aligned with the non-relational attitudes towards sex theme. This changes as the film progresses and he becomes infatuated with Palmer, and then

Katherine, choosing to rather settle down than continue to be a bachelor. Alternatively, Spencer and Stan are only seen pursuing their female companions and are portrayed as having their sexual encounters related to these emotional attachments.

Where these three characters are similar is that at one point or another during the films, decline the offer of sex for various reasons. Both Stan and Spencer decline the offer of sex from their partners during periods where they are more concerned about their personal situations. Spencer declines the offer after his old boss tries to contact him. He is concerned that someone is pursuing him and on two separate occasions spurns Jen's advances. Stan too rejects an offer of sex from Zoe at a point in the film where he is dealing with the uncertainty and worry of being able to afford to support Zoe and the babies. Danny is offered sex from Palmer, and declines in order to help Katherine, who insists that he help her because of all the help she has provided him. Danny is the only one who turns down the offer of a sexual encounter because of duty as opposed to a personal issue. It is important to note however, that these instances all follow periods where the men are offered sex and take up the offer with enthusiasm. However, as per the definition of the theme, by declining the offers placed before them, all three men rank low on this particular theme. The same pattern is seen in the next theme, avoidance of femininity.

6.7.6 Avoidance of femininity

To rank high on the avoidance of femininity theme, the men would have to refrain from all activities that could be considered feminine. None of the men participate in activities that are overtly feminine, like wearing make-up or nail polish. They do, however, participate in activities like cheese making, shopping and decorating, that do have feminine connotations. Each of these activities, however, are represented in such a way so as to make them seem more masculine. For example, Danny goes clothes shopping with Katherine when she buys clothes and shoes. He explains that it is because he wants her to look the part of his wife when she is introduced to Palmer. His inexperience in shopping for women's clothes however is evident by his shock at the cost of the items and his physical expression of boredom and frustration during the montage of the different stores they visit is possibly used to masculinise a stereotypically feminine activity.

An example taken from *Killers* (2010) is when Spencer redecorates Jen's office; Jen refers to the redecoration as construction. When he reveals the room to Jen, she happily states that he has finished with the construction of the room. Construction is stereotypically considered more of a masculine activity in comparison to decorating. The same trend is seen in *The Back-up Plan* (2010) where Stan is referred to as a farmer as opposed to a cheese maker. He sells the cheese products that he created at a local food market, but it is explained that he lives at, and runs the farm where the cheese is made as opposed to strictly being considered a cheese maker.

6.7.7 Restrictive emotionality

Of the three characters Stan is, also portrayed as being the most expressive of his emotions; which is contradictory to the behavioural characteristic described in the restrictive emotion theme. Stan's behaviour is, however, consistent with Harrison's (2008:56) discussion on the contemporary discourse of masculinity. Harrison (2008:56) explains that modern men are supposedly expected to communicate their feelings to others, commit to relationships and feel the need to nurture children. Stan repeatedly talks about his feelings for Zoe, he is shown to be in a panic state often and he expresses his feelings for Zoe to Zoe more than she does with him. During the first sonogram of the baby, Stan is shown as very uncomfortable to the point where he faints. Later in the film, when Zoe tries to break up with him, telling him to leave, he tells her that he does not want to. He places himself in a more emotionally vulnerable position than what she does with him. As such it could be argued that Stan expresses a broader range of emotions than any of the other characters (including that of the characters from the sample of action films). This is the opposite of what Levant et al (1992:335) describe as being a masculine trait. They argue that the more masculine the man the less likely he is to express any emotions, he should not show pain and should not reveal his worries to others.

When comparing Stan to Danny, Danny is more inclined to the descriptors of masculinity described by Levant et al (1992:335). Danny only really shows emotions three times in the entire film. First when he finds out his original fiancé is cheating on him he is visibly upset, second after meeting Palmer he expresses feelings for her, and lastly at his wedding to Katherine, he is visibly happy. The rest of the film, Danny

uses humour to replace emotion. The depth of the emotion portrayed by Danny is limited to humour and the occasional irritation with the children, when they begin to veer from the storyline he has created and the truth about their personal situations begins to emerge.

Throughout *Killers* (2010) Spencer does not hide his feelings. After their first date he tells her about his career and his dream of living in the suburbs. In a discussion with Jen's father, he expresses his feelings for Jen explaining that he depends on her. Later he is visually upset when Jen confirms that she is pregnant but she is unsure of whether or not she wants him to be father to the child. Another example is when Jen asks her parents and Spencer to confess a truth, in a truth circle. Spencer confesses that she was the first to say "I love you" while she was sleeping, but he never told her because he wanted to be the first to say it. He is, however, emotionally stoic during those scenes where the situation requires it. During those scenes where previous friends and work colleagues attack him, trying to assassinate him, he does not get emotional. He defends himself and Jen while keeping calm, without dealing with the emotional impact of having previous acquaintances trying to kill him. As such Spencer ranks somewhere between Danny and Stan on the hypo-hyper masculine scale for this theme.

6.7.8 Comparison of romantic comedy genre characters

As was stated with the comparison of male lead characters from the action genre, the masculinity portrayed across the romantic comedy genre is also dispersed across the hypo-hyper masculinity continuum. Danny has more characteristically masculine traits that align with Levant et al's (1992) seven theoretically derived norms of masculinity, followed by Spencer, and then finally Stan. Danny is emotionally stoic, driven to succeed at his chosen goal, is the only character shown to participate in un-emotional sexual encounters, and although he participates in a feminine activity he is obviously displeased by it.

Both Spencer and Stan, as compared to how they are introduced at the beginning of the film, gradually become less self-reliant as their storylines progress. Both characters are emotionally expressive, sharing their emotions with others and in

the case of Stan often seeming more emotionally expressive than his female companion. Also, both characters are portrayed as willing to sacrifice their own personal career goals to suit the needs of their female companions. Stan decided to leave college to support Zoe and Spencer leaves his successful career as an assassin to set up a life in suburbia.

Each character, however, varies in how their characteristics align with the seven theoretically derived norms (Levant et al. 1992). Both Spencer and Stan have masculine characteristics that change as the films progress. Both are portrayed as being self-reliant and dependant at the start of their respective films. As each storyline progresses each character changes his life goal and becomes dependent on his female companion. This is similar to how Taylor (2008:128) explains masculinity. Taylor (2008:128) explains that masculinity is dependent on personal context and is therefore constantly changing. The changes Spencer and Stan undergo, could then just be a reflection of how men and their masculine behaviour changes as their personal context changes; their reduction in self-reliance being triggered by the kinds of relationships that they pursue.

These two characters are also very emotionally expressive, which is a characteristic missing from the characters from the action genre. The strength, leadership, self-reliance, aggression and restricted emotionality that is described by Benschhoff and Griffin (2009:422) as prevalent in contemporary Western culture is only partially evident in the characters from the romantic comedy genre, and when compared to the action genre these characteristics are more prevalent in the action genre leading men, Roy and Will.

Although the leading male characters from this sample of films from the romantic comedy genre appear to have less masculine characteristics than those from the sample of action genre films, it should be said that the relationships between the male characters and their female counterparts still adhere to heteronormative relationships. Benschhoff and Griffin (2009:329) argue that “Hollywood filmmaking almost always still upholds the hegemonic dominance of white patriarchal heterosexuality, or heteronormativity”. This can be exemplified in the sample of films by the ways in which each of the films deals with the relationships of the leading

characters. Although the characters original meetings may be considered to be unorthodox, as with Zoe and Stan who meet after Zoe's becomes pregnant without a spouse, by the end of each of the romantic comedies the relationships have undergone a 'normal' progression ending in a man and a women getting married. Where these films deviate from what is considered to be patriarchal hegemony is that each of the female lead characters are portrayed as being independent and as in control of their families, relationships and careers as their male counterparts. Spencer, Danny and Stan, as explained previously (see 6.7), often give over control to their female counterparts, adhering to the decisions made on their behalf. This is in contrast to the relationship between Roy and June in *Knight and Day* (2010), where Roy is so much in control to the point of manipulating June into taking actions against himself, like handing him over to the FBI.

6.8 ROMANTIC COMEDY AND ACTION GENRE COMPARISON

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter; the more links that can be made between the characters actions, behaviours, social artefacts, dialogue etcetera, and each of the themes, the more masculine the character will considered to be. However, three variations were discovered during the analysis. When identifying the themes in the coded data it was discovered that; firstly, some of the characters had characteristics that aligned with the themes. Secondly, some of the characters had characteristics that aligned with the themes; however, the extent to which they aligned with the themes was less than other characters. Third, there were characters that had no characteristics that aligned with the themes.

As an example, out of the six male lead characters three characters had no characteristics that could be aligned with the aggression them: Frank, Danny and Stan (see table 6.2). The remaining three characters had characteristics that could be aligned with the theme, however, the aggression characteristics of one character (Spencer) was less than those of the two characters from the action genre (Roy and Will). A possible explanation for this, and a possible topic for future research, could be that it is expected that the characters from the action genre will be more physical, or rather more aggressive, as this is argued to be the nature of the action genre.

One theme that none of the characters could be aligned to was that of fear and hatred of homosexuals. None of the characters had characteristics that could be aligned to this theme as none of the characters came into contact with homosexual characters, or discussed homosexuality in any way (see table 6.2). It is for this reason that the theme cannot be used during this comparison. Possible reasons as to why this may be are beyond the scope of this particular study, therefore the only thing that can be noted is that the characteristics befitting the theme are not present in any of the characters.

Similarly, each character in the romantic comedy genre (Danny, Spencer and Stan) and two characters from the action genre (Roy and Frank) at one point decline the offer of sex when offered by their partners. This is in opposition to the non-relational attitudes towards sex theme. If they were to adhere to the expectations espoused within this theme, each character should have happily accepted the offer of sexual gratification. These five characters then do not behave in a way that their actions could be aligned with this particular theme. Danny is the only character that shows any sign of being able to accept sexually gratification without emotional ties.

There are two themes that indicate a distinct difference between the characters from the action genre, as compared to the characters from the romantic comedy genre: self reliance and avoidance of femininity (see table 6.2). The characters in the action genre have characteristics that align with these two themes, whereas the characters from the romantic comedy have no characteristics that align with these two themes. This could be an indication that characters in the action genre are more likely to adhere to a patriarchal understanding of masculinity. Roy and Will from the action genre are fiercely independent, relying little on others to complete their tasks. Both characters volunteer for, and accomplish dangerous tasks, without expecting or receiving much help from others. Frank is the only exception in the action genre, as he relies very much on Elize to complete his task. Also these three leading men have no characteristics that could be considered feminine. From the romantic comedy genre Spencer, Danny and Stan, alternatively, rely very much on their female counterparts throughout each respective film and each character participates in a past time that could be considered stereotypically feminine.

The final two themes, achievement and status and restrictive emotionality, are also more prevalent in the action genre, although there are some instances of these themes evident in the romantic comedy genre (see table 6.2). Each of the characters in the action genre have characteristics that are aligned with the restrictive emotionality theme, as they express little with regards to their emotions. Alternatively, the three characters from the romantic comedy genre are particularly expressive of their emotions. These three characters are represented as being both verbally and physically affectionate and unashamed to express how they are feeling to others.

A similar trend is identified with the achievement theme. All three characters from the action genre are highly motivated to achieve their goals, risking not only their own safety but also their relationships with their significant others. Only one of the characters from the romantic comedy has characteristics that align with this theme, Danny. Danny takes a break from his work and places the relationship with his assistant and friend at risk, in order to achieve his goal. Spencer and Stan, however, begin the film as being ambitious and driven but this soon changes when they meet their female counterparts. It is here that these characters from the romantic comedy genre begin to veer away from a patriarchal understanding of masculinity as they both become reliant on their significant others, becoming more considerate of their safety and/or needs than achieving their own personal goals.

It is evident then that the characters from the action genre do exhibit more masculine characteristics than those from the romantic comedy genre (see table 6.2). By saying that one character is more masculine than another, what is meant is that the more masculine characters have more characteristics that align with the themes and thereby adhere to the seven theoretically derived norms of masculinity as described by Levant et al (1992). However, it must be noted that these representations are complex and often share in certain characteristics and differ in others, indicating that what is perceived as masculinity is complex with variation within and across genres.

The following page includes a table with a visual representation of the above discussion (see table 6.2). The table indicates which characters had characteristics that aligned with each of the seven themes (highlighted in red), which characters had

characteristics that did not (highlighted in green), and finally which characters had characteristics that had characteristics but these characteristics were fewer than the other characters (highlighted in blue).

Character	Themes						
	Fear and hatred of homosexuality	Self reliance	Aggression	Achievement and status	Non-relational attitudes towards sex	Restrictive emotionality	Avoidance of femininity
Action genre							
Roy							
Will							
Frank							
Romantic comedy genre							
Spencer							
Danny							
Stan							

Green: Characteristics not aligned to theme
Blue: Has characteristics aligned to theme, however, the extent to which they aligned with the themes was less than other characters
Red: Has characteristics aligned to theme

Table 6.2 Visual representation of character alignment with themes

What is indicated in Table 6.2 is that no two characters have exactly the same characteristics of masculinity. The number, and depth, of characteristics that align with the themes is then different for each character. However, there does seem to be a trend in that the characters from the action genre have more characteristics that align with the seven themes, than the three characters from the romantic comedy genre. The assumption then being that action genre characters are more masculine than their romantic comedy counterparts.

This trend is indicated by the higher number of red squares under the action genre section of the table, as opposed to the number of red squares under the romantic comedy section. There is an alignment of the characteristics given to men in the action genre and the seven themes and a misalignment of the characteristics given to the men in the romantic comedy genre and the seven themes. However, it is noteworthy that each character in those instances where the characters from either genre did possess some of the same masculine qualities; it was the depth or frequency of these characteristics that differed. As an example, under the aggression theme, for the most part the characters from the action genre showed more characteristics of aggression than the characters from the romantic comedy genre. This is indicated by the number of red squares under this theme for each character. There are more red squares under the action genre, and none under the romantic comedy genre. However, Spencer (as indicated by the blue square under the romantic comedy genre) has some characteristics that align with the aggression theme, but Spencer's aggression is only prevalent when provoked and as such does not fit with the aggression theme to the same extent as the aggressive characteristics seen from Roy and Will.

The male lead characters from the action genre portray characteristics that are similar to the characteristics Kimmel (1987) and Showalter (1991) explain as men's reaction to the changing roles of women at the end of the 19th century (see 3.4). In order to compensate for the increasingly dominant roles women were fulfilling in society men began to veer away from any feminised behaviour. Avoiding emotion and nurturing connections with others, men were attempting to return the equilibrium of gender roles back to where men were in control. Roy and Will are both male characters with a need to be in control. Roy is in control over June and Will attempts to remain in control of his relationship with his wife. Roy refers little to June's

judgment and makes all decisions for her. Will becomes aggressive when his relationship with his wife is threatened, he is angry at the fact that his wife has the ability to control their relationship by having a restraint warrant against him, keeping him away from her and their son (this is indicated by the story Will tells his work colleague while they are on the train).

Alternatively the male lead characters from the romantic comedy genre are aligned with the men that Kimmel (1987) explains supported the women's movement of the late 19th century (see 3.4). These men were supportive not only in protests, but took on previously feminised household routines in order to be supportive as they believed in equality. It would appear that the men in the romantic comedy genre are a reflection of these same beliefs. The women in the romantic comedy genre participate in the story line as equals, and are on occasion more dominant than their leading men. Spencer and Stan either give up, or offer to give up their own career goals in order to support the women in their lives. The decisions made with regards to their relationships, homes and friends centre on Jen and Zoe.

The variations between the male lead characters of the action genre and the male lead characters in the romantic comedy genre are exemplars for the different perspectives on masculinity. Roy and Will are representative of the strong, independent masculinity that was being promoted to compensate for what was argued to be an increasingly dominant role femininity was playing in society. While Frank, Spencer, Danny and Stan, it could be argued, are representative of men who accept and support the equality of women, not only in the workforce, but in the home as well.

The proposed reason for these variations across the six characters is that masculine behaviour is not only a social construction, but is also context specific. What the varying roles of the men portrayed across the six sample of films is indicating is that a man's actions and behavioural characteristics within a film could be dependent on the man's immediate situation and not necessarily because of the genre he is in. Just as Johnny Depp portrayed Frank Tupelo as a man of weakness, vulnerability and dependence his behaviour was required for the situation that he found himself in. His masculinity is in question from the start of the film, until the audience is told that Frank is in fact the highly sought after international criminal; it is

here that the audience becomes aware of the ruse that Frank and Elise developed and implemented to protect both of them from capture. His masculine behavioural characteristics are secondary to his goal of avoiding capture from the Interpol agent pursuing him; it could be argued then that this is why he is represented as being less masculine when compared to the other lead male characters.

The same could be said for Spencer from *Killers* (2010) and Will Colson from *Unstoppable* (2010); these men were self-reliant, driven, aggressive and emotionally stoic when the situation required them to be so. The fact that they also exhibited behaviour considered less masculine is perhaps more an indication of their ability to identify the appropriate behavioural characteristics that would best suit the situation that they found themselves in. For example, from the start to the end of the film Will gradually subsumes command to Frank (his co-worker) when he realises that it is Frank that has the experience and knowledge to save themselves, the train, and the small town in danger from the runaway train. Similarly, Spencer is violent when attacked but emotionally vulnerable when in the presence of his wife.

6.9 SUMMATION

Some of the seven themes are evident in some form or another in each of the characters: avoidance of femininity, self-reliance, aggression, achievement and status, non-relational attitudes towards sex and restrictive emotionality. The more characteristics a character has befitting each of these themes the more masculine the character would be considered to be. For example, it is indicated by the above comparisons that Roy demonstrates the most masculine characteristics as described within the seven themes, when compared to the other lead male characters.

Roy as a character has numerous characteristics that can be linked back to each of the seven themes: self-reliance, aggression, restrictive emotionality and avoidance of femininity. It is for this reason that of the six characters Roy is considered to be displaying the most features of hegemonic masculinity. Will is then second to Roy, followed by Danny and Spencer from the romantic comedy genre, respectively. Stan and Frank are the two characters who display the least masculine characteristics as described within the seven themes. Much of how these two

characters are represented is in opposition to the qualities and characteristics advocated for in each of the themes.

As stated previously, what the analysis indicates is that masculinity in film is just as complex as it is for the men living the construct. The kind of masculinity being represented only in part is dependent on the genre of the film. What also needs to be taken into account is the situational context within which the character is placed. It is perhaps then not as simple as labelling a character as less masculine purely because he is in a romantic comedy or particularly hyper-masculine because he is in an action film.

Masculinity in the sample of films is then broad with each character representing a different kind of masculinity. From emotional to stoic, from placid to aggressive, from dependant to independent; each character is created from a collection of characteristics that assist in creating a representation of masculinity for the audience. Chapter Seven is a discussion of the above analysis, including the application of the theory discussed in previous chapters to the analysis within this Chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One (see 1.1), it was stated that taking the action genre and romantic comedy genre at face value one would assume that there would be differences in the way masculinity is represented by the leading male characters. However, an in-depth understanding of how these two genres differ is required in order to make sense of the way in which, and the extent to which, the characters differ; what masculine characteristics are prevalent in the two genres. In order to do this, 'real' world norms were used as the basis on which to analyse different elements of the characters persona.

These 'real' world norms were taken from research completed by Levant et al (1992) who derived these norms from a theoretical understanding of masculinity and applied it to 'real' world participants. The result of this analysis of masculinity in film is discussed in Chapter Six and indicates that there are elements of masculinity that are more prevalent in the action genre, than in the romantic comedy genre. This indicates that the male lead characters from the action genre tend to be more masculine than those of the romantic comedy genre. The reason being, the masculine characteristics prevalent in the action genre align more with each of the themes as compared to the characteristics represented by the characters from the romantic comedy genre. This chapter is a final overview of the results of the analysis, with a discussion of the limitations of this study, and recommendations for possible future research on this particular topic.

7.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES REVIEWED

The purpose of this particular study was to determine the differences, if any, in the representation of masculinity across the action and romantic comedy film genres. Furthermore, the masculine characteristics most prevalent in each genre were to be identified in an attempt to determine how the masculinity of the leading male characters for each genre are constructed. In order to determine these differences a

comparison of the leading male characters from each genre was conducted to get a general understanding of how masculinity is represented in each genre, before comparing the genres to one another.

In order to complete the analysis a combination of a directed qualitative content analysis, as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115-116), and Neuman's (2007:330-332) three-stage coding process was used. The combination of methods assisted with summarising a large amount of raw data into more manageable sections by making use of the coding system. The data was then analysed again to determine which elements of the data could be aligned with the chosen themes. The more data there was per leading male character that aligned with each of the themes, the more masculine the character could be argued to be. The result is an analysis that provides an understanding of what kind of masculinity is represented in the sample of action films, as well as in the sample of romantic comedy films, and then finally an understanding of the differences and similarities of masculinity across the genres.

The sub-problems for this study were stipulated in Chapter One as follows:

- Using Levant et al's (1992) Male Role Norm Inventory, to what extent do the representations of the male lead characters in the chosen sample of films from the action genre conform to the identified norms of masculinity?
- Using Levant et al's (1992) Male Role Norm Inventory, to what extent do the representations of the male lead characters in the chosen sample of films from the romantic comedy genre conform to the identified norms of masculinity?

In order to answer each of these questions the leading male characters from each genre were analysed by looking at how they behaved, their emotions, their dialogue with other characters, the social artefacts that they possessed, their dress code and how they interacted with the other characters in the film. These characteristics were then compared to each of the themes taken from the seven theoretically derived norms as described by Levant et al (1992). The result of this analysis indicates that the representation of masculinity, as in life, is much more complex than being able to say a

character falls within a binary definition of masculinity. However, there is an indication that there are masculine characteristics prevalent in the action genre films that are less prevalent in the romantic comedy genre films.

Firstly, in answer of the first sub-problem, the leading male characters from the purposive sample of action genre films align more with each of the seven themes. Roy (*Knight and Day*, 2010) and Will (*Unstoppable*, 2010) have characteristics that align with the self reliance, aggression, achievement and status, restrictive emotionality and avoidance of femininity themes. Frank Tupelo (*The Tourist*, 2010) is an exception to these findings as he only has characteristics that align with the avoidance of femininity and restrictive emotionality themes.

In Frank's case, however, the lack of identification with the majority of the themes seems to be purposeful in the context of the film. To hide his true identity, and to minimise the threat he poses to the Interpol agents, his true masculine characteristics are replaced by those that build a persona of a man that is reliant on others, is not aggressive and is not used to taking risks. Therefore, in the film *The Tourist* (2010) it is the absence of masculine characteristics that is noted because of the presumption that a man with less masculine characteristics is considered to be less of a threat than a man who is perceived to be more masculine. The contradiction, however, is that by comparison Stan from *The Back-up Plan* (2011) is also identified as having fewer masculine characteristics than the other male lead characters of the same genre, however, Stan is not considered as less masculine by the other characters in the film. In the romantic comedy genre, it seems, having fewer masculine characteristics does not have the same connotation as it does in the action genre. This leads to the second of the sub-problems for this study.

In answer to the second sub-problem, the leading male characters from the purposive sample of romantic comedy genre films align less with each of the seven themes. The analysis of Spencer (*Killers*, 2010), Danny (*Just Go With It*, 2011) and Stan (*The Back-up Plan*, 2010) indicate that these characters have very few characteristics that align with any of the seven themes.

It is here that the differences in the genres start to become apparent and the question for this study can be answered.

- What differences, if any, are apparent in the representations of masculinity from the male lead characters in the chosen sample of action genre films, when compared to the chosen sample of romantic comedy genre films?

Roy and Will, both from the action genre, do tend to have more characteristics that align with the stipulated themes than Spencer, Stan, and Danny from the romantic comedy genre.

The masculinity represented in the romantic comedy genre is more emotionally available and expressive, less aggressive, more compromising and reliant on others; while in the action genre masculinity is more independent, stoic, aggressive and more physically adventurous. In short, it would seem the men in the romantic comedy genre are more about the emotional aspects of masculinity while the men in the action genre are more about the physical aspects of masculinity.

A possible reason for the difference in how masculinity is represented across the two genres could be explained by the definition of gender given by Butler (2008:97-98). Butler (2008:97-98) argues that gender is a performance. Individuals use certain behaviours to perform in a certain way so that others will perceive them to be of a certain gender. The characteristics of each leading male character are then possibly written so that they perform certain behaviours thereby creating the image of a certain kind of masculinity. A masculinity that is different for each character. The question this then raises for future research is, if masculinity is a social construction as is discussed in Chapter 3, and if a part of this construction is based on social artefacts, then which version of masculinity are men basing their construction on? Which characters are the more influential and considered more relevant as an influence to men's definition of masculinity? As relevant as these questions are they do not fall within the scope of this study and can therefore not be answered here.

7.3 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

As has been stipulated through-out, the findings from this research are limited to understanding how masculinity is represented in this particular sample of films. By using non-probability purposive sampling, the findings of this study are limited and can, therefore, not be generalised to all films. The purpose of the research, however, was to gain an understanding of the representation of masculinity across the two genres, and not to generalise to all films. Also, the audiences' point of view and their reading of the representations of masculinity are not taken into consideration; however, by undertaking a textual analysis, possible differences in the characters could become evident which could lead to further research that can focus on audience perception. By understanding how masculinity is represented in the chosen sample of films, future research could then use this as a basis to compare how each gender perceives these representations; and whether or not male and female audiences perceiving the characters in the same way. For example, are male audiences seeing the characters from the romantic comedy genre as less masculine than that of the characters from the action genre; and vice versa for female audiences?

Furthermore, it is suggested that the model used within this study to analyse the representation of masculinity in film, be used to analyse other semiotic formulas of identity construction in film. The combination of the directed qualitative content analysis, taken from Hsieh and Shannon (2007:115-116), and Neuman's (2007:330-332) three-stage coding process, could assist with the analysis of the representations of other social constructs, for example, representations of femininity or sexual orientation. It is important, however, that if this model of analysis is used that it be preceded by an extensive literature review in order to appropriately identify the required themes for the analysis, thereby ensuring that the model adapt to each research question that it is applied to. The use of this model in future research would then also assist in testing the validity of the method and offer possible improvements on the model.

7.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study emphasises that there are variations of masculinity being represented in across this sample of films and that there is no specific right or fixed formula when it comes to developing an understanding of what it means to be masculine. Perhaps if men who are dealing with something like gender role strain had a broader understanding of what it means to be masculine there would be no strain. Their behaviour would then be compared to a much broader understanding of masculinity reducing the strain caused by their current narrow definition. Instead of seeing the range of options for masculinity as daunting one should see them as opportunities to build an understanding that is broader than traditional definitions.

This would assist with Blazina's (2001:257) explanation of gender role conflict, where it is argued that men under go strain because they feel that the masculine ideal is dichotomous and either an individual fits with the ideal or they do not. A more varied explanation of masculinity will then alleviate the anxiety of having to either fit the ideal or be considered non-masculine. The six films from the sample all offer versions of masculinity that differ on a continuum from hypo-masculinity to hyper-masculinity. Each character differs in the range of masculine behavioural characteristics thereby offering a varied understanding of what masculinity is.

In Chapter 4 it is argued that the action genre is produced for a male audience, and the romantic comedy genre is targeted at predominantly female audience. If this be the case and the representations of masculinity across these two genres differ to the extent that they do, and in the way that they do, then it is understandable that there is a discrepancy between men's and women's socially constructed and media influenced definition of masculinity. If Stanley (2006:236), Hardt (2004:106) and O'Day (2004:204) are correct and gender representations in film are amalgamations of 'real' world understandings of gender which audiences learn from, could these differing representations be a contributing factor to the gender role conflict?

After looking at numerous biological, psychological and social definitions of gender, and in particular masculinity Gilmore (1990) explains in his book *Manhood in the making: Cultural concepts of masculinity*, that masculinity is both a cultural and

social construct that is dependent on the individual's cultural upbringing, and social context. As a social artefact, film can be argued to be a part of an individual's social context. The findings from this study then allude to the fact that conflicting understandings of masculinity could arise as audiences of romantic comedy's (which are for the most part female audiences) are being exposed to men in film that are emotionally available, willing to participate in activities that could stereotypically be considered feminine, and are able to rely on female counterparts. While audiences of the action genre (which are for the most part male audiences), alternatively, are watching films where men are shown to be very much self reliant, they do not discuss their emotions, are highly driven, and often prefer to handle opposition aggressively as opposed to talking through conflict. These two genres, it can then be argued, are contributing to opposing expectations of masculinity. Women expecting men to behave in one way like their romantic leading men. While men are learning to behave and expect other men to behave like their action heroes.

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ADDENDUM A

Filmography of action and romantic comedy genre films described in the study

Film title	Date of release	Director	Cast Name of character (name of actor in brackets)	Production company	Genre
Knight and Day	2010	James Mangold	Roy Miller (Tom Cruise) June (Cameron Diaz)	Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation	Action
Unstoppable	2010	Tony Scott	Will Collson (Chris Pine) Frank (Denzel Washington)	Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation	Action
The Tourist	2010	Florian Henckel Von Donnersmarck	Frank Tupelo (Johnny Depp) Elise (Angelina Jolie)	Columbia Pictures	Action
Killers	2010	Robert Luketic	Spencer Aimes (Ashton Kutcher) Jen (Katherine Heigl)	Lionsgate	Romantic Comedy
The Back-up Plan	2010	Alan Poul	Stan (Alex O'Loughlin) Zoe (Jennifer Lopez)	CBS Films	Romantic Comedy
Just Go With It	2011	Denis Dugan	Danny Maccabee (Adam Sandler) Katherine (Jennifer Aniston)	Sony Picture	Romantic Comedy

