Veirun, Shane: Hegemonic Masculine Values & Their Affect on Gender Expression & Identity

Research Proposal

"Hegemonic Masculinity" is the "culturally idealized form of masculine character" (Cheng 1999). In my video I plan to interview and survey multiple men in order to determine how they have received, interpreted, and incorporated messages pressed upon them by their surroundings. My goals include identifying the "current" form of the "hegemonic man" (as culture develops so too do our notions of the "ideal"), which agents are most influential in the mind of men (i.e. family, friends, media, education, etc.), as well as observe how hegemony has acutely affected men’s lives. In particular I would like to know how hegemonic masculinity has affected the average man's gender expression (how they act and express their gender) and identity (how they identify their gender on the spectrum/continuum).

"Another essential feature of ethnography is that it relates specific observed behavior to cultural norms" (Heider 1976). Chapter 1 I intend to use observations made through my interviews and surveys to draw conclusions about our cultural norms as a whole (Heider 1976). I plan to ask people directly about their life and experiences in a traditional interview style as opposed to following them throughout a day in their life. My hope is that they will not tailor their answers to what I would like to hear and instead be truthful about their experiences. I will select my interview subjects based on personal experience that I have had with them that has led me to believe they have encountered issues with hegemonic masculinity. In this sense I will not have had extended contact with my subjects in the traditional sense; as my subjects will be people with whom I have met and known before the start of my research as opposed to being people whom I sought out contact with expressly as subjects.

I plan to do this through short interviews with men from various walks of life. The interview will be partially Yes/No answers and partially open-end to allow for elaboration on certain topics. Due to my limited capability as a single researcher, I plan to follow Flaherty in that I will use a few specific individuals to draw conclusions about the larger group. I will try to interview from a pool of individuals I know as well as some that I do not know. I am particularly interested in observing the differences between men from different backgrounds and as such I would like to try and diversify my sample as much as possible. I expect to find that people have found it difficult to fit in with the "ideal" and that such an "ideal" has generally been harmful. This would lend itself to a mix of surveys and interviews—perhaps a pretty large sample for the survey, and then a smaller sample for interviews.

Proposal is about 250 words: yes

Proposal outlines the goals of the project: strong  good  adequate  needs work

Proposal outlines the methods of the project: strong  good  adequate  needs work

Reference to course readings: strong  good  adequate  needs work

Reference to scholarly/peer-reviewed anthropological works: strong  good  adequate  needs work

Final Video

Scholarly Background

The greatest form of power is that which is not recognized as being power. This is known as hegemony. In other words, hegemony leverages power without the threat of violence upon those who would deviate from the norm. According to Raewyn Connell, a doctor of sociology from Australia, feminism challenged existing hegemonic beliefs of gender but there also has been a tendency to presume that gender issues mainly pertain to women (Connell 2002). Naturally however, examining feminism has brought about questioning men’s existence in gender relations (Connell 2002). Connell pioneered the idea of “hegemonic masculinity” which is understood as the cultural ideal of masculinity. The concept of hegemonic masculinity suggests that masculinity is varied and that there is a multitude of “lesser” masculinities that are relegated to deviants. “deviants” may be too strong here. Perhaps “subordinated” men? Hegemonic masculinity is not a static archetype but rather one that evolves with time as culture itself evolves and changes.

“The hegemonic definition of manhood is a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power” (Cheng 1999 direct quotes require page numbers). Hegemonic manhood acts as a barrier to power that allows certain types of men to exercise power over others while at the same time barring others from ever possessing such power. The average man experiences hegemonic manhood in the form of norms and pressures that impress values upon them from a young age. Role models such as fathers, movie stars, superheroes are essential to an early boy’s education of masculinity. For instance, (a 2003 study) Jakupak at al. (2003: page number) found that there was “a significant relationship between men’s cognitive and experiential components of masculinity and men’s fear of positive emotions” (Jakupak et al.). The study found that men who had grown up with more traditional masculine traits were more likely to have a fear of emotions and suppress them as a whole.
Hegemonic masculinity boils down to being a choice (hmmm... I'm not so sure it is that simple. Free will is complicated by context), one that can be severely impacted by information given during childhood and point of view (Jewkes et al. 2015) or maybe that is reference to context. Young boys may grow up idolizing the power they were told to hold over others but some may reject this mantle in favor of growing up under an alternative masculinity (fair enough, there is some choice, but that is not the same as "boiling it down" to choice). Those who choose to not adhere to the ideal are subjected to a lifetime of being compared and measured by a norm that they have no interest in (again... can anyone have "no interest" in norms? We can reject them but that is not the same as not being interested). Failing to adhere draws all sorts of attention from those who are subjugated by hegemony and those who enforce it. This attention is largely negative, as failure to conform obviously brands one as a pariah (sometimes it does, but sometimes it results in more subtle penalties—try to be a bit more nuanced and less categorical). Resulting stigma may be incorporated in various forms of social hazing, bullying, and destructive actions; all of this because someone may be deemed "less masculine" than others.

The main goals of my research were to identify current hegemonic masculine values and observe how they may affect one's perception of their own masculinity. I sought to see how men feel about the way they interact with society on a daily basis. In order to answer these questions I had a survey phase and an interview phase of my research. For the survey (Appendix A), I contacted 20 men between the ages of 18-30 and had them answer the Google Form. For the interview aspect of my research I talked to two individuals that I have known for a year or more. The reason I picked these two was because I knew they had struggled with their masculinity in past and/or I had identified them as men that didn't fit into the hegemonic standard. One individual was a male of 18 years which I grew up alongside. The interview was a structured one with eight questions. Other than that, I also had my interviewees answer several questions on a continuum scale. The questions themselves being based on the "genderbread person" (Appendixes B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, & J). My interview subjects were given continuum scales of gender, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation and asked to identify how they felt about themselves ("subject's p.o.v.") in relation to it and how they felt others generally viewed them ("other's p.o.v."). "Other's p.o.v." was quantified by my interview subjects based on how they had been treated by others in the past. This involved questions they had been asked, comments they received, etc. Very good discussion of methods

In the film itself I started by defining hegemonic masculinity as it is a concept that some are unfamiliar with. I narrated this as I didn't know how to get this information across without narration. I also incorporated the survey through two diagrams (a pie chart and a bar graph, Appendixes K & L) to demonstrate common responses in a visually receptive way. Alongside this explained what questions I asked and the most common answers. In the surveys questions about celebrities and brands that capture the masculine ideal were used to determine current day traits of a "hegemonic man." For the interviews I could not include both without condensing what was said by both subjects. I chose to include one full interview and simply transcribe the other (Appendix M) as I felt that over-editing their voices may make result in me imposing my own meaning on what was said. Neither subject wished to be named, and one requested that his voice be distorted if used. I omitted my own voice from the interview section in an attempt to let my subject become more predominant. I sprung the interview upon my subjects with little pretense in an effort to get as genuine a reaction as possible.

I used the film "Paris is Burning" as an inspiration for my interview style; "Paris is Burning" had a multitude of personal interviews in an informal setting. However due to the nature of my research and the preferences of my subjects, my film ended up being rather uninteresting and dull because I knew they had struggled with their masculinity in past and/or I had identified them as men that didn't fit into the hegemonic standard. One individual was a male of 19 years that I see on a daily basis and as such was able to pick him out as someone who may be considered "non-masculine" and the other was a male of 18 years which I grew up alongside. The interview was a structured one with eight questions. Other than that, I also had my interviewees answer several questions on a continuum scale. The questions themselves being based on the "genderbread person" (Appendixes B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, & J). My interview subjects were given continuum scales of gender, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation and asked to identify how they felt about themselves ("subject's p.o.v.") in relation to it and how they felt others generally viewed them ("other's p.o.v."). "Other's p.o.v." was quantified by my interview subjects based on how they had been treated by others in the past. This involved questions they had been asked, comments they received, etc. Very good discussion of methods

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I used the film "Paris is Burning" as an inspiration for my interview style; "Paris is Burning" had a multitude of personal interviews in an informal setting. However due to the nature of my research and the preferences of my subjects, my film ended up being rather uninteresting and dull (don't undersell yourself-others will do that for you in academia!). The visuals of my film mostly consisted of looping clips of different academic buildings on the SUNY Geneseo campus. In the video it is never explained but the academic buildings depicted both contain the majors of my subjects. In retrospect, I realize I could have made my film more interesting had I shot more interesting stock footage. You're not graded on style, but I appreciate the reflection.

Appendix A: My Survey

1. In your role as a male, have you ever felt pressured to act a certain way?
   Yes Maybe No
2. If you have been pressured, who was responsible for doing so? (Check all that apply)
   Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Familial Relations News TV/Movies
   Commercials Strangers I have never felt pressured
3. Is there a male celebrity or public figure that you think is presented as the "ideal man?"
   If so, who and why?

4. Are there particular brands that you feel portray themselves as particularly "manly?" what qualities of being "manly" do these brands push?

Appendix B: The "Genderbread Person" off which my continuums were based. The definitions below were used to help explain each continuum to the subjects (Killermann 2018). I like this, but I cant read the text!

Genderbread-Person.pdf

Appendix C: How Subject 1 felt about his Gender Identity and how he felt others view his Gender Identity.
Appendix D: How Subject 1 felt about his Gender Expression and how he felt others view his Gender Expression.

Appendix E: How Subject 1 felt about his Biological Sex and how he felt others view his Biological Sex.

Appendix F: How Subject 1 felt about his Sexual Orientation and how he felt others view his Sexual Orientation.
Appendix G: How Subject 2 felt about his Gender Identity and how he felt others view his Gender Identity.

Appendix H: How Subject 2 felt about his Gender Expression and how he felt others view his Gender Expression.

Appendix I: How Subject 2 felt about his Biological Sex and how he felt others view his Biological Sex.
Appendix J: How subject 2 felt about his Sexual Orientation and how he felt others view his Sexual Orientation.

Appendix K:

In Your Role as a Male, Have You Ever Felt Pressured to Act a Certain Way

Appendix L:
Appendix M:

References Cited

Connell, Raewyn R.


Cheng, Cliff


Heider, Karl G.


Approximately 900 words
Yes no

Provides basic background information for the issues
Outstanding Strong Good Adequate Weak

Substantial list of scholarly and peer-reviewed References Cited listed
Outstanding Strong Good Adequate Weak

Includes brief discussion of why you chose the format of your video (e.g., narrated or non-narrated, etc) in relation to the course readings.
Outstanding Strong Good Adequate Weak

Makes reference to any of the films we watched that inspired your approach to the film. If so, why?
Yes no

The final wiki space is in past tense
Yes no

References in American Antiquity format.
Yes no some problems

Writing style
Outstanding Strong Good Adequate Weak

Overall very well done with good use of sources and Appendices.

Reflection on the Final Video

My research proposal expressed my goal as being “[...] identifying the ‘current form’ of the ‘hegemonic man’ [...]” which agents are most influential in the mind of men, […] as well as observe how hegemony has acutely affected men’s lives […] I would like to know how hegemonic masculinity has affected the average man’s gender expression.”

In terms of this, I personally felt that I had achieved my goals but I do not believe that I had reached a level where I can make generalizations about men and/or society as a whole. I think I could have reached that level of analysis by improving my methodology.

In retrospect, I would have liked to interview more subjects despite the fact that I didn’t truly use my second interview; my reasoning being that a larger sample size would allow me to draw more accurate conclusions about my study. The same could be said of my survey; a larger sample size would only have benefited my study. After viewing other films in class, I came to realize how visually uninteresting my film was; the reason for this was that I had wholly neglected shooting “B-roll”; while we were not evaluated on visuals I think complimenting visuals wouldn’t hurt my film.
I do feel that my wikispace was more competent in explaining certain aspects of my research. For instance, the gingerbread person explained how terms such as “gender expression,” “gender identity,” “sexual orientation,” and “biological sex” were defined for my subjects. I do firmly believe that my pieces are best when considered together as a whole. My film does a much better job at conveying my results and the voice of my subjects than my written work; and my written work does a better job at providing background and explaining methodology. The two tie well together and to view either component in isolation would result in the loss of a more holistic understanding; an ethnographic film should usually be accompanied by an ethnographic text (Heider 1976).

I ultimately would have preferred to create a film where my voice was not present at all and my subjects were given free reign to dominate the film but this was not possible as I felt I had to explain the basics of hegemonic masculinity and communicate the results of my survey. I do wish that I was more concise in my explanation of hegemony and the explanation of my survey because in the end I felt that I took up more space in my video than my subjects. After this I did however avoid narration (Sherman 1998) during the interview part of my video by using on screen captions for my questions. I would have liked to include my second interview but I feel that it would have been too subjective for me to pare down my subject’s answers in order to fit them in the run time; what I may have considered to be an “essential” part of a subject’s answer might have been the most inconsequential remark in someone else’s eyes.

References Cited
Heider, Karl G.

Sherman, S. R.

Written Reflection on Final Video Rubric (see syllabus p 3-4)
a bit long at 500 words (limit was 350)

Evaluates your video in relation to your written wiki space and the course readings, with explicit references to both.

Outstanding Strong Adequate Weak

Discusses choices you made about the style of the video and evaluates how successful were they in conveying the subject matter.

Outstanding Strong Adequate Weak

Discusses how well the video worked in comparison to the written component?

Outstanding Strong Adequate Weak

Explicitly reference the course readings (and other resources if you wish).

Outstanding Strong Adequate Weak

Entry is in past tense.

Yes No