

MEN IN THE MEDIA TODAY – FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

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

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

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

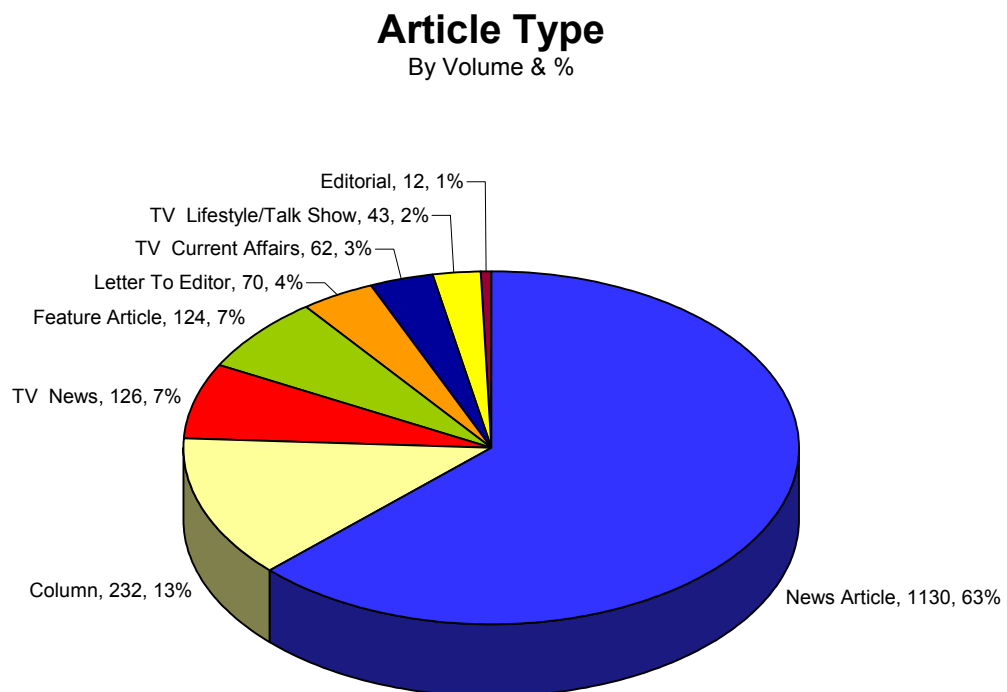


Figure 4. Breakdown of media content analysed by article type.

As could be expected in this sample, the greatest proportion of editorial media content was news articles (63%). Significantly, this was followed by 232 opinion columns discussing men and male identity issues (13% of total coverage) – a sign of substantial focus on men

and men's issues in topical debate. TV news and feature articles each comprised 7% of media content analysed; letters to the editor 4%; TV current affairs reports 3%, while 43 TV talk show and lifestyle program segments comprised 2% and editorials 1%.

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

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

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

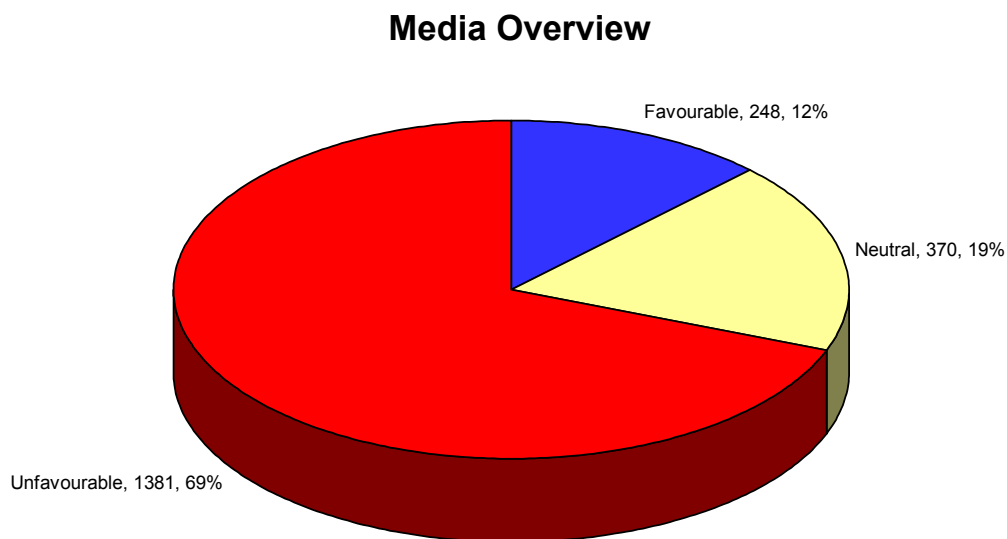


Figure 5. Overview of proportions of favourable, unfavourable and neutral media coverage of men and men's issues.

Leading male profiles

Media representations of men were categorised into profiles or overall themes. This provides a useful overview of the dominant images or portrayals of men and male identities. A total of 1,776 of the 1,799 media articles and program segments analysed contained an identifiable profile or theme. The leading profiles of men and themes in media portrayals of men are shown in Figure 6.

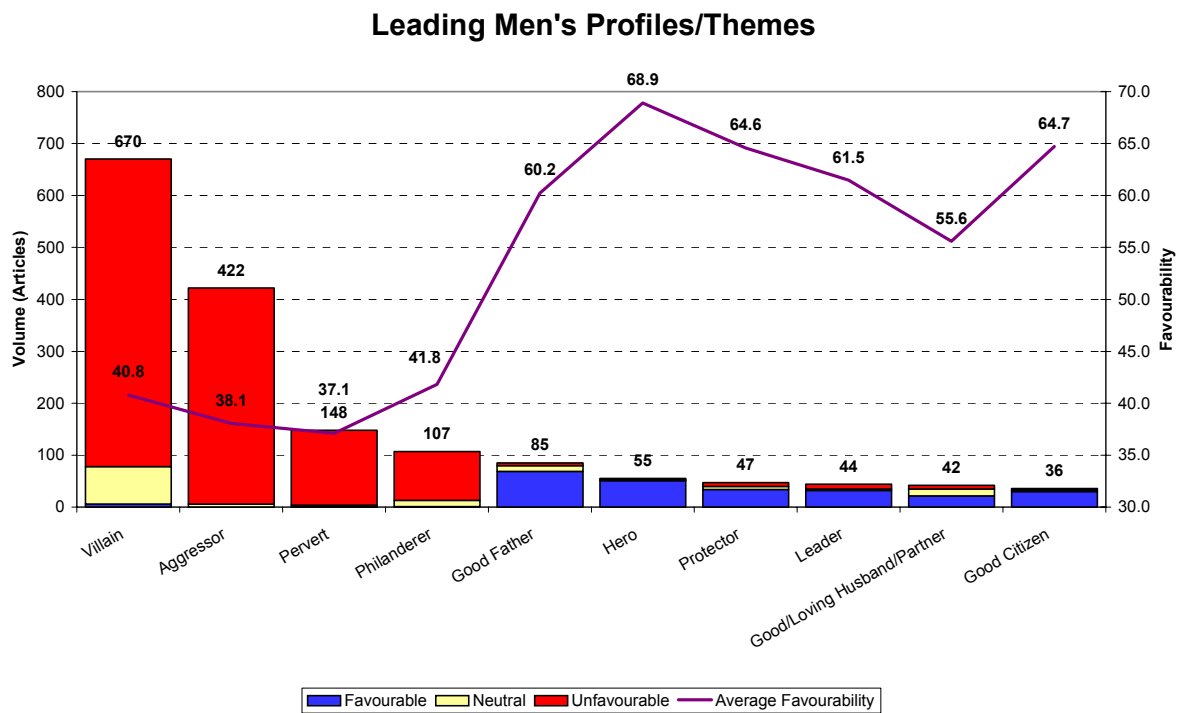


Figure 6. Leading profiles/themes in mass media representations of men.

Men are predominately portrayed in mass media as villains, aggressors, perverts and philanderers. More than 75% of all mass media representations of men and male identities categorised into profiles and themes showed men in one of these four ways.

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

Positive Profiles/Themes (+)	Number of Articles	% of Total Articles	Average Favourability
Good father	85	4.8%	60.2
Hero	55	3.1%	68.9
Protector	47	2.6%	64.6
Leader	44	2.5%	61.5
Good/loving husband/partner	42	2.4%	55.6
Good citizen	36	2.0%	64.7
Good provider	15	0.8%	53.3
Handyman	2	0.1%	47.5
Total	326	18.4%	59.5

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

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

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

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

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

The main issues categories (topics) reported in relation to men that contributed to these profiles or themes are shown in Figure 7.

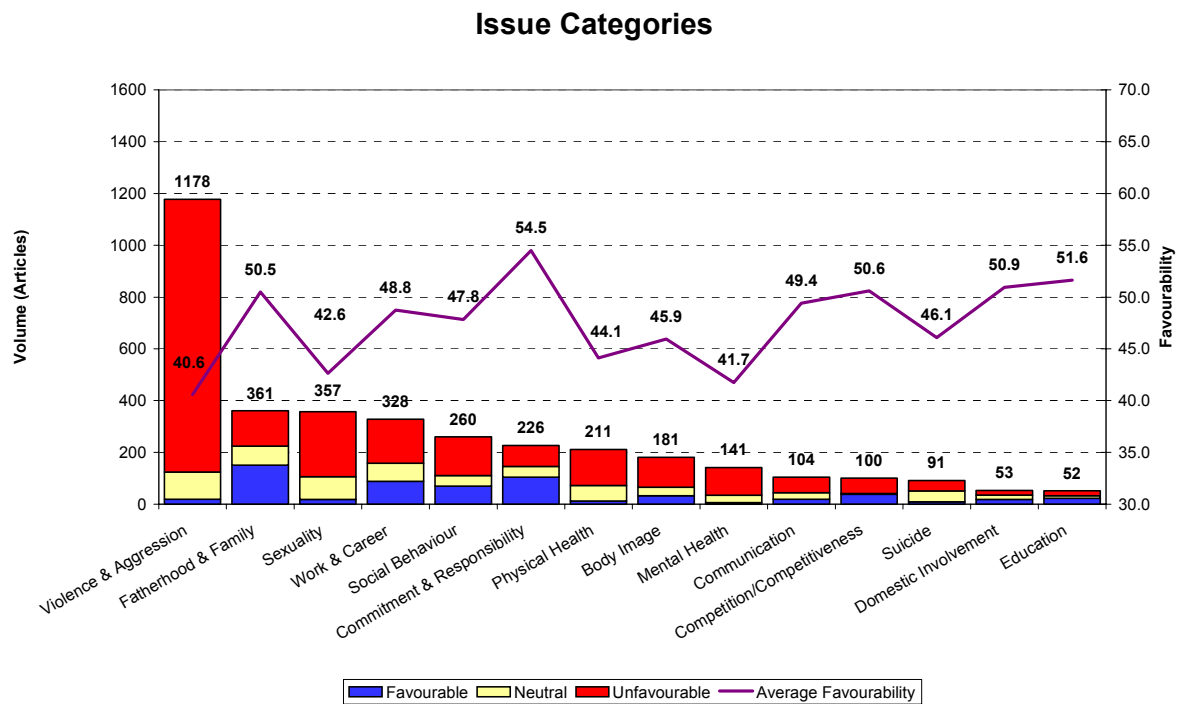


Figure 7. Leading issue categories of media reporting on men.

Men are mostly reported in mass media news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle media in relation to violence and aggression. A total of 1,178 articles out of 1,799 analysed (65%) reported men in connection with violence and aggression. A further breakdown of the types of violence and aggression reported in relation to men is provided in Figure 8.

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

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

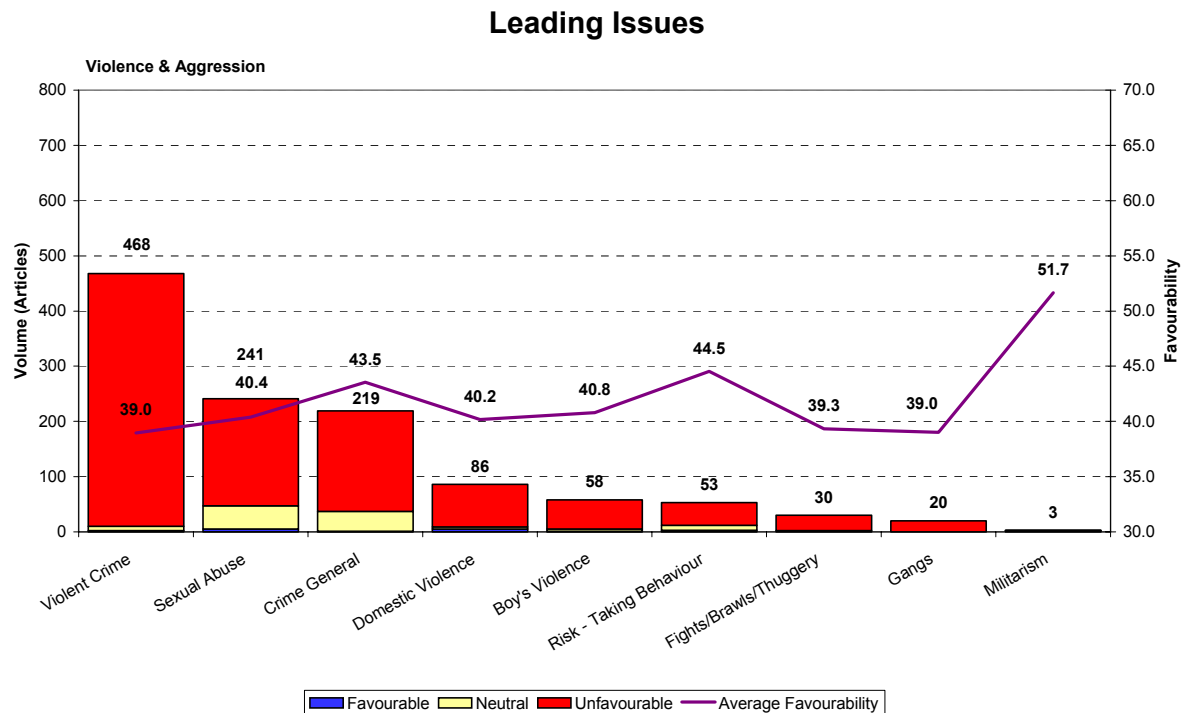
Men and violence

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

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

Issues	Favourable Articles	Neutral Articles	Unfavourable Articles	Total Articles	% in This Category	Average Favourability
Violent Crime	2	8	458	468	39.7%	39
Sexual Abuse	5	42	194	241	20.5%	40.4
Crime General	1	36	182	219	18.6%	43.5
Domestic Violence	5	4	77	86	7.3%	40.2
Boy's Violence	1	4	53	58	4.9%	40.8
Risk-Taking Behaviour	3	9	41	53	4.5%	44.5
Fights/Brawls/ Thugs	0	2	28	30	2.5%	39.3
Gangs	0	0	20	20	1.7%	39
Militarism	2	0	1	3	0.3%	51.7
Total	19	105	1,054	1,178	100.0%	40.6

Table 7. Leading issues in mass media reporting of violence and aggression by men broken down by favourable, unfavourable and neutral articles.

Crime statistics show that many incidents of violence are perpetrated by men and, understandably, are reported by mass media. During the period of this study, a number of major violent crimes drew national headlines and extensive media reporting including:

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

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

A baby boy, Jordan Anderson, was beaten to death by his step-father. National media reported: “His body was beaten; his lips split; his toes clamped. Jordan Anderson suffered a death so terrible ... his injuries were quite extraordinary” (National Nine News, December 9, 2003). *The Daily Telegraph* reported: “The seven-month-old’s torture and suffering ended only when he choked to death on his own vomit” (December 12, 2003, p. 11);

A high profile case involved charges against a man for murdering a 14-month old boy Jaidyn Leskie, at Moe in Victoria in 1998. The boy's body was found in a dam with a crushed skull and a broken arm, allegedly inflicted by Greg Domaszewicz while he was baby-sitting the toddler who was the son of his girlfriend (*The Age*, November 25, 2003, p. 1; *The Australian*, November 26, 2003, p. 3);

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

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

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

The disappearance and eventual gory discovery of murdered British schoolgirls, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, brought wide publicity to another violent man, Ian Huntley. Photographs of the two girls in their red Vodafone-branded soccer shirts and

reports of Huntley's cold-blooded murder of the girls appeared in all major media, as did his life sentence (eg. *The Australian*, December 18, 2003, p. 10);

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

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

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

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

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

A mother and her de facto partner were charged with putting the woman's eight-month old baby girl into a scalding bath. The girl died slowly from serious burns (National Nine News, November 4, 2003);

A US report of girls “hazing” was broadcast on *Oprah*, showing an incident of school girls savagely beating and kicking juniors at Glenbrook North school at Northrock outside Chicago (*Oprah*, July 30, 2003);

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

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

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

The most significant case of female violent crime during the period of this study provides an important comparison with representations of male violence. Kathleen Folbigg was arrested, found guilty and sentenced for the murder of all four of her children. The children’s deaths all occurred during infancy and Folbigg claimed all were victims of

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). As incredulous as the claim was, a case was made that Folbigg should not stand trial for murder or go to prison. It was alleged during the trial that Folbigg herself had been the victim of abuse by her father and that this had caused a mental disorder that rendered her not responsible for her actions (National Nine News, August 29, 2003 and numerous press reports).

Folbigg was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment with no parole, after much heated debate in the court and the media (National Nine News, October 24, 2003). But the case illustrates a significant difference in media treatment and discourse concerning male violence and crime and female violence and crime¹. The view was widely expressed that Folbigg could not, as a mother, be capable of killing her children unless she was in a deranged state. In the hearing to determine her sentencing, calls for leniency were made on the grounds that her father had caused her to be the way she was. In summary, it was argued that a woman was not capable of such a thing and, if she did it, it was indirectly caused by a man.

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

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

¹ An appeal was subsequently lodged against Folbigg’s sentence (*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 27-28, 2004, p 9).

as criminals, or someone who has a problem?” Chief Commissioner Nixon replied: “No. I see them as criminals. What I think it’s about is power” (*60 Minutes*, August 31, 2003).

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

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

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

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

violence than previously cited ‘lock them up and throw away the key’ methods of dealing with the problem.

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

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

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

Linda Mills and Tubman Centre specialists argued strongly that it was necessary to “help people heal”. “After arrest, he’s just madder,” Mills explained. She said passionately: “It’s

not a he's to blame, she's the victim and if we do not get there (to a holistic treatment solution), we will not solve this problem." Mills also attacked the notion that domestic violence is a 'man problem', pointing out that women are just as violent against children as men are. This claim is supported by statistics from the Australian Institute of Criminology.

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

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

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

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

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

Allegations of 'groping' against movie star and California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger;

Alleged sexual assault of a teenage girl by American basketballer Kobe Bryant, including allegations that a bodybuilder allegedly offered to kill the 19-year old woman making the allegations to “solve the problem” (*The Age*, September 20, 2003);

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

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

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

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

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

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

The claims and subsequent charges against Michael Jackson were reported worldwide including in most of the media sampled in this study. Coverage included front pages such as *The Daily Telegraph* (November 22, 2003, p. 1) under the headline “Fallen Star”. While outside the sample of this study, and therefore not included in the data, the international

current affairs journal *Newsweek* devoted four pages to the Michael Jackson case under the headline “From Moonwalk to Perp walk” (*Newsweek*, December 2, 2003, pp. 90-92).

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

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

The most widely reported case for alleged sexual assault or harassment involved Australia’s Olympic swimming coach, Greg Hodge. On the night of October 13, 2003, *A Current Affair* broadcast an interview with former swimmer, Emma Louise Fuller, who claimed that Hodge had touched her inappropriately when she was training under his tutelage and had stalked her since she left his team. Fuller told 1.5 million viewers: “He’s a creep. He had a sick obsession with me” (*A Current Affair*, October 13, 2003). Hodge was not advised of the allegations prior to the program going to air and given no opportunity to

prepare a response. He was confronted on camera and asked for a response without knowing the details of the allegations.

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

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

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

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

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

In a full-page article in *The Daily Telegraph* (October 19, 2003, p. 11), family and friends rallied to Hodge’s support and labelled the claims a “witch-hunt” (an interesting metaphor from a gender perspective). The story was reported in all other major newspapers, radio and TV bulletins, as were the claims of his primary accuser, Emma Fuller. In all, the

allegations were reported in 24 newspaper articles within the sample studied, including three front pages, and in more than a dozen TV news and current affairs report.

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

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

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

Should the case against Hodge be proved, the full weight of the law should be used to protect Fuller and analysis of the case is not intended to circumvent proper legal process. But questioning is a permitted and important part of any legal process and inquiry.

Unfortunately, questioning of allegations is rarely conducted by mass media interested in ratings and knowing that sensational allegations against national figures will ensure commercial success. When those national figures are men, they are all the more vulnerable in contemporary societies as a plethora of cases show.

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

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

Claims of sexual assault by men are reported frequently and extend across all levels of society. A series of allegations of sexual assault have been made against priests in the Catholic Church along with allegations of a cover-up of priest paedophilia. Claims that a priest, Phillip Green, sexually molested boys in his care were aired on *A Current Affair* and Archbishop Doyle of Tasmania was interviewed. The program alleged that the Archbishop lied and covered up facts to protect the priest (*A Current Affair*, October 31, 2003). Former Catholic priest, Michael Glennon, was described by a judge as “wantonly evil” in

sentencing him to 15 years in jail for sexually abusing four Aboriginal boys between 1984 and 1991. The media reported that, in total, Glennon, has been convicted five times of paedophilia against 15 children since 1978 (*The Age*, October 23, 2003, p. 3). Another former Catholic priest, Michael Joseph McArdle pleaded guilty and was sentenced in Brisbane on 56 charges of indecently dealing with boys under 14 and six charges of indecently dealing with girls under 14 (*The Australian*, October 9, 2003, p. 4).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Teacher faces sex charges” (*The Daily Telegraph*, September 26, 2003, p. 8);

“Ten sacked over abuse in schools” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 31, 2003, p. 5);

“Army rape culture denied” (*The Australian*, October 16, 2003, p. 11);

“Sex case magistrate arraigned” (*The Weekend Australian*, November 15-16, 2003, p. 10);

“Harassment at work rife” (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 13, 2003, p. 26);

“Chatroom groomer preyed on 73 girls” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition, October 11-12, 2003, p. 37).

One national newspaper headline sensationally claimed “Pacific region warned of paedophile plague” (*The Australian*, October 16, 2003, p. 7).

Reading mass media, any woman or girl could be excused for believing men are marauding monsters. Some women state as much, not only privately, but in mass media contributing to a highly negative and inflammatory discourse on men and supporting a generalisation that male sexual aggression is pervasive. For instance, in an opinion column, Sian Prior discussed crime statistics which show that, in reality, the incidence of many types of crime are falling or stable. Under the sub-heading “Crime statistics are cold comfort when one is confronted by male violence” Prior reported a man kicking her car door and shouting at her in traffic in the following terms:

Suddenly I was remembering all those other times I’ve been afraid. Fending off a gang of aggressive young men on a train station late at night. Walking home from a bus stop, being followed by a strange man in an overcoat. Backing away from a man who is smiling at me and masturbating in broad daylight in my local park. Locking my car doors while a man shakes his fist at me for taking the last parking spot outside the supermarket. This month the newspapers have been full of stories about men shooting their wives, murdering their fathers-in-law, men strangling prostitutes, men taking their own lives. I’ve been lucky. This kind of extreme violence has never touched me personally. Most of the men I know are gentle, talkative types. (And yes, I know women can be killers too.) But at the back of nearly every woman’s mind lurks a fear of that naked masculine aggression ... (*The Age* (September 29, 2003, A3, p. 2).

Sexual abuse and assault are sensitive issues. Clearly, from the statistics, these offences occur and all rational men and women equally abhor such behaviour. But abhorrence of offences that do occur should not incite generalisations or be used to shortcut the processes of justice, including the important presumption of innocent until proven guilty.

It is not only men saying this. In a major feature article headed “In the name of justice”, Bettina Arndt noted: “Seemingly every week some new accusation of sexual misconduct captures public attention” and reported that, when a man is accused of rape, “even if he is innocent, his reputation is forever smeared”. The article quoted a Purdue University study which found more than 40% of rape cases were classified as false by police and FBI

studies using DNA testing exonerated 30-35% of 4,000 sexual assault cases examined over a four-year period (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 2, 2003, p. 15).

A number of court cases have found that women do make false allegations against men. During the period of this research three prominent cases of alleged rape were found to be concocted. In the first, a university lecturer falsely accused her husband of rape and coerced their two teenage children to lie that they had witnessed the assault. Testimony from a friend of the couple's daughter and surveillance tape revealed that the daughter was shopping at the time of allegedly witnessing the assault (*The Age*, July 11, 2003, p. 3 and September 4, 2003, p. 8).

In the second case, a young woman law student made six separate false rape allegations including two against a senior political figure. It was reported that the young woman pulled the politician's name at random from a parliamentary book. In dismissing the charges, the judge described the allegations as "vile and false" (*The Age*, September 6, 2003, p. 7).

An internationally reported claim alleged that captured American Army private, Jessica Lynch, had been raped by her Iraqi captors. The allegations, on this occasion, were made by a man, Rick Bragg, a former *New York Times* reporter and author of a biography on Lynch, *I am a Soldier Too* (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 7, 2003, p. 33). To her credit, Lynch denied she had been raped and confirmed that Iraqi doctors had cared for her and aided her rescue on April 1, 2003.

The woman who accused cricketer Shane Warne of harassment through explicit text messages was, following the period of this media content analysis, convicted of and jailed for extortion (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 9, 2004, p. 3).

Also, shortly after the period of this media analysis, Sydney football club, The Canterbury Bulldogs, became embroiled in a sensational case in which a number of its players were accused of raping a young woman in Coffs Harbour. The case captured national headlines for several months, during which time media reports alleged that "gang banging" was endemic in football club culture, public signs were erected calling for a number of players to be charged (even before police had completed their investigations), and \$1.3 million of sponsorship was withdrawn. After an extensive police investigation, no charges were laid

due to lack of evidence and conflicting evidence. Police revealed that the young woman making the allegations had lied in some aspects of her evidence and eye witnesses reported that she had willingly gone to the players' hotel and had been seen in the swimming pool willingly engaging in sex with at least one player in the early hours of the morning shortly before the alleged rape. While lack of evidence supporting some allegations, inconsistencies and conflicts in evidence, and even the woman's willing participation in sex on some occasions, do not prove that sexual offences did not occur, nor do allegations prove guilt. The Canterbury Bulldogs case illustrates a double tragedy common in sexual assault allegations: a woman may be wronged by the arduous processes of the law to prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt but, on the other hand, men are often assumed to be guilty and their reputations smeared forever solely on the basis of allegations, even when no charges have been laid or they have been acquitted.

Men and fatherhood

The headline "Fatherhood is in fashion" was flashed around the world by international news agency Reuters-Associated Press reporting on an international fashion show in Milan in January 2004 and published in leading national newspapers including *The Australian* (January 15, 2004, p. 3). A photo showed a male model on the catwalk clutching the hand of a small boy.

Analysis of mass media content undertaken in this study shows that, indeed, fatherhood is in fashion and a focus of public discourse. The second leading category of media reporting on men was 'Fatherhood and family'. Some 361 media reports, 20% of the total sample of media articles analysed in this study, discussed men and fatherhood, including many opinion columns and feature articles.

Renewed focus on fatherhood is occurring internationally. In Britain, so-called "fatherhood expert" Adrienne Burgess has been a policy adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair on family issues and she claims "fathers are on the agenda". Interviewed by Bettina Arndt, Burgess said "there has been a shift in public discourse". She cited as examples Prime Minister Blair taking time off for the birth of his fourth child in 2000 and Chancellor of the British Treasury, Gordon Brown, taking a month's paternity leave in 2003 (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 14, 2003, p. 9).

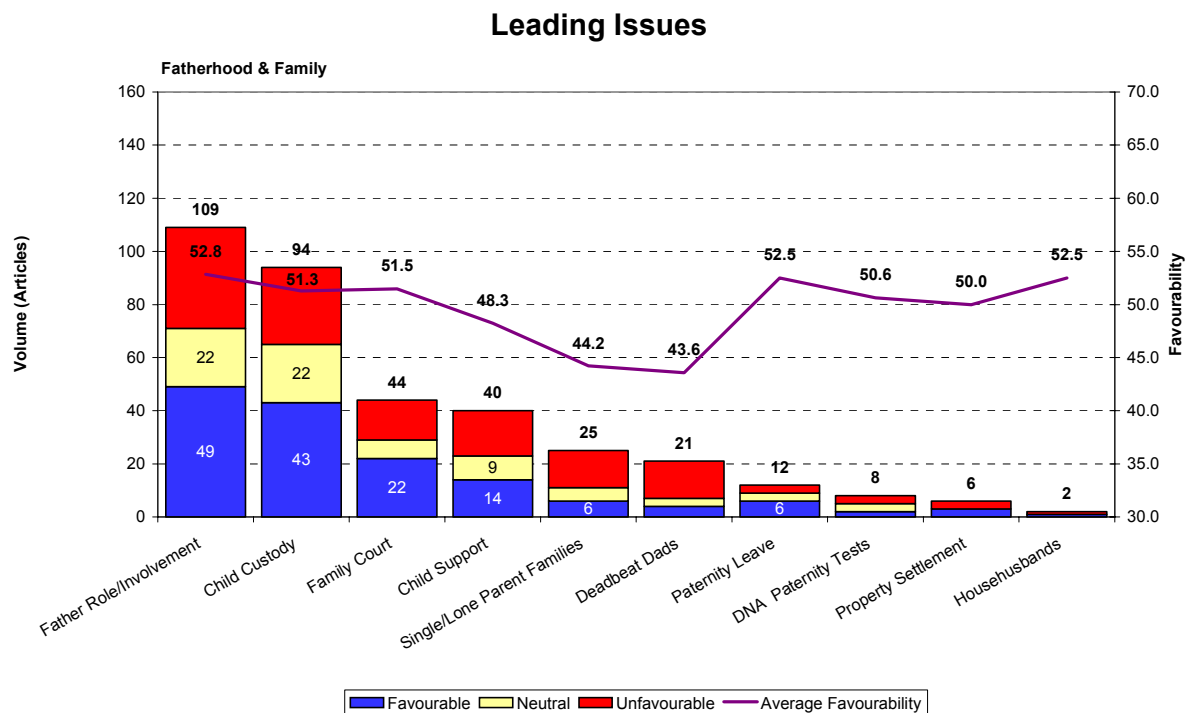


Figure 9. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to fatherhood and family.

In Australia, a sign of fatherhood reaching the political agenda was a National Strategic Conference on Fatherhood held in Canberra in August 2003. Speakers included Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, and “fatherhood consultant” Adrienne Burgess. More will be said on these speakers and their views later. Also, a National Fatherhood Forum has been established and, following the period of this study, the Australian Prime Minister and the Leader of the Labor Opposition both announced policy initiatives directed at fostering involvement by fathers and male role models in children’s lives, echoing similar social and political initiatives in the UK and other countries.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies was reported claiming that one in three children under the age of 18 has little or no contact with his or her father (*The Sunday Age*, December 21, 2003, p. 11). Researcher Michael Flood from the institute was quoted saying “there is an epidemic of fatherlessness in Australia” with close to one million children living with one parent, usually mothers. Flood said that, after divorce, “more than one third of children do not see their fathers”. In an opinion column in a leading newspaper, he cited author Steve Biddulph who, in *Raising Boys*, says “boys with absent fathers are more

likely to be violent, do poorly in schools, and join gangs (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 5, 2003, p. 15).

Most media coverage of men in relation to fatherhood and family discussed the level of involvement and role of fathers with children. This is one area where considerable favourable discussion is emerging in contemporary discourse on men, with increasing recognition of the importance of fathers in children's lives. Under a headline, "Memo feminists: fathers have a role in families too", Angela Shanahan wrote: "During and after birth, in all the fuss over the mother, one sometimes forgets that babies belong as much to their fathers as to their mothers" (*The Age*, August 27, 2003, p. 13).

Flood was reported saying: "Fathers are important to the wellbeing of children and families, and supporting fathers positive involvement is a worthy goal" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 5, 2003, p. 15). The media did not elaborate in any detail on why fathers are important or what role they should play.

A number of celebrity and well-known fathers were profiled in mass media. These included:

A five page feature on actor Russell Crowe talking about the importance of his family and his new-born son (*Australian Women's Weekly*, December, 2003, pp. 49-54);

A feature article on a group of well-known musicians including Paul Kelly, Neil Murray and Colin George who combined to produce a CD entitled "Fatherhood" and talked about the importance of their children to them (*The Australian*, November 20, 2003, p. 12);

A feature entitled "Football's battle of the dads" profiling fathers in opposing teams playing in a match on Fathers Day (*The Sunday Telegraph*, September 7, 2003, p. 20);

A major feature in men's magazine *Ralph* entitled "Sons of guns" profiling three young sports stars talking about their famous fathers (*Ralph*, October, 2003, pp. 126-133).

Oprah also featured a series of interviews with famous fathers including John Travolta, Will Smith and Arnold Schwarzenegger talking about their experiences of fatherhood. Of John Travolta, she commented: “His eyes always light up when he talks about his children” (*Oprah*, September 5, 2003).

In an in-depth special entitled “Secret thoughts children have about their fathers”, *Oprah* interviewed children about their relationship with their fathers and then interviewed the fathers to discuss their children’s comments. The program presented emotional scenes, with some men crying as they discussed their emotional connections to their children even though they admitted not communicating this adequately. One father reported “a brick wall holding us back from communicating with each other” while another reported that when his ex-wife took his son away it “crushed his heart” (*Oprah*, July 2, 2003).

In another program *Oprah* interviewed Roland Warren of the National Fatherhood Initiative in the US and a group of fathers who spoke of their innermost fears and desires, many of which revolved around their children. One of the fathers explained that “every dad has a dream”. *Oprah* picked up on the comment stating: “I thought dads were just working all the time. Every dad has dream – that’s good” (*Oprah*, October 7, 2003).

The relationship between fathers and their children was positively portrayed in a major newspaper feature based on an interview with the father of Iran’s Bijani twins, joined at the head and upper body from birth, who died during an operation to try to separate them. Alireza Safaian was the adoptive father of the twins who helped raise them. The article began: “Alireza Safaian is filled with pain. For almost 27 years he cared for the Bijani twins ... today they are gone and Mr Safaian wrestles with his emotions”. The headline read: “A father feels the pain of separation” and a sub-heading described how the twins’ father was “devastated by their deaths” (*The Sunday Age*, July 13, 2003, p. 6).

Australia’s Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, stated in a leading newspaper column: “For too long, fatherhood has been ignored, taken for granted, seen as just about earning the money or laying down the law.” Goward acknowledged: “Men, too, have been disadvantaged by the imposition of gender roles on their lives ... for men, the onerous task of being the breadwinner, working in an often thankless job – perhaps ill-paid, long hours, bad conditions – have always been considered proof of their love for their

family” (*The Age*, August 26, 2003, p. 11). Goward argued that more flexible work arrangements are necessary to allow fathers time off work to spend with their children.

However, along with recognition of the importance of father involvement and the depth of many men’s emotional connection with their children, discussion also contained an almost equal number of criticisms of men for lack of involvement with and commitment to their children. Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, is among the most prolific commentators on the subject with both support for and criticisms of men as fathers. In a number of opinion columns and speeches, Goward blamed lack of father involvement with children on lack of family-friendly workplaces. But she also said men have to be prepared to take time off and proposed the solution required changing work culture as much as changing laws and regulations such as providing paid paternity leave. In one opinion column, Goward said: “Fathers will do their share of parenting when the mood at the office encourages them to” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 12, 2003, p. 11).

Australia Institute researcher Michael Flood agreed with Goward, writing in an opinion column:

Fathers’ positive involvement in families after divorce is being hindered, but not by selfish mothers, nor by the Family Court. Fathers face the same obstacles to involvement they did before divorce: the excessive demands of family-hostile workplaces, the economic disadvantages of involved parenting (which many mothers already suffer), and policy barriers to shared care (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 5, 2003, p. 15).

A discussion paper, “Fatherhood and fatherlessness”, produced by the Australia Institute and written by Michael Flood, was widely reported in mass media saying that Government policies encouraging fathers to be breadwinners and mothers to be home-makers, work culture, and “long hours and inflexibility” limit fathers’ involvement with their children. Flood was reported criticising men’s groups for “focussing on men as victims of injustices in family law” as a primary cause of fathers’ separation from their children and for blaming women (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 1, 2003, p. 3).

In a controversial statement that drew wide media debate, Goward said fathers should be denied equal time with their children after divorce unless they share child-care

responsibilities during the marriage (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum, August 16-17, 2003, p. 9). How this could be monitored was not discussed.

Under a headline “Dads who care and share are a small minority”, Flood’s Australia Institute discussion paper was reported by Farah Farouque and Adele Horin as saying that fathers are involved in the day-to-day care of their children in only 5-10% of Australian families and share the physical care of their children in only 1-2% of families (*The Age*, December 1, 2003, p. 8).

An extreme example of public criticism of men over fatherhood and child access was an opinion article by Trish Bolton (credited as a tutor in media and communications at Swinburne and Monash Universities²) under the headline “When it comes to child access, many men just don’t want to know”. Bolton reported that, after she ended her marriage, the father of her two children kept in contact for “a year or so”. She wrote:

... but after less than three months, I knew it wouldn’t last. Somehow, in that short time, his love for them just seemed to evaporate. I would watch helplessly as my little boy sat on top of his suitcase waiting for his daddy to arrive, legs kicking back and forth with anticipation, for a father who often did not keep his promise ... There’s a backlash against single mothers. It is being fuelled by commentators such as Arndt who never miss an opportunity to portray single mothers as manipulative and self-serving, a men’s movement that is deeply misogynous, and a Prime Minister who wants to drag women back into the kitchen where he thinks they belong (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 4, 2003, p. 15).

Bolton’s tirade against fathers who do not maintain contact with children after separation drew letters to the editor from men, including Colin Andersen of Lapstone who wrote:

It doesn’t seem to have occurred to her that it is precisely these fathers and children who need the legislative back-up of a rebuttable presumption of joint custody, given that it is the present family law system that enables mothers who make access difficult to get away with their destructive and bitter combat by routinely awarding them sole custody (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Letter to the Editor, September 5, 2003, p. 10).

² This is cited because the writer was published with her academic position listed, not as a reporter or a simply a member of the public, a factor which affects the semiotic efficacy of the article and shows mass media reflecting societal, in this case, academic discourse.

Bolton's claims are in conflict with research data such as that of Hawthorne (2002) which shows that 56% of non-resident fathers want more time with their children. Media also reported positively on fathers wanting greater access, such as a feature headed "Fathers get a raw custody deal" by Janet Albrechtsen who claimed 72% of non-resident fathers want more contact with their children (*The Australian*, December 24, 2003, p. 11).

In the case of divorced and separated parents, some researchers do not agree with Goward and Flood that it is family-unfriendly workplaces and work culture that keep fathers out in their children's lives. Bruce Smyth, a research fellow at the Melbourne Institute of Family Studies, was reported saying the Institute's findings suggest "three Rs – re-partnering, relocation, and residual bad feeling" are responsible for lack of father involvement with their children. In other words, mothers remarrying or finding a new boyfriend, moving away, and tensions between the parents keep fathers from their children after divorce. Quoted by Muriel Reddy in a weekend opinion column, Smyth said further: "You could add to this relative economic disadvantage and rotten behaviour in the form of abuse" (*The Sunday Age*, December 21, 2003, p. 11).

Research investigating the difficulties faced by Australian men in accessing family-friendly policies including paid paternity leave by University of New South Wales sociologist, Michael Bittman, was also reported. According to columnist, Bettina Arndt, Bittman found "many men working in small teams felt they would be letting their workmates down if they took leave ... but the crunch issue proved to be economic. Bittman found men don't take leave because it is not economically feasible". Arndt cited research showing less than 5% of Australian men take paid paternity leave when it is available (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 14, 2003, p. 9).

A less savoury picture of fatherhood involved international tennis star Boris Becker who was forced to pay out \$48 million in a divorce settlement and child support after getting a young woman pregnant in a "five minute romp in a broom closet" of a London restaurant. One headline reported: "Boom boom, 5 minutes, \$48m" (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 5, 2003, p. 36).

Another controversial element of fatherhood gaining headlines in mass media is a number of men forced to raise and, in some cases, pay child support for children who recently

introduced DNA testing show are not theirs. In one case that made front page news, a man was reported suing for refund of \$75,000 in child support after learning in the Federal Magistrates Court that he was not the father. In another case, a man was awarded \$70,000 damages after finding he had paid child support as a result of being misled by his former wife (*The Age*, October 29, 2003, p. 1).

DNA tests to prove paternity have emerged as a hotly-debated topic. A number of men were reported to be arranging paternity tests without permission or knowledge of the mother or child. The men claimed that permission would be unlikely to be given and, therefore, they had no choice. *A Current Affair* reported that “secret DNA tests prove men are tricked into supporting children who are not theirs”, citing research which allegedly showed that 20% of men tested are not the biological fathers of their wives and partners’ children. Basil Wainwright of the Men and Legal Equity Group was quoted saying that, in one study of 35 men obtaining paternity tests, 13 (40%) were not the biological father. Interviews with fathers who had found they were supporting children who were not theirs reported “men are being cheated and deceived by wives and partners for emotional and financial gain”. However, women’s groups and mothers were reported to be strongly opposing paternity tests. Elspith McGinnis of the National Council for Single Mothers and their Children called for the banning of fathers secretly testing their children (*A Current Affair*, August 18, 2003).

An interesting conclusion from this analysis is that the most prolific and most prominent editorial and opinion writers on fatherhood in the extensive media sample studied were:

Bettina Arndt;

Pru Goward;

Michael Flood;

Adrienne Burgess;

Adele Horin;

Julie Szego;

Angela Shanahan;

Muriel Reddy;

Georgina Safe;

Christina Lamer;

Trish Bolton.

As can be seen from the first names, all but one of the most prominent commentators on fatherhood in the wide sample studied are women. Male researchers Bittman and Smyth only appeared in mass media when quoted by women columnists, Bettina Arndt and Muriel Reddy. The writers cited are opinion columnists and commentators who contributed ‘expert’ views and personal comment. News reporters, who are ostensibly assigned irrespective of gender, were excluded from this list. While not suggesting that women should not have views on fatherhood, Deleuze’s warning that “only those directly concerned can speak in a practical way on their own behalf” (Foucault, 1977, p. 209) and feminist claims to the superiority of “self-validating” rather than “other-validating” in objectivity/subjectivity debates (Hearn, 1993) are salutary. For whatever reason, men are largely absent in discourse on one of the topics which research suggests is most important to them.

Even more ironic and questionable on the grounds of subjectivity and experience is that Adrienne Burgess was quoted in several media articles as a “fatherhood expert” and a “fatherhood consultant”. She is author of *Fatherhood Reclaimed: The Making of the Modern Father* (Burgess, 1997), a book that was written before she and her husband, Martin Cochrane, became parents. Following publication of the book, she became a policy adviser on fatherhood and child support issues to the Blair Government in Britain before returning to her native Australia. Her gender (and childlessness at the time of writing the book) do not invalidate Burgess’ views on fatherhood nor her ability to contribute to debate through research, but the dominance of female perspectives on key men’s issues such as fatherhood, including describing men’s feelings, concerns and level of interest, is evident from this analysis of mass media discourse and, one can argue, contributes gender bias. A man writing in the same way on motherhood would be greeted with some incredulity.

Inter-related with fatherhood and child involvement by fathers, the next most discussed issues in connection with men and fatherhood were child custody, the Family Court and child support. Discussion of single/lone parent families and ‘deadbeat dads’ (a term commonly used for non-resident dads and even enshrined in a 1998 US child support bill

as cited by Hawthorne 2000) also featured prominently in mass media reporting of men as fathers, some of which have already been cited.

A number of men and men's organisations are outspoken in criticisms of child custody laws, Family Court procedures and child support arrangements. However, despite men's complaints that child custody arrangements deny fathers adequate access to their children and strong criticisms by men of child support arrangements which they say cause them financial hardship and give them little say in how their payments are applied, the majority of mass media discussion of these issues comprised criticisms of men. Some – again mostly made by women writers – contained vitriolic attacks on men. For example, Catharine Lumby, in a full-page column in a national current affairs magazine said:

Family law – or, more accurately, the law regulating marriage and divorce – is one of the most contentious areas of law on the books. But it's critical to remember that the intense controversy surrounding it is fuelled by the vocal criticisms of a tiny minority of the millions of Australians who've been through a relationship breakdown. And it's a tiny minority overwhelmingly made up of men ... (*The Bulletin*, July 8, 2003, p. 31).

Lumby is contradicted by a report that a record 1,500 submissions were received by the Australian Federal Government Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs which examined child custody issues and also by reports that "angry groups representing divorced mothers and fathers have joined with Labor MPs calling on John Howard to extend the controversial inquiry" (*The Weekend Australian*, September 13-14, 2003, p. 3). As a postscript, *The Australian* reported that, by April 2004, the inquiry had received almost 2,000 submissions and conducted 26 public hearings (*The Australian*, April 27, 2004, p. 1)³. That is hardly a "tiny minority" fuelling the controversy. Lumby continued in her column to attack men's groups in the following terms:

Fathers rights groups ... have been tremendously successful in gaining the ear of senior politicians. And yet their major claims have no empirical support ... the real agenda is about reasserting a patriarchal model of the family ... (*The Bulletin*, July 8, 2003, p. 31).

³ This article is cited for pertinent background information. It was not included in the data as it was published outside the period of the study.

A number of writers were scathing of the Australian Family Court. Janet Albrechtsen described the court as “a graveyard of reform” and pointed to a feminist bias in the court’s approach. She said:

The social experiment began with the best intention. The Family Court, established in 1976, promised a revolutionary system for dealing with family breakdown – one that sought outcomes in ‘the best interests of the child’. But the 1970s were feminism’s heyday. And so that message – the best interest of the child – was filtered through a feminist prism where the denigration of men refracted into the belittling of fathers (*The Australian*, December 24, 2003, p. 11).

Federal MP, Kay Hull who was appointed chair of the Standing Committee inquiry into child custody arrangements, interviewed by Diana Bagnall in a national current affairs magazine said:

There is not one person who has come in front of us, even those who have been successful in the Family Court, [or] who have shared-parenting arrangements, [who have not been] scathing and hateful about the processes that they went through ... It’s the cost and trauma of the adversarial process being fingered here, as well as a perceived bias against the parenting skills of breadwinners (usually male), but more and more working mothers find themselves fighting to prove their caring cred (sic) (*The Bulletin*, September 16, 2003, p. 12).

Letters to the editor also showed major dissatisfaction, particularly among men, with their experiences of the Family Court. Two examples were:

I can testify to the benefits of shared-care after divorce. But I can also confirm the horrific battle that men encounter in the Family Court when they attempt to fight for their rights and the rights of their children to have equal access to their fathers. If [this proposal for shared access] is not supported, we will face a culture in which fatherhood is relegated to history, the epidemic of male suicide will continue to escalate, and men will face child rearing with fear rather than joy (Name withheld, Queensland, *The Bulletin*, July 15, 2003, p. 8).

... spare a thought for those of us who have been, and are, in court fighting for the right to have our children on an equal basis. My ex-wife left me for another man, taking my children,

and I have been fighting for them ever since (Name withheld, ACT, *The Bulletin*, July 15, 2003, p. 8).

The same issue of *The Bulletin* reported that proposals for rebuttable joint custody opposed and described as “unworkable” by a number of women’s groups and agencies (eg. The Sole Parents Union whose president, Kathleen Swinbourne, said overseas evidence showed the move was “terrible for children, treating them as divisible pieces of property”) was already law in eight US states (*The Bulletin*, July 8, 2003, p. 22).

Barry Williams, president of the Lone Fathers Association, was reported saying of existing child custody arrangements “the system is so stacked against men that it is fuelling a massive rise in the number of male suicides ...we are dealing every night with people threatening suicide” (*The Daily Telegraph*, July 7, 2003, p. 2).

The problem appears to exist internationally in major western societies. A New Zealand father whose ex-wife moved to Australia with their daughter highlighted the problems many separated fathers face. In an article entitled “One man’s desperate appeal to get his daughter back” Steven Petty reported spending \$10,000 trying to find his daughter, but had not been able to locate her and had not seen her for many months (National Nine News, September 10, 2003). A newspaper headline also reported “Family tug-of-war across the Tasman” (*The Daily Telegraph*, September 11, 2003, p. 20).

While the Australian Federal Government’s appointment of an inquiry into child custody arrangements provided men’s groups and individual men, as well as women, a chance to communicate their concerns for and commitment to their children, negative stories of fathers not meeting their responsibilities were frequent in mass media. Under the headline “Child support scandal”, current affairs TV reported the case of Roger Miller who had not paid his former wife any child support over several years. The program reported that there were 66,000 cases of fathers “refusing” to pay child support, amounting to \$617 million in unpaid child support (*A Current Affair*, July 18, 2003). The same program followed up the issue the next week under the headline “Sorry track record on child support”, again profiling Roger Miller as a “serial deadbeat dad” (*A Current Affair*, July 23, 2003). Then the program followed up again on the issue a few months later presenting more cases of fathers who had not paid child support. No fathers who paid child support were

interviewed in any of the three nationally televised peak-viewing time programs (*A Current Affair*, September 1, 2003).

As reported under ‘Men and violence’, a number of media articles reported fathers abusing and even killing their children, particularly following child custody disputes. For instance, a full page feature in *The Daily Telegraph* examined male-perpetrated infanticide under the headline “When a father’s love takes an evil turn” (September 17, 2003, p. 27). The national daily, *The Australian*, also published a full-page feature the same day headlined “When dads get deadly” (p. 13). It reported that 25 children are killed by their parents each year in Australia and fathers are responsible for 63% of these murders. However, buried in the long feature article were statements by research analyst from the Australian Institute of Criminology, Jenny Mouzos, that even though fathers were responsible for most filicide, “the numbers are inflated by non-biological fathers (step-fathers) who kill children”. While not making these deaths any less tragic, Mouzos pointed out that the figures on the distribution of parents who killed children by gender and biological ties shows “mothers posed a more lethal risk to their own”. Biological mothers account for about 35% of all filicides, while biological fathers account for 29%, Mouzos reported (*The Australian*, September 17, 2003, p. 13).

A difference in societal attitudes towards men and women committing filicide is evident in media discourse. Most filicides committed by mothers involves infants, and post-natal depression is commonly cited in such cases (eg. Kathleen Fogbigg), leading to an increasing focus on a treatment approach rather than a punitive approach. However, despite reports and data showing that most men who kill their children do so in a state of severe depression (eg. Australian Institute of Criminology statistics show most fathers killing their children also kill themselves), often linked to divorce and separation from their children, a punitive approach continues to be taken towards fathers who kill their children. Responses reported in mass media include calls for more AVOs (Apprehended Violence Orders) and refuges for women, with little discussion on help for men in distress. The two *Oprah* programs previously cited were the only two examples of the latter.

A major front page story in *The Age* headlined “The Family Court: how it can push men over the edge” reported that the court was investigating the extent to which its decisions contributed to male suicides. The article reported: “Little research has been conducted in

the area, but the most recent, published in the *Journal of Family Studies* seven years ago, found that separated men were six times more likely to commit suicide than married men”. The article noted “nearly 2,000 men kill themselves every year in Australia and the number is rising” (*The Age*, August 19, 2003, p. 1).

Following this study, the Australian Federal government announced a review of child custody laws and a review of gender equity in schools including proposed incentives to encourage more men teachers (*The Australian*, March 10, 2004, p. 1). Also, the Federal Opposition Leader spoke of a “crisis in masculinity” and proposed mentoring programs for boys and involving fathers more (*The Australian*, February 18, 2003, p. 1).

Men and sexuality

As in many issue categories (subject areas) studied, male sexuality was predominantly negatively portrayed. One third (33%) of all discussion of male sexuality was in relation to paedophilia, as shown in Figure 10.

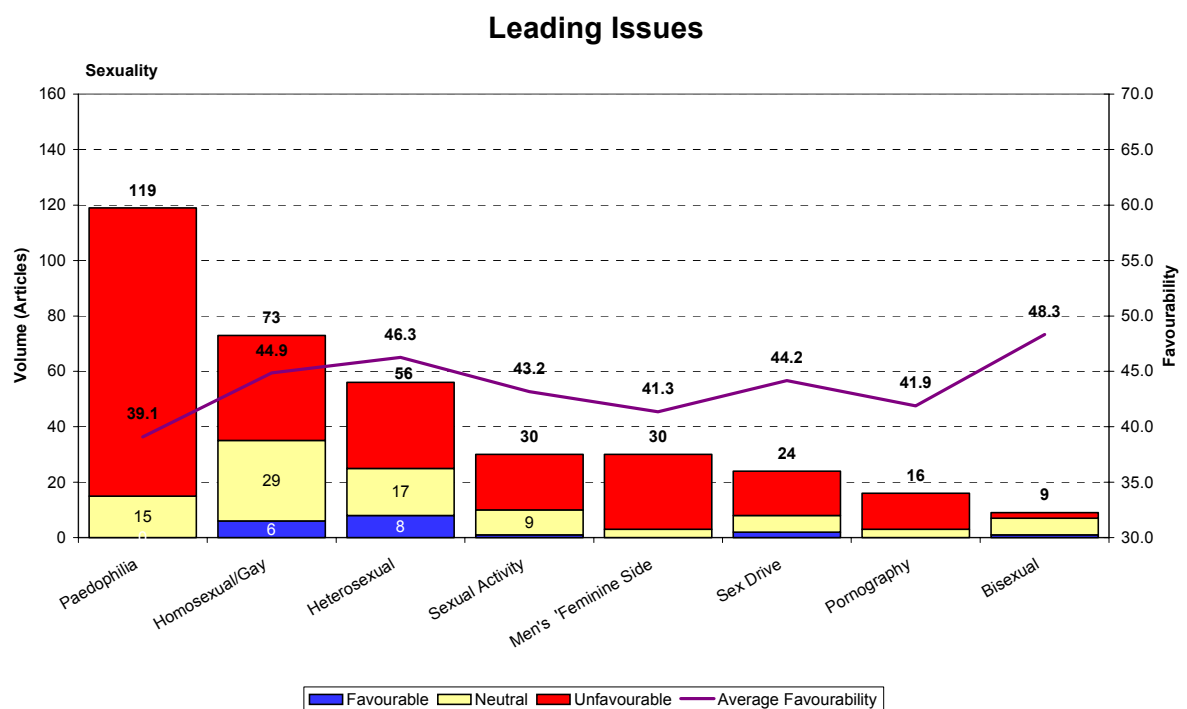


Figure 10. Leading issues in mass media reporting of male sexuality.

Worldwide, mass media headlines followed the Michael Jackson case leading up to and including his arrest for alleged sexual offences against children (National Nine News,

November 21, 2003 and numerous newspaper and magazines articles already cited under ‘Men and violence’). In Australia, claims of extensive paedophilia rocked both the Catholic and Anglican churches.

Male homosexuality has become prominent in media representations of men, highlighted in TV shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and numerous press reviews that followed its international launch. One headline described the program as “the queering of popular culture” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 13, 2003, p. 15). Homosexuality is lightly and positively portrayed in *Queer Eye*. However, media coverage continues to reflect gay stereotypes, and homosexuality was negatively portrayed in other media content with criticisms of gay marriages and social commentary reflecting homophobia.

Significantly, however, heterosexuality was equally negatively portrayed. Male heterosexuality was often associated with traditional (hegemonic) masculinity and seen as violent, aggressive and dominating. Often homosexual men were portrayed as more sophisticated and sensitive than heterosexual men.

International controversy was created by Germaine Greer (2003) with her book, *The Beautiful Boy*, which was cited as paedophiliac in tone. The arch-feminist defended her pictorial collection of pre-pubescent boys, claiming the beauty of the male as an object of female desire has been repressed and that the images, mainly from Western art, explored the shifting meanings and presentations of masculinity. But most reviewers and social commentators found it voyeuristic and sexual objectification. Greer received some criticism, although it was muted. Columnist for *The Telegraph* in London, Sarah Sands, republished in *The Age*, said “the photographs of ‘ravishing’ young men with slightly paedophiliac picture captions, struck me first as amusing waywardness from the great maverick feminist. But on consideration, I think this may be the logic of Greer’s feminism. No equality, but straightforward role reversal” (*The Age*, September 4, 2003, p. 15).

It is beyond this analysis to compare reaction to a man publishing a book of photos of pre-pubescent girls, but Greer’s text raises a number of questions including whether her approach is reverse sexism and whether it is objectification to which women have long objected.

Male sexuality faces a growing trend towards objectification in mass media strikingly similar or parallel to the objectification of women which has been widely documented. The top-rating TV show *Sex and the City* has been an exemplar in objectification of men as sex objects for the gratification of women. In a major feature published in *The Observer* in London and reprinted in *The Age*, *Sex and the City* scriptwriter, Cindy Chupack advises women to pass on boyfriends after they have finished with them which she terms “man-me-downs” (*The Age*, August 9, 2003, A2, p. 2).

A TV current affairs segment entitled “Love in Australia” reported that 75% of 30-year olds have never married and featured an interview with a young woman and a young man commenting on what they wanted in the opposite sex. The woman stated: “I don’t like short men, or men with hairy chests. They have to look good in a singlet ... have a six-pack” (*A Current Affair*, October 6, 2003). Such body focus is increasingly being turned on men after several decades of trying to free women from its constraining grip.

Women’s magazines take objectification of men to extremes in much the same way as men’s magazines have treated women. Men in women’s magazines are either young, virile, waxed ‘hunks’ with ‘six-pack’ stomach muscles and model looks, or figures of ridicule. For example, with no apparent editorial rationale other than voyeurism, *Cosmopolitan* presents its “Guy without a shirt” section, featuring a young man in a swimming costume or underwear only. Soccer star, David Beckham was featured in the October 2003 issue with the sub-heading “Want to see Becks take a free kick – naked?” Under the heading in the November 2003 issue the magazine unashamedly urged readers “Check out this month’s half-naked spunk”.

Cosmopolitan (November 2003) published a sealed section entitled “The Penis Monologues” with a sub-title “What his willy wants to know”. While the section contained informative advice on giving sexual pleasure to a man, it was full of machismo claims (allegedly made by men) presented with more than a touch of sarcasm and ridicule such as:

I have the most manly penis in the world. Erect, he’s as strong as a battle ram and has more throbbing veins than a heart ... (Big John, 35)” and “My biggest asset, literally, is my penis. When erect, it’s 20 centimetres long. And I can stay erect for nearly four hours. Women stare

speechlessly at me when I cycle through town wearing my Lycra pants. No doubt they all want to ride me (Freddy, 25) (*Cosmopolitan*, November 2003)

Reflecting other prominent portrayals of men as sexually promiscuous, commitment phobic and not as smart as women, other features in the same edition included “Cheatproof your relationship”; “Find out if your relationship can handle a baby” and “Remember that idiot who dumped you out of the blue” (*Cosmopolitan*, November 2003).

Men’s magazines such as *FHM* and *Ralph* were equally focussed on sexuality, sexual activity and men’s sex drive, mostly with a performative focus. Examples from men’s magazines are further cited in qualitative content analysis.

Traditional objectification of men as potential husbands also continues in mass media. Typical of ‘man chasing’ stories was a feature article on “husband hunting hot spots” in Sydney. The article reported that “Sydney’s pubs are going through a ... revival as women map out a city-wide husband-hunting guide”. It continued: “Women, particularly those in their 30s, were very focussed in terms of dating and it was not surprising they had mapped out the city’s bars for particular types of men” (*The Daily Telegraph*, August 8, 2003, p. 16). The article was not an isolated instance of representing men as ‘prey’. *Cosmopolitan* presented a major three-page feature entitled “Romeo, Romeo, where the hell are you Romeo?” The feature cited a Harlequin North American Study which claimed “50% of single women are in active search of Mr Right” (*Cosmopolitan*, October 2003, pp. 96-100).

A notable feature of positive representations of men as sensitive and emotional is that these traits are referred to frequently as men’s “feminine side”. In Figure 10 this issue was categorised as unfavourable as it suggests that sensitivity and emotional depth are not male characteristics and that men can only attain these positive characteristics by being or becoming female. For instance, while referring more to fashion than sexuality, a page three feature in Australia’s leading national newspaper was headlined “Femininity rules ... and that’s just for the blokes”. The article reported that “so far this season two words sum up the menswear collections: camp and effeminate” (*The Australian*, July 2, 2003, p. 3).

Men and work

Another prominent category of mass media reporting of men is in relation to work and career. This period of this study (2003) was one of relative economic stability and growth in a number of western economies, particularly Australia. Therefore, job losses and redundancy were not as prominent in mass media reporting as they have been in periods of economic recession.

A number of researchers have noted the centrality of work in men's lives (eg. O'Connor, 1981, p. 51; Segal, 1990, p. 297; Tacey, 1997, p. 124; and Webb, 1998, p.129). However, the leading issues discussed in mass media in relation to men's work and career indicate a significant transition is occurring. While career success was the most prominently reported issue, Figure 11 shows that career success received as much criticism as positive reporting and, overall, career success was seen as only slightly favourable. Work versus family and lifestyle was extensively discussed, particularly in opinion columns and feature articles. This suggests that a major social shift is underway with increased recognition (or at least discussion) of the importance of family and lifestyle outside of work and career success.

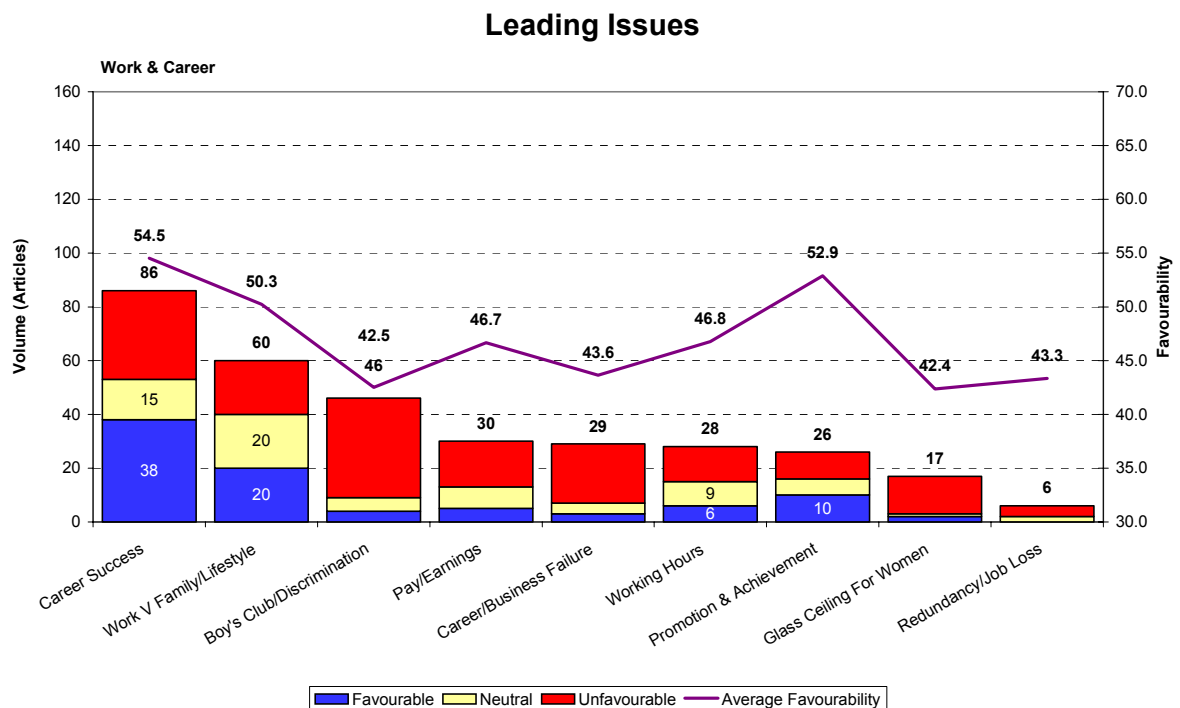


Figure 11. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to work and career.

One media report headlined “Working yourself to death” suggested that the Japanese phenomenon of *karoshi* (death from overwork) had arrived in Australia. The article reported that stress claims had increased, deaths at work had risen 30% from 2001 to 2002 and the number of Australians working long hours (50 hours per week or more) had doubled in the past 20 years (*The Daily Telegraph*, August 21, 2003, p. 22).

Another media report cited a 2003 Relationships Australia survey which found 90% of Australian couples say that finding a balance between their work and lifestyle is straining their relationship (*The Sunday Telegraph*, December 14, 2003, p. 51).

A number of books on work and its effects were reported and reviewed during the period of this study, including Barbara Pocock’s *The Work/Life Collision* (Pocock, 2003) and a book written by academics from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology who traced workplace transformations over the past 20 years. The book, *Fragmented Futures – New Challenges in Work Life*, reported that workers are putting in more hours than ever before and since the late 1980s more than 1.2 million women have entered the workforce compared with 700,000 men – although it noted that around half of the new jobs for women were in low-skilled fields (Watson, Buchanan, Campbell & Briggs, 2003).

A full-page health and science feature headlined “White collar blues” reported that “a life based on career success, materialism and dodging social ties is making some men miserable” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 11, 2003, pp. 1-2).

A *Sydney Morning Herald* feature in its My Career section reported of men and work: “They also want to be part of their children’s lives. Inside the office, however, it can be another story.” The article stated: “There’s a tension between what companies want productivity-wise and what an employee needs to do to be a good father, and they’re often at odds with each other. The difficulty is that just as males are getting into their peak career mode, they’re also getting into family mode” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, My Career, May 4-5, 2003, p. 1).

Another My Career supplement reported that 88% of Australians claim they are not valued, feel demoralised, suffer from stress and anxiety, and their work encroaches on their private lives” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, My Career, September 13-14, 2003, p. 1).

Columnists have focussed on the issue. For instance, Emma Tom contributed an opinion article to *The Australian's* The Wry Side section entitled “Workaholics willing to be bled dry for the corporate cause”, reporting on corporate office workers spending long hours at work. The trend is international, with Tom reporting UK research by a London-based market research company which found more than 40% of men and 23% of women would welcome spending evenings or the entire night at the office (*The Australian*, October 22, 2003, p. 15).

Angela Shanahan suggested that “maybe there is no balance in the work-family juggle” and argued that feminism has replaced the model of male breadwinner with a new model where both men and women work and “reinforces the idea that a mother is worth something only if she works” (*The Age*, August 5, 2003, p. 11).

However, one positive example that things are changing headlined “New generation of men who share the load” noted “fewer and fewer modern young women are prepared to tolerate what their baby-boomer mothers took for granted – a bread-winning husband who kept his nose out of the child-rearing and home-making” and claimed that there has been “a generational shift which is invisible to many commentators about the way child care and domestic duties are split”. The author, James Woodford, argued that “many young couples are trying out new ways of sharing the work, simply because it makes more sense to do so, and are waiting for government and employer policies to catch up”. Woodford cites his own personal experience after his wife and he had a child, saying “I found myself forced to wind back my hours at the office and then cut down to four days, then three days before finally deciding to work from home and care for our three-year-old daughter” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 29, 2003, p. 11). However, most men report that they do not have the flexibility or the financial capacity to cut back to part-time work or work from home and many of their wives either cannot earn enough to replace their husband’s income or do not want to work, as US study cited in the next few pages has found.

The high volume and conflicting nature of mass media messages on men and work suggest that today’s men and women are living on the cusp of major social and industrial change.

Reports of discrimination against women and workplaces being a “boy’s club” were also reported frequently and unfavourably. The ‘glass ceiling’ was cited in 17 articles, particularly in relation to the law and senior management positions in large corporations. For instance, in a major feature headed “The feminine effect on the law”, then newly appointed Chief Justice of the State of Victoria, Marilyn Warren, argued that “women who break through the glass ceiling have an obligation to help those below” and claimed that more women should be promoted to senior positions in the law because:

... women are adaptive and flexible ... women bring to the law a strong sense of method ... women bring a combination of typically feminine characteristics to the law: energy, patience, humour and insight ... My list is not exhaustive. It is intended to highlight the difference that women bring to the law (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 15, 2003, p. 11).

Warren’s comments not only position her as a ‘difference’ feminist, but are another example of what Nathanson and Young (2001) call superiority feminism, containing a generalisation that method, energy, patience, humour and insight are characteristics which women are better able to provide than men.

A full page feature in *The Age* headlined “Engendering a legal minefield” reported “the good news for women lawyers: more are getting plum jobs. The bad news: a male backlash”. The article claimed: “... despite the Government’s recent efforts, women remain only a small fraction of those in senior positions in the law; women barristers continue to be denied an equal share of senior briefs; and female lawyers generally earn on average \$20,000 a year less than men” (*The Age*, Insight, December 6, 2003, p. 8).

Anne Summers’ (2003) book *The End of Equality*, which was widely reviewed and reported, identified the law as an example of a field in which women’s advancement has “ground to a halt in the face of male opposition” and attacked institutionalised forces in workplaces which she claimed can only be addressed by government regulation and support for women such as child care.

Claims of a “boys’ club” discriminating against women and a “backlash” seeking to undermine women’s efforts are rife in mass media – often without supporting evidence. In a review of Summers’ book, columnist, Emma-Kate Symons wrote: “As Summers shows,

some powerful men are trying to take back women's hard-earned gains of the 1970s and '80s through legal, political and social means" (*The Weekend Australian*, Books Extra, November 29-30, 2003, p. 6).

Columnist Jane Albrechtsen has earned the ire of many feminists and has been branded a conservative by disagreeing with generalised claims of discrimination at work. Rejecting Summers' views in *The End of Equality*, Albrechtsen said "nuance is still nowhere to be seen". She wrote:

Well-educated middle class women like to tell us that women want a leg up, a short cut, and they want power. They want to run the show, sit in the nation's boardrooms, in its courtrooms and in parliament ... Undoubtedly, discrimination may still be part of the answer. Yet there is also so much more to it than one-word slogans. Add some nuance and what looks like discrimination and regression starts to look a lot like a reflection of women's choices. Some women prefer the playground to the boardroom. Some women use the professions as a marriage market. Some women like to be kept. Nuance like this may be unpalatable, but that does not make it untruthful ... Feminism has some growing up to do (*The Australian*, December 3, 2003, p. 15).

But Albrechtsen is one of very few voices raised in defence of men in any way and, as noted in analysis of sources quoted in mass media, it is interesting that this defence is mounted by a woman columnist and not men. This gender imbalance in authors writing on men's issues and sources quoted raises important questions worthy of further investigation. Do media editorial policies in relation to social and gender issues favour women? Or are men unconcerned or disinterested? Or have men been silenced in some way?

Research in the US showing that many women are choosing home and children instead of paid employment was reported. Media quoted US Census Bureau data showing the number of stay at home mums has increased by 13% in less than a decade. And it is not only women with limited or no opportunities who are staying at home, according to media reports. Research conducted among women graduates from leading US universities has found "high achievers are ditching the hard-fought-for privileges to be stay-at-home mums" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 12-13, 2003, p. 32). A report by Lisa Belkin entitled "The Opt Out Revolution" published in *The New York Times Magazine* and cited

in Australian media reported that only 38% of women graduates from Harvard Business School work full-time and half of Princeton University graduates interviewed by Belkin had left their top-rating jobs (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 9, 2003, p. 11). In another feature it was reported: “The stalwart feminists of the 1970s might be horrified, but it seems that their daughters – highly educated and driven since birth to be professional high achievers – are reaching their late 20s or early 30s and finding that a career is not all that it was cracked up to be” (*The Australian*, September 15, 2003, p. 10).

Men bearing the brunt of industrial rationalisation and corporate restructuring, suffering career burn-out, and living alienated from their families are likely to feel that it was feminist generalisations about so-called male power and privilege that eulogised paid work over personal life and family and, in so doing, did a disservice to men and women.

Some argue that women leaving the paid workforce is simply a sign of workplaces failing women through inflexibility and working to male rules. However, Belkin disagrees saying that women are also rejecting the workplace even when it is tailored to their needs. “They are redefining the meaning of success in their lives” she was quoted as saying in a major feature entitled “Reclaimed by biology” (*The Weekend Australian*, November 1-2, 2003, p. 24).

An example of a positive media report showing many men do not discriminate against female workers featured ‘Muddy Mary’ – South Australia’s first official apprentice brick layer. Con, Mary’s father, her mother Angela, and work mates on the building site where she worked were interviewed and, in response to the interviewer’s question about whether it mattered if bricklayers were girls, one co-worker stated: “As long as they do the job, it doesn’t matter. Male, female, or space men” (*A Current Affair*, August 5, 2003).

It is significant that only career success, promotion and achievement were reported favourably overall in relation to men’s work and careers – and even these aspects of work were subject to considerable criticism and negative comment. All other issues were unfavourable, including working hours and pay and earnings.

Melbourne’s and one of Australia’s leading daily newspapers, *The Age* devoted a major series to “Suicide: Men at risk” and, as part of the series, interviewed seven prominent

educated professional men on their experiences and the “trials of manhood”. One of the recurrent themes in the men’s comments was the importance of work in their lives and in providing their identities. A school teacher and former priest commented: “We tossed this around, we (men) define ourselves primarily through work. Once our work begins to take on a meaninglessness, everything else goes with that. We are Industrial Revolution people. We have been defined primarily by what we can output, not by what we can take in.” A school principal stated: “I’m a school principal. If I’m not a school principal any more, what am I? (*The Age*, August 20, 2003, p. 13)

Despite relative economic stability and low unemployment during the period of this study, Professor Sue Richardson from the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University warned that Australia is creating a “dangerous” underclass of young unemployed unmarried men. Adele Horin reported Richardson speaking at a conference in Canberra where she said “35 per cent of Australian men aged 35-44 in 2003 were not married and did not have a full-time job. This compared with 20 per cent in 1978.” The headline of Horin’s report summarised young males’ plight as “Jobless, single and male: society’s forgotten outcasts” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 2, 2003, p. 11).

Interestingly, as with fatherhood, the most prominent writers on men in relation to work in the mass media studied were women including:

Pru Goward;
Bettina Arndt;
Angela Shanahan;
Susan Mitchell;
Emma Tom;
Barbara Pocock;
Adrienne Burgess;
Adele Horin;
Judy Adamson;
Julie-Anne O’Hagan;
Brigid Delaney;
Sherrill Nixon; and

Melissa Marino.

Male bylines writing about this subject were far fewer. They were, most notably, Michael Flood, Michael Bachelard, Tim Colebatch and Tom Morton.

Men's social behaviour and body image – representations of masculinities

Mass media representations of male social behaviour are widely varied, but again portrayals of men are predominantly negative as shown in Figure 12.

‘Metrosexuals’ is a new buzz word in mass media in relation to men. The term has emerged as the most prominent male identity portrayed in mass media in relation to men’s social behaviour. Reportedly coined by British author Mark Simpson in 1994 and allegedly made popular by New York trend-spotter Marian Salzman (Barker, 2004), the term refers to men who are fashion-conscious and well-groomed, often to the point of wearing make-up and waxing to remove body hair.

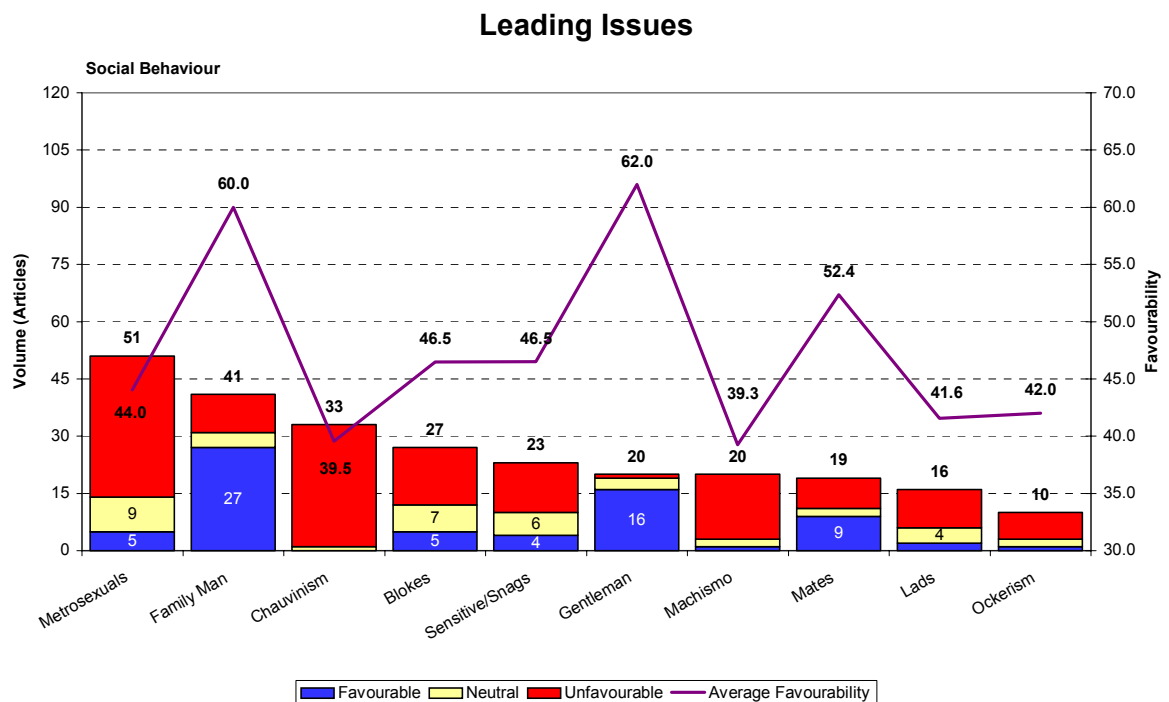


Figure 12. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to social behaviour.

Related to social behaviour, men are increasingly portrayed in mass media as body conscious, users of make-up and beauty products and, to a lesser extent, devotees of waving for hair removal and body building. Traditional masculinity in the sense of strong, muscular, rugged and hirsute appearance is also represented in mass media, but less so than metrosexual images and in negative as well as positive ways. Traditional masculine appearance is increasingly criticised in favour of David Beckham and Ian Thorpe type images of hairless, coiffured gymnasium-sculpted male bodies and Botox-injecting metrosexuals.

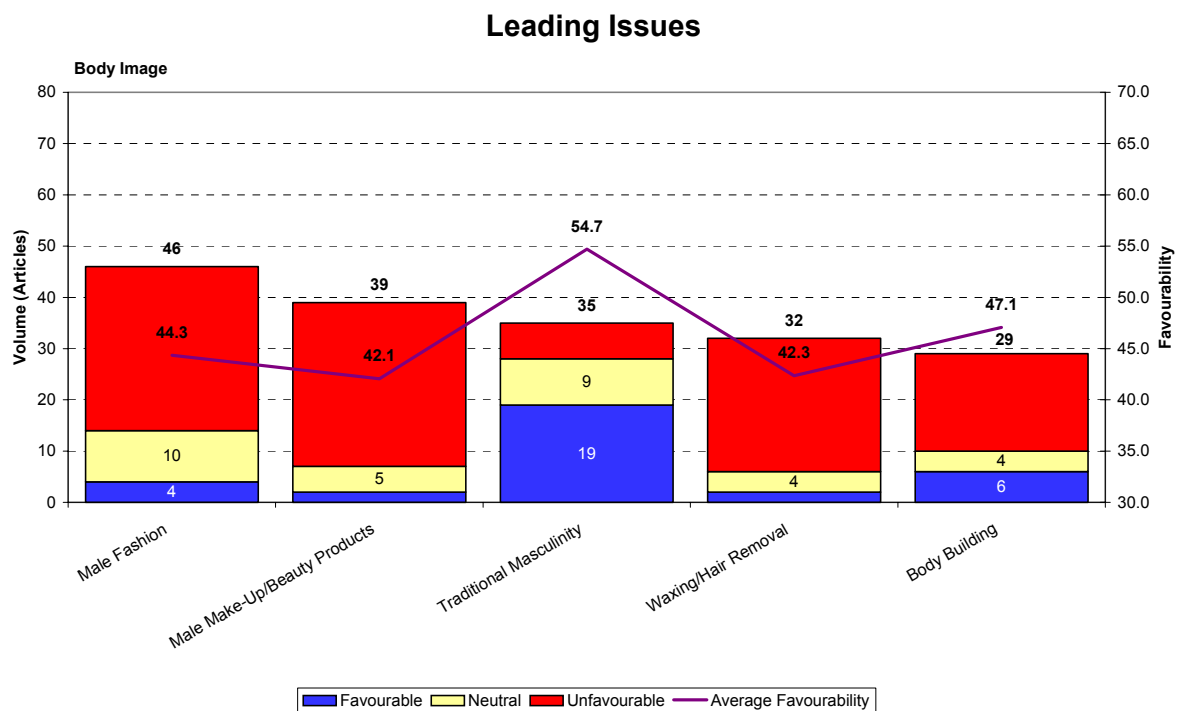


Figure 13. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to body image.

Top-rating international current affairs show, *60 Minutes*, devoted a major segment to “Metro Man”. International soccer star and “sex symbol”, David Beckham, was cited as the ideal metrosexual. Australian examples cited were Olympic swimmers Ian Thorpe and Geoff Heugill, resplendent with their hairless bodies, along with singer, David Campbell. Reporter Charles Woolley reported: “They’re into makeovers, make-up and moisturisers, know everything there is to know about shirts and shoes and, for what it’s worth, they’re straight” (*60 Minutes*, August 24, 2003).

Australia's other national current affairs TV show was not far behind in reporting on this major issue. At least *A Current Affair* recognised the commercial motives behind the metrosexual trend with its report entitled "The boom industry that allows men to lie back and think of make-up" (*A Current Affair*, September 19, 2003).

Not to be outdone by *60 Minutes*'s rhetoric, *A Current Affair* did a follow-up program on Botox treatments being used by men as well as women. Reporter Brady Hall matched Charles Woolley's alliteration describing "the body beautiful Botox world" (*A Current Affair*, December 2, 2003).

A major feature in *The Sunday Telegraph* titled "Metro Man" featured Olympic swimmer, Ian Thorpe; soccer star David Beckham; actor Hugh Jackman; fashion guru Wayne Cooper; actor George Clooney; Australian TV personality and former male stripper Jamie Durie; and cricketer Brett Lee among others as examples of "Metro Man" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, July 20, 2003, pp. 10-11).

Men's magazine *Ralph*, published a quiz headed "Are you a metrosexual" in a tongue-in-cheek tone. But the underlying message was that, if a man was not a metrosexual, he was a sexist, football-loving, beer-drinking slob – ie. traditional heterosexual men are 'out' and metrosexuals are 'in' (*Ralph*, October 2003, p. 125).

Despite the levity of *Ralph* magazine's approach, there are signs that men are concerned and conflicted by the shifting kaleidoscope of identities paraded in mass media. A letter to the editor from a young man summarised concerns expressed by many men. Under a headline "Men in need of direction" the writer stated: "The increasing trend towards this portrayal of men in advertising is a representation of the indeterminate role of males in modern society ... men are less secure in the part they have to play in the social structure ... for the young male, there is a great deal of confusion about the contribution they have to make to society and in relationships...". The letter concluded by appealing against "lauding one gender and denigrating the other" (*The Daily Telegraph*, July 7, 2003, p. 10).

A Sunday magazine feature was sub-headlined "Some modern males don't know whether they're Arthur or Martha (Stewart that is)" and commented of modern men that "his generation is fighting a battle for masculinity on multiple fronts: personal grooming;

housework, childcare, communication and general touch-feely-ness. It's no wonder many are floundering. Experts are calling this new male plight 'Atlas syndrome'" (*Sunday Life* magazine in *The Age*, November 9, 2003, p. 12).

Janet Albrechtsen came out in strong opposition to the so-called metrosexual revolution. In a national column headed "Stop tampering with the male" and with an overline stating "Metrosexual Man, representing the temporary triumph of androgyny over biology, is feminism's Frankenstein", she asked "what would liberated assertive, independent women find attractive about girly boys who hog the mirror?" Albrechtsen also questioned a study which defined a metrosexual as having "little interest in military hardware or heroism, he prefers salmon pink shirts and loves to share his shopping with his friends. His most common vice is – brace yourself – being passive" (*The Australian*, August 6, 2003, p. 11).

Some commentators have cited mass media reporting of this alleged new trend as nothing more than a cynical marketing ploy designed to sell products through exploiting men's ego and insecurity in the same way as women have been induced to buy make-up, hair care products and stay abreast of fashion. Miranda Devine, in a large opinion feature under the headline "The pain of the modern male eunuch" commented: "The new masculine metrosexual ideal seems to be imposing the same tyranny of lookism on men which women have long endured (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 18, 2003, p. 17).

The concept of Sensitive New Age Guys (SNAGS) is closely related to metrosexuals, although SNAGS are so described more in relation to emotions than fashion. Mass media portrayals of SNAGS were also mostly unfavourable due to inferences that SNAGS are 'wimps'. Even many women writers express a preference for "real men" – whatever that term means. Columnist Muriel Reddy commented in a major Sunday opinion column: "There is a whole rethink of just what it is ... to be a man. The images include the 'sensitive new age guy', the gay, the bisexual and the queer man, the 'new lad' and the metrosexual. It's a brave new world out there for men" (*The Sunday Age*, December 21, 2003, p. 11).

'Family man' is a traditional social role favourably reported in mass media, but portrayals of family men were less frequent than metrosexuals. 'Gentleman' was the other favourable social image of men, but more often men were portrayed as chauvinists and as 'blokes' or

‘blokey’ – terms that are mostly used as unfavourable descriptions. It is significant that in Australia and the UK ‘blokes’, the most common colloquial expression for men, once positive (such as in ‘a good bloke’) has become a negative, while the equivalent North American term ‘guys’ has largely become androgynous.

Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, blames “the blokey culture” of certain industries for the lack of women in senior positions. Without citing specific issues that define a “blokey culture”, Goward claimed finance industry research shows that most women left because of the “blokey culture” (*The Age*, December 4, 2003, pp. 1, 4).

Male mateship has been identified in much social literature as an important source of support and identity for men. In Australia, in particular, mateship has been celebrated in songs, poetry, films (eg. *Gallipoli*) and novels. But mateship also has come in for attack. A number of media articles criticised male mateship as the root of many evils including excessive drinking and drunkenness often leading to aggression, sexual abuse, domestic violence and risk-taking behaviour such as dangerous driving. A summit on alcohol abuse in Sydney was reported under a page one headline “Casting a sober eye on grog and mateship” and opened with the sentence: “Australians’ very notion of mateship may need to be rewritten ...” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 27, 2003, p. 1).

Machismo was unfavourably cited in relation to men frequently and was closely linked with mateship and ‘lads’ (a term for immature males and, particularly in the UK, denoting men who reject gender equality and regress to political incorrectness and chauvinism).

Men and commitment and responsibility

Analysis of men in relation to commitment and responsibility reveals an interesting contradiction in discourse. Women’s magazines and opinion columns frequently report that men lack commitment and even that they are “commitment phobic”. Yet, alongside criticism of men as lacking commitment is extensive reporting of men working long hours and even being workaholics, serving in the military, fire brigades and other national commitments, and regularly carrying out heroic rescues to save lives (community commitment). Considerable evidence shows men have consistently demonstrated commitment and responsibility in work, as protectors and as soldiers. Risking their lives as

volunteers in war, as many Australian men have done, is an evocative example of commitment and sense of responsibility.

What emerges from analysis of discourse is that commitment and responsibility have been redefined selectively and narrowly. Commitment and responsibility to work has become a site of conflict and is mostly viewed as negative. Military commitment and responsibility is now shared with women – albeit it too has been denigrated at various times such as during the Vietnam War and claims are made that there would be no war if women were in charge. Commitment in sport (not analysed but cited in some discussions of men) is mostly portrayed as frivolous or a refuge for hegemonic masculinity. In almost all cases, claims of lack of commitment by men relate to individual men postponing or avoiding marriage and having children. Such decisions are interpreted as a fault in men. Other possible explanations are rarely if ever considered. Discourse is being led by women, as identified in analysis of sources, and the commitment and responsibility that they principally seek – the only ones that seem to count – are to themselves and their children.

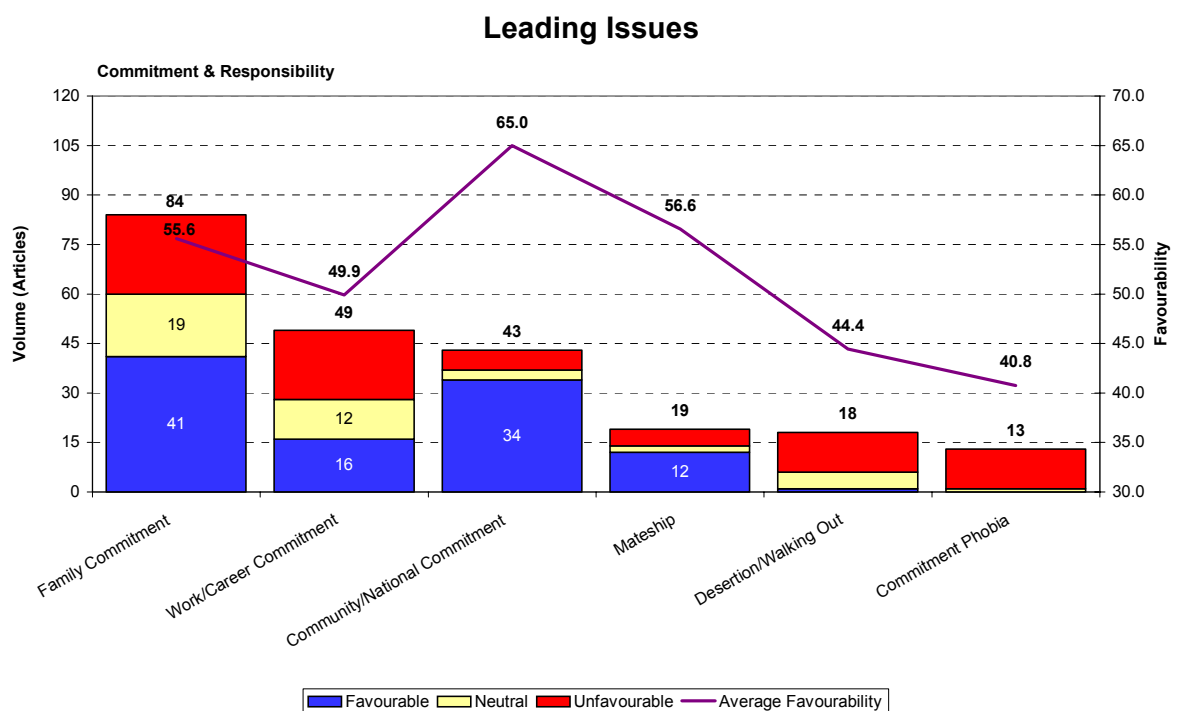


Figure 14. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to commitment and responsibility.

Men's physical health

Men are portrayed as not taking care of their health. As shown in Figure 15, leading issues reported and portrayed in relation to men's health were alcohol drinking and drug abuse. Disease generally was reported to be increasing and male health was cited as requiring attention. However, preventative treatment and programs to address men's health problems such as prostate cancer were little reported in leading mass media. For example, prostate cancer, a major killer of men, was discussed in just 12 articles – 0.67% of reporting about men.

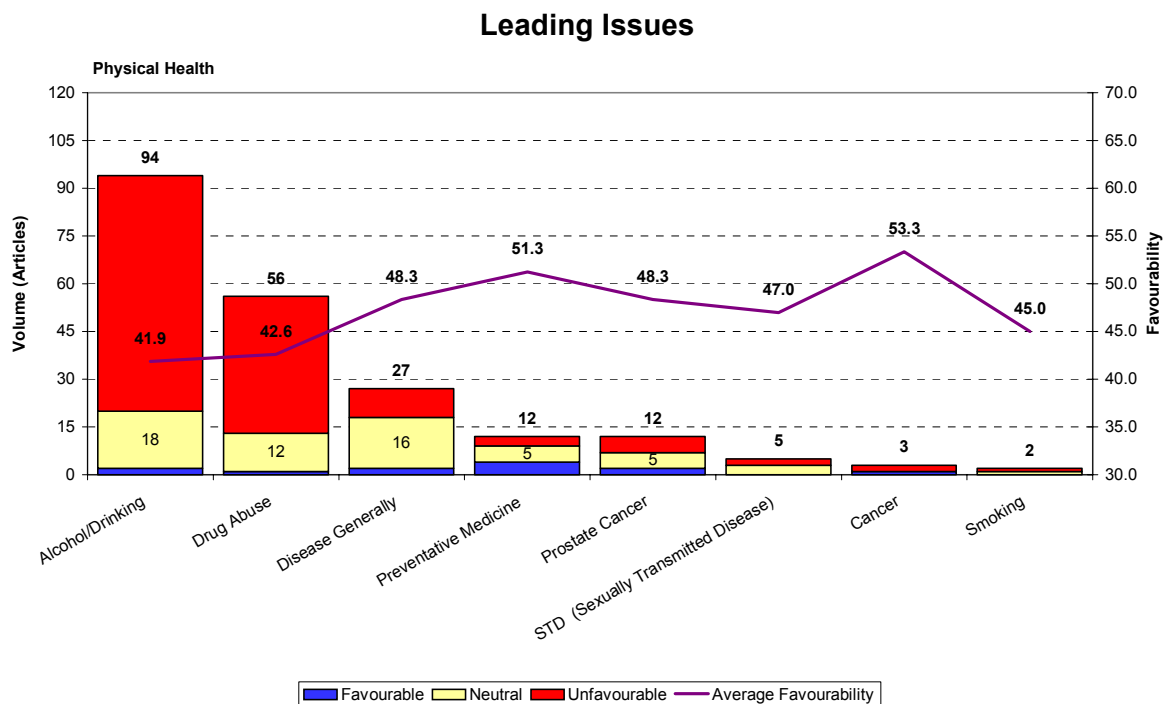


Figure 15. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to physical health.

A week-long national health conference in Cairns called for a National Men's Health Policy, concluding that Australian men "are not only neglectful of their health, but are poorly served by the Federal system compared with women". University of Western Sydney health professor and co-director of the Men's Health Resource and Information Centre, John Macdonald was reported saying while the past 20 years had seen "an understandable and laudable move towards women's health, there has not been an equivalent for men" (*The Australian*, September 9, 2003, p. 3).

Contributing to the neglect were reports that tests for diagnosing prostate cancer were flawed, leaving many men at risk of having cancer undetected (*The Australian*, July 25, 2003, p. 3).

Several major publications called for increased focus on prostate cancer among men. For instance, *Australian Women's Weekly* reported that “every three hours an Australian man dies from prostate cancer” and urged women to help “save your man’s life” through testing (*Australian Women's Weekly*, November 2003, p. 183). Also, a major weekend newspaper feature headlined “Killing me softly” pointed out that “prostate cancer is a threat to men, similar to breast cancer in women, but we’re not doing enough about it” (*The Australian*, December 20-21, 2003, p. 20).

Some mass media have played a commendable role in bringing key issues concerning men’s health to national attention. For instance, in addition to the two articles cited in the previous paragraph, two major features on men’s health were published by one newspaper group (*The Age*, July 28, 2003, A3 pp. 8-9 and *The Sunday Age*, August 10, 2003, pp. 1, 8) and *Family Circle* magazine (November 2003) devoted a major feature to men’s health (pp. 54-56).

Men’s mental health and suicide

Men’s mental health was mostly reported in relation to suicide so these issues (coded separately as shown in Figure 7) were analysed together.

Most media focus was on suicide among older males, followed by young male suicide and male suicide attempts, as shown in Figure 16. A shift in focus from youth suicide to suicide by older men reflects statistics showing that older males are most at risk of suicide. Male suicides were reported predominantly in relation to depression and insanity (including temporary insanity) during or following instances of men committing violent crimes such as killing their partners and children.

Other key contributors to male suicides cited by mass media were relationship break-up, loss of access to children and sexual dysfunction (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 4, 2003, p. 13; *Sunday Age*, September 28, 2003, p. 11 and a multi-page feature entitled

“Suicide: Men at Risk” in *The Age*, August 18, 2003, pp. 13-15). *The Age* feature brought a reported “flood of response” in letters to the editor (*The Age*, August 23, 2003, p. 12).

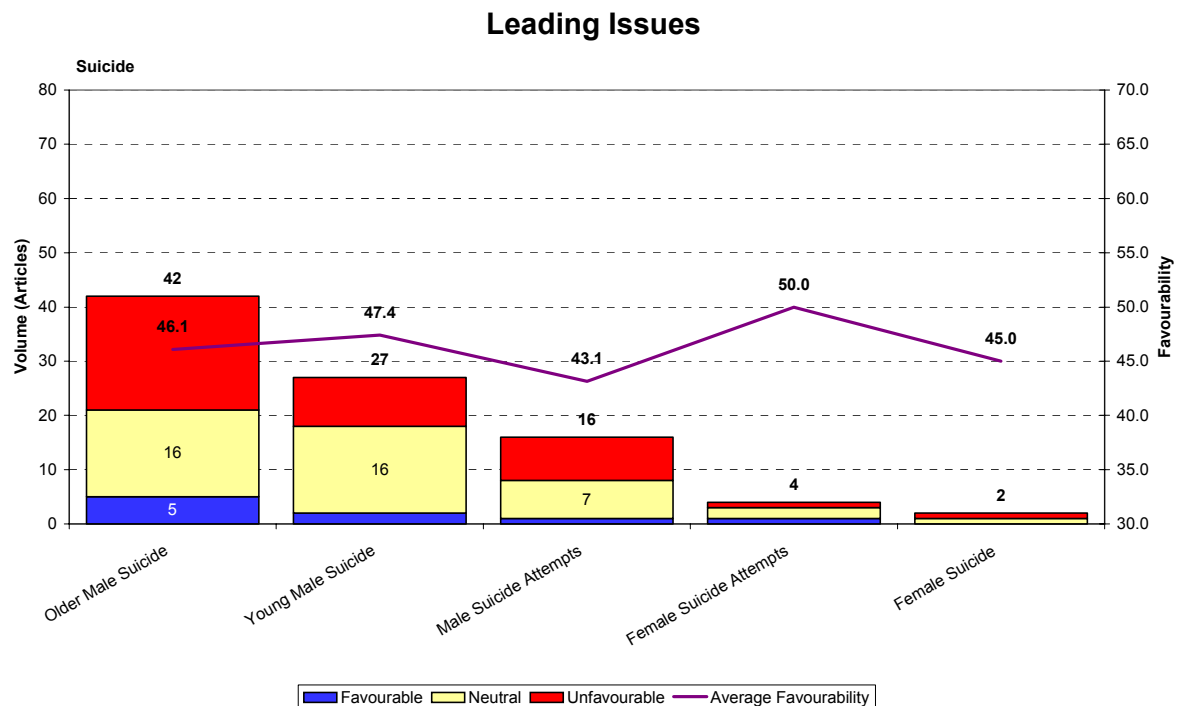


Figure 16. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to mental health and suicide.

Analysis of mass media reporting of both male and female suicide and suicide attempts was conducted and this shows much higher reporting of male suicide in mass media, as shown in Figure 16.

A letter to the editor told of two parents’ tragic experience of young male suicide. The parents wrote: “It was Father’s Day 2001 when our 19-year-old son Anthony, decided to leave and not return. We waited ... hoping that he would call to ask to come home or to at least say that he was OK and didn’t want to come home. A week later, on September 8, the police came to tell us that our son was dead” (*The Age*, October 15, 2003, p. 10).

Men and communication

Men were mostly reported as unable to express or poor at expressing their feelings and emotions and also for not talking, as shown in the high proportion of negative media reporting of these issues illustrated in Figure 17. The dominance of female writers on

men's issues and the content of media discussion suggest that communication may be largely defined in female and feminist terms.

Men were reported to be poor at non-verbal communication and listening. Only a few mass media articles represented men as good communicators.

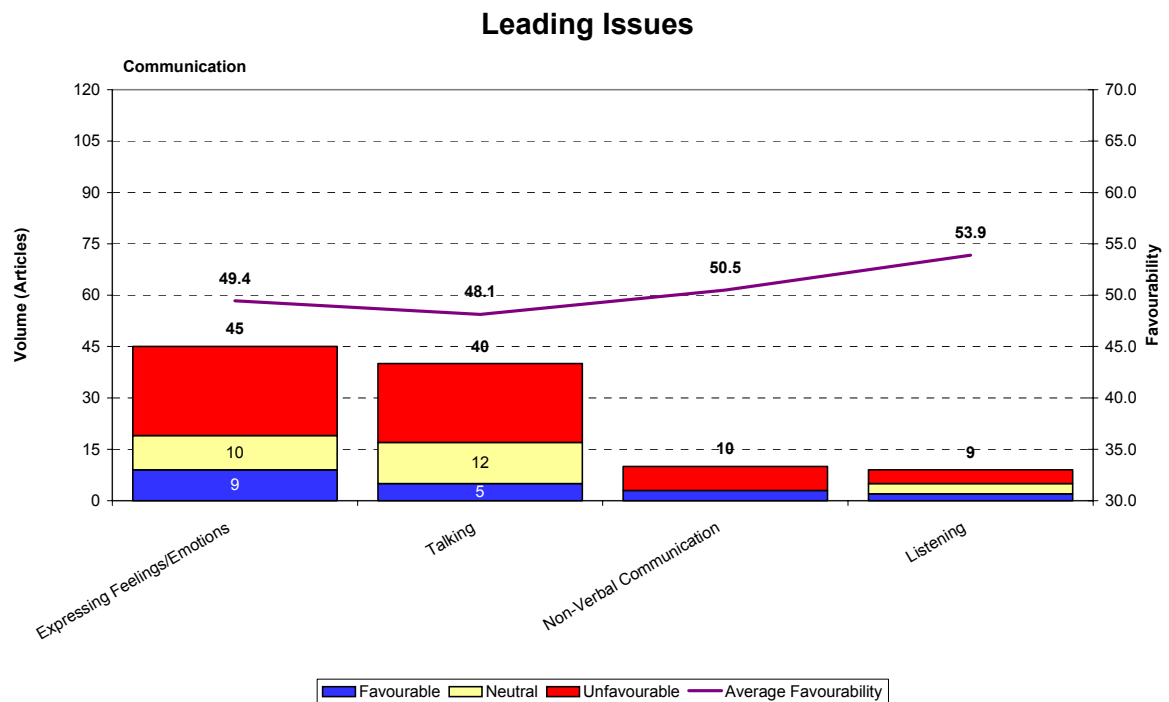


Figure 17. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to communication.

Male competitiveness

Other noteworthy findings were that male competitiveness was frequently cited in mass media reporting and portrayals of men and male identities, predominantly as causing harm rather than benefits.

Figure 18 shows that mass media references to male competitiveness causing harmful effects such as risk-taking and oppressive actions appeared more than twice as often as male competitiveness associated with benefits such as success in an endeavour or achievement.

Male teamwork and co-operation among men was cited even less frequently.

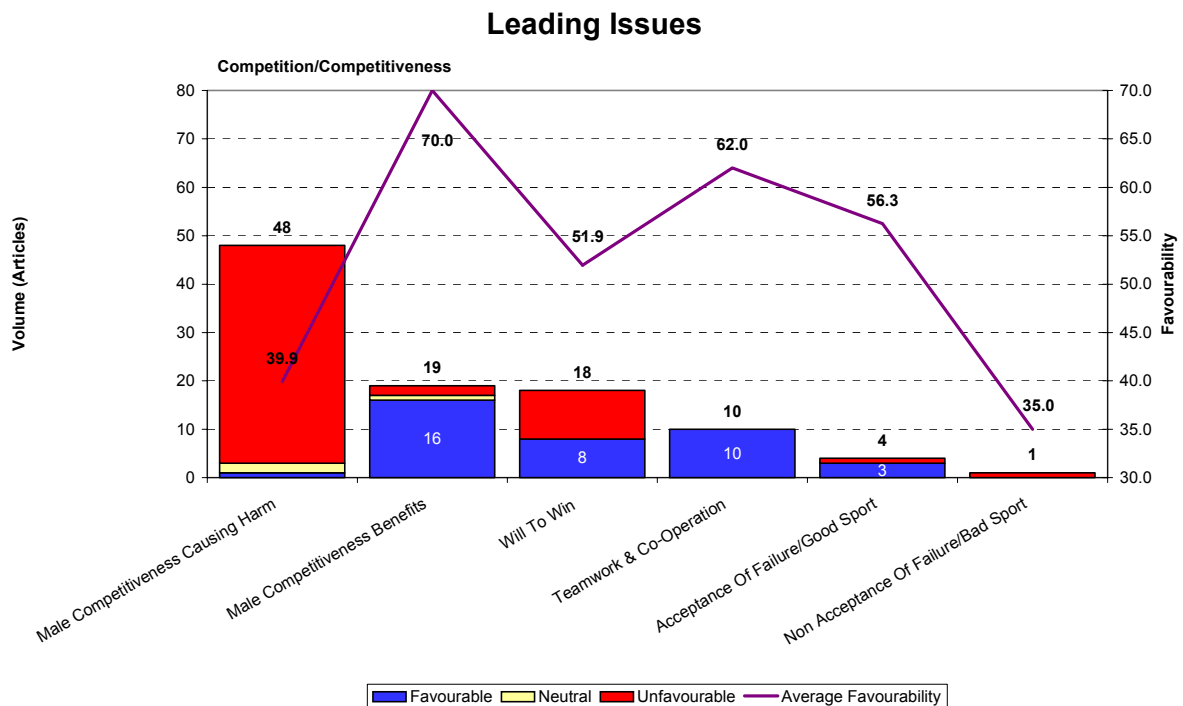


Figure 18. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to competition and competitiveness.

Male competitiveness was portrayed as leading to greed and was cited frequently in instances of men committing corporate fraud. While this study did not examine business media reporting, some notable corporate collapses were widely reported in general news such as disgraced Australian business tycoon, Alan Bond, released from prison and trying to rebuild his career. *A Current Affair* raked over Bond's past, referring to him as perpetrating "Australia's biggest ever corporate fraud" (*A Current Affair*, November 4, 2003).

High profile Australian multi-millionaire stockbroker, Rene Rivkin, also made it out of the business pages into mainstream news when he was convicted of insider trading and sentenced to prison (*The Australian*, November 5, 2003, p. 4; *The Daily Telegraph*, November 14, 2004, p. 4; and a major Weekend Inquirer feature in *The Australian*, November 1-2, 2003, p. 17). Bond and Rivkin were two of a number of men in senior corporate positions who, like their counterparts in Enron, Worldcom and Tyco in the US and a number of other companies, were found to have succumbed to greed and broke the law.

A Current Affair also reported “An Australian man at the centre of a multi-million worldwide fraud”, showing the arrest of a man from Nyngan, New South Wales, Nick Marinellis, allegedly a “Mr Big behind the Nigeria e-mail scam”. (*A Current Affair*, October 30, 2003). A total of 25 charges were subsequently laid against Marinellis.⁴

Men and domestic involvement

Men’s role in child care was the most reported issue in terms of male domestic involvement, followed by house cleaning, ‘house husbands’ (men involved full-time in family domestic duties) and cooking. Half of 28 articles discussing men and child care were positive, reporting men taking a major role in caring for their children. This included prominent stories on fathers such as Russell Crowe reportedly ecstatic about the birth of his first child and John Travolta of whom Oprah Winfrey said “his eyes light up whenever he talks about his children”, as cited under “Men and fatherhood”. However, a significant number of media articles also criticised men for lack of involvement in child care as shown in Figure 19.

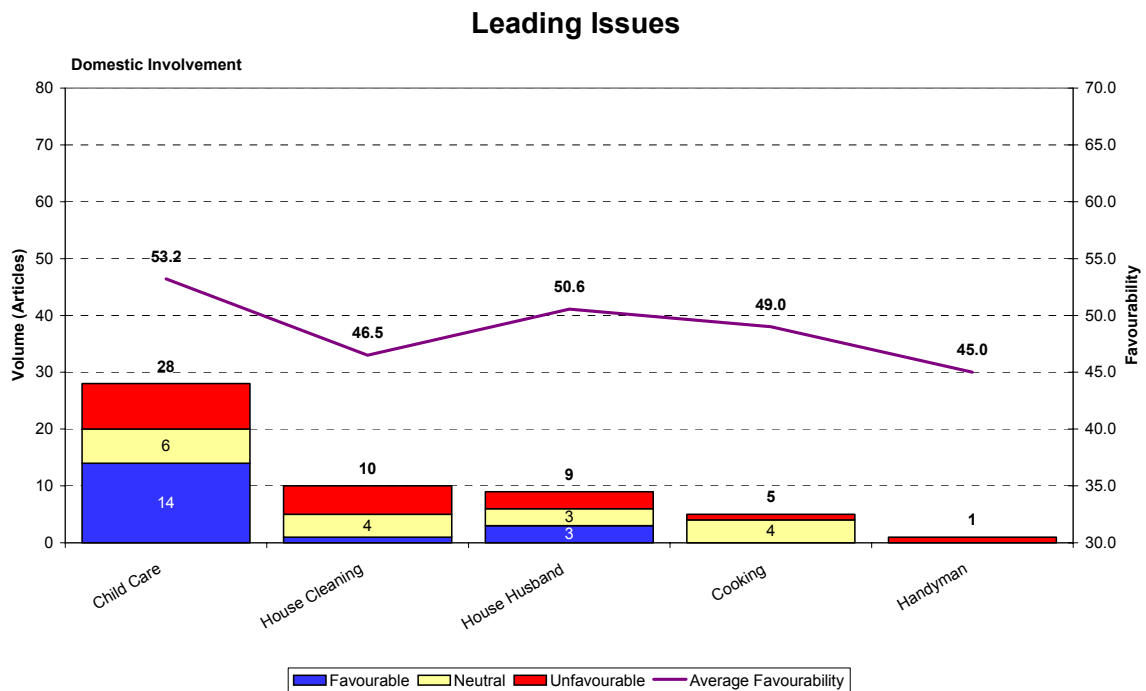


Figure 19. Leading issues in mass media reporting of men in relation to domestic involvement.

⁴ Marinellis was sentenced in November 2004 to more than five years jail (*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 9, 2004, p. 8).

Media reporting on men in relation to house cleaning were mostly negative, citing men's lack of effort in this regard, and comment on 'house husbands' were equally balanced between positive, negative and neutral.

An interesting observation is that domestic involvement (including terms such as child care and housework) is primarily defined as work inside the house. Only one article in this study reported or noted men's domestic work outside the house. Domestic involvement and 'housework' appear to be strictly defined as caring for children, cleaning inside the house and cooking. Attending to gardens, garages, paths, driveways, washing cars, cleaning out gutters, handyman repairs and maintenance are not acknowledged. Definitional issues appear to be a significant factor in widespread claims that men do not do their share domestically and a broader definition of 'housework' may substantially alter the alleged inequity between men and women in this area.

Boys' education

Boys' education was a major focus of mass media reporting during 2003. Academic performance of boys was reported favourably in this sample as shown in Figure 20, with boys excelling in Year 12 exam results.

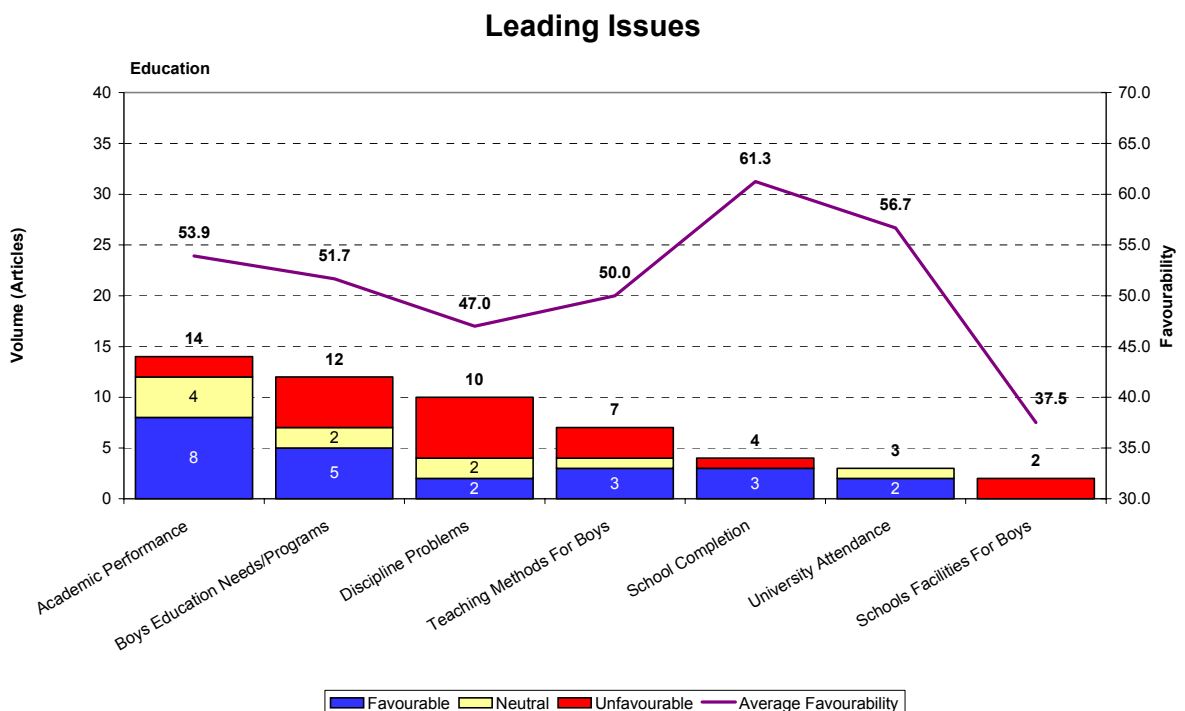


Figure 20. Leading issues in mass media reporting of boys in relation to education.

However, the small number of reports of boys topping examinations belies the broader issue of boys falling behind girls on average in academic achievement and calls for a renewed focus on boys' needs. A major feature in *The Bulletin* entitled "Through the glass ceiling" reported that "men are the new second sex" when it comes to education. The three-page article reported that there were 75,000 more women than men enrolled at Australian universities in 2003 and 80,000 more women than men with degrees in the 25-34 age group. According to the report, female school teachers outnumber men four to one and also outnumber men among university staff. And, not only do women outnumber men in education, but they are outperforming them. Boys fill detention rooms and remedial groups, *The Bulletin* reported. Meanwhile, women dominate six out of 10 major tertiary fields of study and, of 145, 000 students awarded degrees in 2002, almost 60% were women (*The Bulletin*, September, 9, 2003, pp. 28-30).

The appointment by the Australian Federal Government Ministerial Council on Education of Richard Fletcher, a noted proponent of boys' educational needs, men's health and head of the Engaging Fathers Project to a review of gender equity policies in education to ensure balance between the needs of boys and girls was not greeted enthusiastically by education authorities, according to Bettina Arndt. However, Fletcher commented: "I'm hoping that the new attention to boys will result in them achieving their potential but not at the expense of girls" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum, December 20-21, 2003, p. 7).

A number of mass media reported on boys' education needs and programs, discipline problems with boys in schools, teaching methods for boys, and school facilities for boys. Several very unfavourable media stories reported teachers punishing boys for making noise and policies which discriminated against boys.

Four controversial incidents which highlighted potential problems in school treatment of boys made national TV news and current affairs during the period of this study. In one, a six-year old boy was suspended 30 times for behavioural problems. He was described as "a runaway", "a terror" and accused of "abusing teachers". However, the report investigated and found poor treatment by the teacher had substantially contributed to the problems. The teacher was disciplined (*A Current Affair*, July 3, 2003).

In a second incident, a primary school teacher was dismissed for her treatment of a young boy. The female teacher allegedly stuck masking tape over the boy's mouth to stop him talking (National Nine News, August 6, 2003).

In an even more serious incident, four boys at a school in Yarrawonga, Victoria were reportedly forced to lie on the floor of a classroom by a female teacher who then invited their classmates to walk over them, kick them and "stomp on them". Parents were outraged and called for an investigation (National Nine News, October 30, 2003). In a follow up current affairs program, one boy, Sam, reported feeling bullied and humiliated. The 25-year old teacher was disciplined (*A Current Affair*, December 23, 2003). However, the series of incidents raises serious questions about the approach of education authorities to managing boys in schools.

Eltham North Child Care in Melbourne was reported to have banned boys from wearing super hero costumes. The school claimed that wearing of super-hero costumes such as Superman and Batman outfits made the boys boisterous and unruly and provoked violence. However, the decision was described by parents of the three to five year old boys – mothers as well as fathers – as "political correctness gone mad" (*A Current Affair*, August 18, 2003).

Media representations of boys at school, while limited, support claims that boys are disadvantaged in school systems and that their needs and attributes are not catered for.

Leading messages about men

The overall negative portrayal of men in mass media is particularly demonstrated by the leading messages communicated about men in news, current affairs, talk shows and lifestyle media content. Figure 21 reports the top 10 messages concerning men in this sample. This shows that men are mainly described as criminals, aggressive, violent, sexual abusers and predators. They are also represented and described frequently as chauvinists and misogynists, stupid or incompetent, insensitive, out of touch with their feelings and commitment phobic.

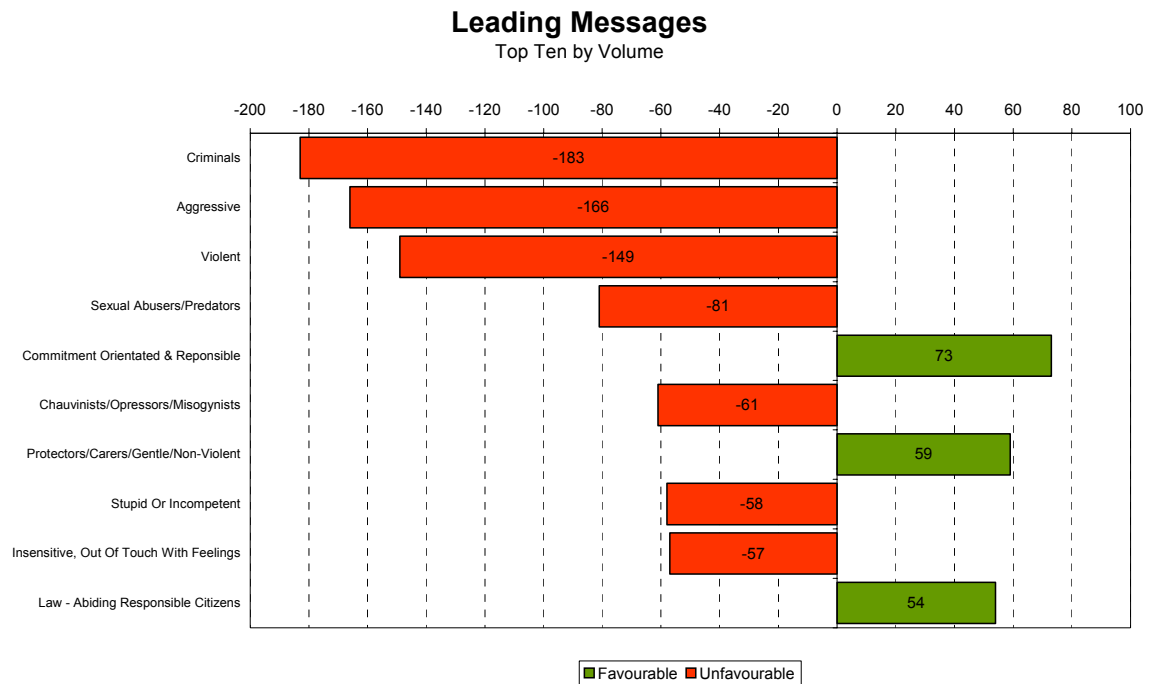


Figure 21. The 'top 10' messages about men in mass media.

Figure 22 further illustrates the overwhelmingly negative portrayals of men and male identities by contrasting positive and negative messages analysed. It shows negative iterations of most messages are far more frequent than positive iterations.

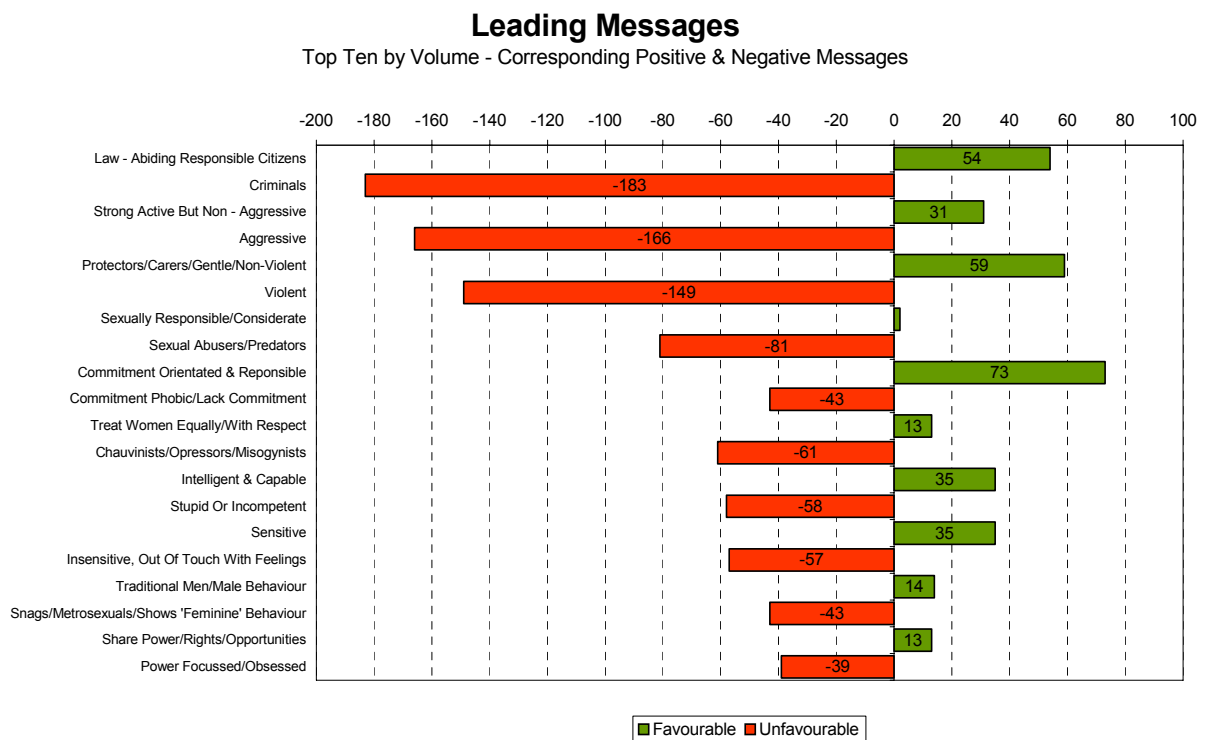


Figure 22. Comparison of leading positive and negative messages about men.

There are positive representations of men in mass media. Men are shown, albeit a minority, as commitment orientated and responsible, protectors and carers/gentle and non-violent, and as law-abiding responsible citizens. These messages are reflected in mass media reporting of heroes such as fire fighters and rescue workers, war heroes (particularly in news and feature articles around Armistice Day), Father of the Year awards, stories of police officers protecting communities, and profiles of respected male leaders.

Examples of portrayals of men as heroes and protectors found in this study included:

A Melbourne single father who saved his three children from their burning house, including running back into the flames to rescue his three-year old daughter trapped on the second floor (*The Age*, December 13, 2003, p. 11);

A man who ran into a neighbour's burning house to save a young girl after her mother had already died in the fire. "I couldn't see her. I could just hear her screaming. Then I saw her silhouette curled up inside through all the smoke. I threw a table and smashed through the window at the side and just reached through and grabbed her," he reported (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 22, 2003, p 23);

A 46-year old Sydney western suburbs man who climbed into a burning car to release a child restraint and free a four-year old girl. *The Daily Telegraph* reported: "This lap of flame took her whole eyebrow off. It just went schooom – that was horrible – it just dissolved in front of me ...that's the point where I shit myself and thought, this seat's got to come – if this belt won't undo, I'm going to bite it out, I'm going to tear it out, whatever" (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 30, 2003, p 9);

A Melbourne University media studies student who jumped from a platform on to railway tracks to rescue a 16-year old who had fallen off a train and sustained serious head injuries. The man administered CPR and called emergency services on his mobile phone despite other trains approaching, saving the young male's life (*The Age*, October 23, 2003, p. 8);

A father who jumped on to railway tracks to save his infant son whose stroller had rolled off the platform into the path of an approaching train. “Mr Candy jumped on the tracks, hurled the stroller back on the platform and then tried to scramble up as an eight-carriage Tangara bore down on him. But he slipped off the platform edge and was forced to wedge his body up against the platform as the train hurtled past, centimetres from his head ...” it was reported (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 10, 2003, p. 9);

A 17-year-old young man who pulled a disabled driver out of a burning car one night on Sydney’s north shore. Nominated for a bravery award, the young man reported: “When I got to the car, the dash was melting on to the man’s legs. I told him to get out, but he said he couldn’t because he was a quadriplegic. I didn’t stop to think, I just reacted instinctively and I pulled him from the car and carried him out” (*The Daily Telegraph*, August 24, 2003, p. 29);

A young man washed out to sea by huge waves on the New South Wales south coast with his girlfriend who spent his last moments protecting her and helped saved her life, according to her accounts (*The Sunday Telegraph*, November 23, 2003, p. 11);

An Australian, Simon Leunig, was interviewed on a national current affairs show following his heroic assistance to victims following the 2003 terrorist bombing of the Jakarta Marriott Hotel. The program reported that Leunig helped rescue victims of the blast without regard to his own safety (*A Current Affair*, August 6, 2003);

Two Qantas flight stewards, Greg Khan and Denise Hickson, who over-powered a man threatening a flight with a knife. The male steward who led the attack on the would-be hijacker sustained cuts to his head and face, but passed the incident off as “in the line of duty” (National Nine News, July 3, 2003);

A British father who auctioned one of his kidneys over the Internet to fund pioneering treatment that he hopes will enable his six-year old disabled daughter to walk (Agence France Pressé reported in *The Australian*, December 5, 2003, p. 11);

Australia's famous 'Crocodile Hunter' Steve Irwin made headlines in 2003 when he rescued an injured American diver off the coast of Mexico. Irwin, who was filming in the area, offered his boat and satellite phone to assist in a search when he heard two American divers were missing. After being alerted to the divers clinging to rocks in heavy seas by kayakers, Irwin went to the area in a dinghy and swam the last few hundred metres to rescue one remaining diver. The second diver slipped from his friend's grasp before Irwin arrived (*The Sunday Telegraph*, November 30, 2003, p. 19);

A number of media reported tributes to Australian legendary bushman, R. M. Williams who died at age 95 in November 2003. In a report entitled "The remarkable life of R.M. Williams", national news described Williams' career from bushman to founder of the clothing and footwear empire (National Nine News, November 4, 2003). The following week, news reported on the "magnificent procession for the funeral of R. M. Williams (National Nine News, November 12, 2003). Newspaper headlines included "Bush legend R. M. Williams hangs up his boots" (*The Age*, November 5, 2003, p. 4) and "Bushie icon lived history" (*The Australian*, November 5, 2003, p. 11).

A number of mass media honoured returned soldiers to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War (July 27) and on Armistice Day (November 11). Media told of the atrocities of war faced by (mainly) men and their heroism. *The Bulletin* published a moving account of bravery headlined "Valour under fire" which recounted an incident involving Ron Cashman, a 20-year old corporal, at the time fighting on the front line in Korea to try to gain high ground called 'The Mound'. This article, reporting outstanding male heroism, is quoted and analysed in detail in section 5.2, "Qualitative findings".

The Age reported "Diggers recount cost of freedom 50 years on" featuring photographs of memorial celebrations (*The Age*, July 28, 2003, p. 3) and the national daily *The Australian* published an interview with the widow of Lieutenant-Colonel Charlie Green who was killed in the Korean War. The courage, commitment and protective instincts of men who fought in wars was headlined in Lieutenant-Colonel Green's reported last words: "Look after my men; they are all good blokes" (*The Australian*, July 26, 2003, p. 27).

On Remembrance Day (November 11) 2003, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* both published a profile to honour one of the world's oldest veterans, Marcel Caux, 104 in 2003⁵. After laying a wreath at the Sydney Cenotaph, Caux who was wounded three times in fierce fighting in World War One and lived post-war as a declared pacifist, shook hands with children and said "Peace is so much better than war" (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 12, 2003, p. 5; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 12, 2003, p. 8). TV news reported that there are "just six Australians left who survived the horrors of World War One" (National Nine News, November 10, 2003). *Australian Women's Weekly* in a special report (October 2003) noted that 65,000 men died during World War I.

The courage and strength of men was shown positively in peacetime also in chilling reports of coal miner Colin Jones whose right arm was trapped under his front-end loader following an underground accident. Jones amputated his own arm with a knife to escape (*The Age*, July 1, 2003, p. 2).

Other positive representations of men and masculinity appeared to mark the opening of a photographic exhibition of the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the 100th anniversary of the first flight by the Wright Brothers. A *Sydney Morning Herald* feature entitled "Men of steel who built the bridge with hard yakka" recognised traditional male industry and work. The famous Sydney landmark was "built by ordinary men with intricate calibrations and hard physical labour ... some worked 11 or 12 hour days and there were many accidents, including 16 fatalities, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported (August 25, 2003, p. 7). The pioneering aviators were hailed as "heroes" in a number of media articles in December 2003 to mark the historic first 12-second flight in North Carolina (eg. *The Daily Telegraph*, December 18, p. 43).

Family Circle magazine published a major feature over several issues for readers to nominate and vote the 'Husband of the Year'. The magazine published descriptions of the finalists, usually provided by their wives, saying "these lovely men are the winners of the *Family Circle* Husband of the Year competition". However, over five issues of the magazine, the competition featured idealised images of men and a certain degree of objectification. In the final (December) issue announcing the winner, the judges said: "All

⁵ Marcel Caux died in August 2004.

the men have displayed the most important relationship quality – commitment to their women”. The word “commitment” or “committed” was used four times in the first three paragraphs of judges’ comments and the magazine further commented “Most women would say that a man who makes them laugh would be high on the list” (*Family Circle*, December 2003, p. 28).

Analysis of texts quoting women speaking about men reveals a near obsession with commitment, suggestive of a lingering insecurity among women despite their strides towards autonomy and independence. The ‘Bridget Jones syndrome’ (30-year old single female without a man) continues to be a topic of discussion in women’s magazines and popular newspapers. For instance, in a major newspaper weekend magazine insert, Sarah Wilson wrote:

... I was like Carrie Bradshaw sitting cross-legged at her laptop. I started reading astrology columns, I grew my hair, I joked about having a questionnaire to hand out to blokes to save time ... and I suddenly cared, in the face of feminist schooling, that I didn’t have a man by my side (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Sunday magazine, November 16, 2003. p. 12).

The role of fathers was recognised positively in the Australian Father of the Year award. In 2003, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, a prominent scientist, was voted Father of the Year (National Nine News, September 5, 2003).

TV stars are afforded the mass media limelight regularly – an interesting case of mass media reporting on mass media. For instance, during the period of this study, the first season of *Australian Idol* was completed, with Guy Sebastian voted the winner. He appeared on most TV news, in countless newspaper and magazine reports and was interviewed on current affairs television (*A Current Affair*, November 20, 2003).

Mass media also profiled the (then) new Federal Opposition Leader, Mark Latham, calling him “Federal Labor’s big gamble” but reporting on him relatively positively (*A Current Affair*, December 2, 2003). However, within days of his election, attacks were launched against him, not on political grounds, but as a man as outlined later.

Despite a number of noteworthy heroic profiles of men presented in mass media, Table 8 shows total unfavourable messages (1,082) outnumbered favourable messages (455) by 2.4 to one. More than 70% of all messages analysed were unfavourable, compared with just 29.5% favourable.

Message	Favourable Mentions	Unfavourable Mentions
Criminals	0	183
Aggressive	0	166
Violent	0	149
Sexual abusers/predators	0	81
Commitment orientated and responsible	73	0
Chauvinists/oppressors/misogynists	0	61
Protectors/carers/gentle/non-violent	59	0
Stupid or incompetent	0	58
Insensitive, out of touch with feelings	0	57
Law - abiding responsible citizens	54	0
Commitment phobic/lack commitment	0	43
Snags/Metrosexuals/shows 'feminine' behaviour	0	43
Power focussed/obsessed	0	39
Not committed to children	0	36
Intelligent and capable	35	0
Sensitive	35	0
Groomed/waxed/feminine appearance	0	35
Paternal and care for children	34	0
Sex, sports, cars, mates focussed	0	34
Strong active but non-aggressive	31	0
Don't do their share/lazy domestically	0	29
Strong, rugged, traditionally masculine appearance	23	0
Good Communicators	21	0
Do not take care of their health/risk taking	0	20
Work focussed	0	20
Poor communicators/women are better	0	19
Well rounded/balanced	16	0
Balance work/personal/family	15	0
Traditional men/male behaviour	14	0
Share power/rights/opportunities	13	0
Treat women equally/with respect	13	0
Do their share domestically	7	0
Fathers deserve equal child rights	7	0
Inconsiderate/Ineffective lovers	0	4
Don't deserve/can't be trusted with equal child rights	0	3
Care for their health	2	0
Sexually responsible/considerate	2	0
Boys do not/girls need more attention	0	2
Boys need special/more attention	1	0
Total	455	1,082

Table 8. Detailed breakdown of leading messages in mass media representation of men in order of occurrence.

Gunmen, hitmen, conmen and man hunts – gender language continues (at least against men)

Noteworthy in this analysis was the number of times that gendered terms using “man” as a suffix or prefix appear in mass media headlines and stories – particularly in negative ways. Examples frequently cited include “gunman”, “conman”, “hitman” and “man hunt”. Prominent examples of these gendered terms found during this study included:

A front-page headline in *The Age* proclaiming “Chaos as West Gate gunman holds police at bay” (*The Age*, September 17, 2003, p. 1);

A full front page story in *The Daily Telegraph* headlined “Another day ... another burst of gunfire” began “A GUNMAN fired up to three shots from a high-powered weapon yesterday ...”. The word “gunman” was capitalised for emphasis (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 10, 2003, p. 1).

Other headline references to “gunman” or “gunmen” included:

“Gunmen flee on foot after home attacks” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, August 31, 2003, p. 3);

“Ring of steel to shut down the drive-by gunmen” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 23, 2003, p. 4);

“Gunman in court” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, November 2, 2003, p. 20);

“Arrested gunmen linked to gangsters” (*The Australian*, December 23, 2003, p. 3);

“Gunmen ambush Iraq’s top female” (*The Daily Telegraph*, September 22, 2003, p. 18);

“Gunmen kill three Israelis in Gaza raid” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition, October 25-26, 2003, p. 20).

Melbourne’s *Age* newspaper ran a page four headline carried over from page one: “Hitman clue in murders investigation” (*The Age*, September 3, 2003, p. 4) and another *Daily Telegraph* front page was headlined “Family tears as hitman kills the wrong man” (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 9, 2003, p. 1).

When Australian-born Peter Finlay (writing under the pseudonym D. B. C. Pierre with the initials standing for Dirty But Clean) won the Booker Prize for his book *Vernon God Little* in 2003, his gambling and criminal past were reported more than his literary achievements with headlines including:

“Conman’s Booker hopes” (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 14, 2003, p. 6);

“Dirty but clean Aussie conman wins Booker” (*The Australian*, October 16, 2003, p. 7);

“Australian conman wins Booker Prize” (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 16, 2003, p. 15);

Other uses of the term “conman” included a story of an 82-year old man convicted for pension fraud which was reported under the headline “Ageing conman jailed” (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 27, 2003, p. 19).

Of Australia’s major daily newspapers, only *The Age* avoided gendered language and reported more positively on its front page “Regretful rogue in a tux takes literary jewel” (*The Age*, October 16, 2003, p. 1).

Other male gendered terms used in media reporting included “wanted man” (eg. “Asia’s most-wanted man lived the life of a dollar-a-day backpacker” in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 27, 2003, p. 8) and “man made”. Like all other uses, the latter was negatively presented in a major story on whale beaching which was headlined “Man-made hazards to blame in theory over whale strandings” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition, December 6-7, 2003, p. 3).

The same media regularly used the terms “spokesperson” when the speakers were male, with no uses of “spokesman” or “spokesmen” found in the extensive sample of coverage studied. Similarly “chair” was used in place of the traditional “chairman”.

Guidelines have been introduced in Australia and many developed countries allegedly to eliminate sexist language, but men reading the media studied could only conclude that positive man words have been removed, while negative man words proliferate in media language.

Significantly, not one use of “gunwoman”, “hitwoman”, “conwoman” or “woman-made” was found, even though murders, frauds and armed offences committed by women and female-created effects were reported.

Any of the negative “man” words cited can be communicated without reference to the gender of the person involved. For instance, a “gunman” can be described as an armed person or person with a gun; a “conman” can be described as a con artist, confidence trickster or fraudster; and a “man hunt” can be simply described as a hunt for a suspect.

Also, it is noteworthy that legal terms such as “manslaughter” continue to use the male gender when women can commit and be victims of the offence. In summary, analysis of mass media content suggests that gendered language has been addressed only insofar as it disadvantages women. Negative references to men and males frequent discourse.

Other noteworthy findings

One of the most internationally high profile media stories towards the end of the period of this study reported the capture of former Iraq President, Saddam Hussein. Like many media, *The Daily Telegraph* devoted its full front page to a photo of the fallen dictator dishevelled and humiliated under the headline “Got Him” (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 15, 2003, p. 1). Saddam Hussein was widely reported as evil and despotic, particularly in American-originated media, and his downfall was widely welcomed despite controversy over the invasion of Iraq.

It was also reported that, ultimately, all men are facing extinction according to a number of media reports based on release of research and the book *Adam’s Curse* by Bryan Sykes (2004) which claims that the Y chromosome is deteriorating and within 150,000 years or so, it will die out. Broderick (2003) summarises Sykes’ argument like this: a human female has two X chromosomes, each with a slightly different version of the human female-building genome. This provides a back-up in the event of corruption or decay. Males have

one X and one Y chromosome. There is no spare copy of the code for the Y-carried sex genes – the male. Sykes says that “under the microscope, today’s Y chromosome has shrunk, a mere stump of the gene package on the X ... without an archival copy for repair purposes, the Y is doomed to unremitting degradation and finally must perish 6,000 generations hence.” New research has found that the deteriorating Y chromosome may not be as doomed as first thought, with discovery of “reversed versions of the key code ... mirror images that allow it to check the sex-building templates for fidelity and to repair mutations” (p. 10). However, the complexity of genetic studies makes them difficult to understand and mass media generally have promulgated the original story that men are a dying breed. During the period of this study, headlines included:

“Y men are on their way to extinction” (*The Age*, July 10, 2003, p. 13);

“Y men are going to be extinct” (Simon Benson column in *The Daily Telegraph*, August 25, 2003, p. 19);

“Male sex hormones to blame for heart disease” (*The Daily Telegraph*, September 17, 2003, p. 3);

“Testosterone makes the heart fail faster” (*The Age*, September 17, 2003, p. 7);

“Cardiac perils in the genes for men” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 19, 2003, p. 3);

‘Y factor spells doom for men’ (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 October 2003, 4);

“Degeneration Y: Adam is on the eve of extinction” (*The Age*, October 13, 2003, p. 3);
and

“XX-rated negotiation possible as the Y-front faces extinction” (Emma Tom column in *The Australian*, October 15, 2003, p. 11).

Such an onslaught of mass media messaging as outlined above can do little for men’s self-esteem and identities.

Approaching Christmas, newspapers and magazines traditionally review the year passed. *The Daily Telegraph* published a series entitled “Saints and Scoundrels”. Saints were evenly balanced between men and women. But scoundrels identified six men and one woman (*The Daily Telegraph*, Confidentially Speaking, December 23, 2003, p. 13).

Whenever a man rises to a public position, it seems only a matter of time before he is attacked on the grounds of gender or gender-related issues. When Australia's Federal Opposition elected Mark Latham as its leader in 2003, it could be expected that his policies or lack thereof, as appropriate, and his political leadership capabilities would be under scrutiny. But, within days, mass media headlines contained allegations that he had "abandoned his first wife", that he "uses his children" and that he has left a "trail of human wreckage". His former wife was interviewed and quoted saying: "He goes on about working-class roots, but in terms of gender, is it patriarchy or class that is most repressive?" (*The Australian*, December 4, 2003, p. 4) Gender? Patriarchy? Repressive? These terms appear in the interview without context. Why introduce gender at all if the subject under discussion (and the subject of the speaker's sentence) is working class roots? What has patriarchy got to do with a discussion of one man's political leadership capabilities? The statements made in this article resonate with feminist ideology.

Cartoons also were a site of bias against men in mass media. No cartoons were found in this study which negatively portrayed women. But a number of cartoons depicted men negatively. For example:

A large Spooner cartoon in *The Age* showed a terrorist figure with the text: "What a piece of work is man, how ignoble in passion, how limited in faculties, in form and moving how frenzied and degenerated, in action how like a fiend, in apprehension how like a man (with apologies to William Shakespeare)" (October 16, 2003).

A *Sydney Morning Herald* cartoon (November 13, 2003, p. 14) showed a figure attempting to sell Christian crosses to a customer saying "It's cheaper without the bloke".

Another *Sydney Morning Herald* cartoon in a Health and Science supplement showed an illustration of a confused-looking man sitting in front of a doctor who is peering into a microscope saying "I've just discovered your true manhood" (October 30, 2003, Health and Science, p. 1).

This study focussed on general news and current affairs, as well as talk shows and lifestyle media and did not analyse business reporting, entertainment or sport. Some researchers point out that men dominate senior positions in business and suggest that business media not included in this study are likely to represent men favourably. However, a study of business media coverage in Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia in 2003 found “more than 70% of reports on business related to corruption, fraud, poor corporate governance and ethics, insider trading, excessive executive payments, regulatory change to combat business fraud and malpractice, and poor customer service.” The 10-week study of 630 business media articles found 593 negative messages prominently reported compared with 385 positive messages in relation to business (CARMA International, 2003).

Other studies have shown that mass media reporting of sport have represented traditional hegemonic masculinity which is increasingly criticised as overly competitive, discriminatory and violent (eg. Duncan and Jensen, 1990; Messner, 1988; Messner, 1992; McKay and Middlemiss, 1995; and Sabo and Curry Jansen, 1992).

Therefore, it can be concluded that men are overwhelmingly represented negatively in mass media, not only in news, but in a wide range of representations and discourse reflected in and propagated through mass media.

Leading sources

As shown in this study and illustrated in Figure 23, media discourse is largely contributed and often dominated by women writers, academics and researchers. Male voices given resonance in mass media discourse are, in most cases, pro-feminist men.

Analysis of sources making statements and quoted shows that 21% of mass media reports and comments on men was attributed to men generally, with a further 7% sourced from male authors and columnists and 5% from male academics and researchers. Mass media reports and comments on men were almost equally contributed by women – 16% from women generally; 10% from female authors and columnists and 2% from female academics and researchers. In total, 33% of mass media discussion of men was based on quotes from men, with 28% attributed to women. Considering that the subject of media content analysed was men and men’s issues, including their work, physical health, mental health sexuality, body image, fatherhood and children, it could be argued that men’s

subjectivities (ie. opinions, views and feelings) on these issues are the most relevant and should be more prominent.

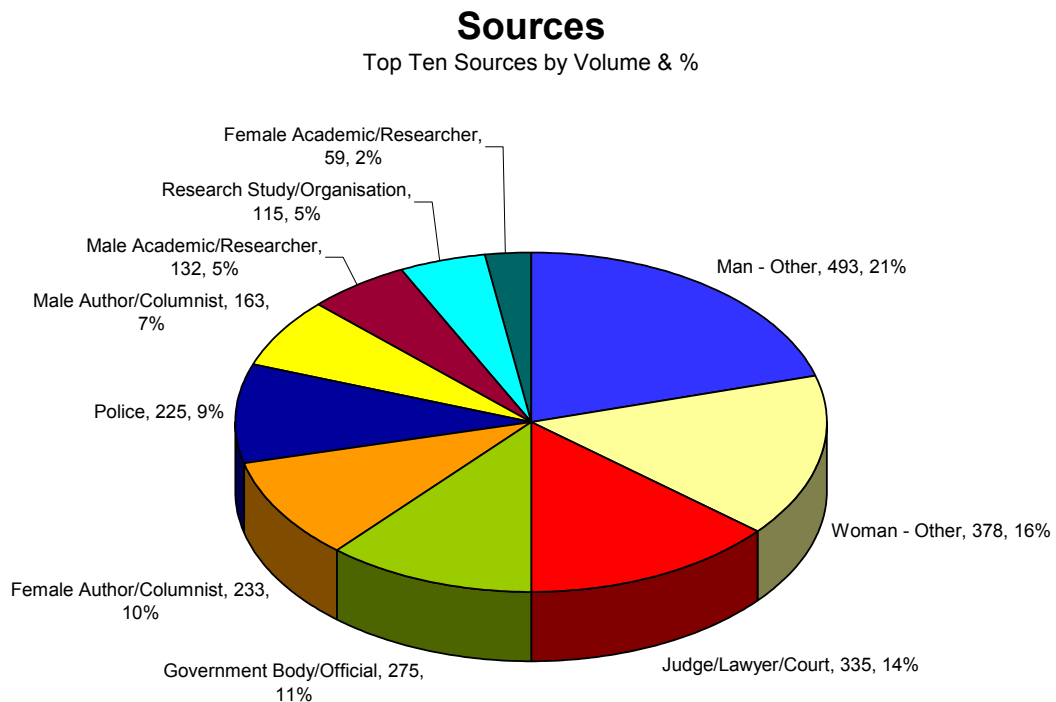


Figure 23. Breakdown of media content analysed by sources.

Sources are not to be confused with by-lines (the writers) of news reporting. While a case can be made that the gender of journalists is irrelevant in the case of reporting news (which is allegedly factual and dispassionate), sources of comment – the experts, authorities or subject experiences quoted – could be expected to be dominated by men for two reasons. Firstly, as men hold most positions of authority in politics, business, the police and the military, statistics suggest that men would comprise the majority of sources quoted. Secondly, when the subject of discussion is men, men's issues and male identities as outlined in this study, it could be expected that the experiences and feelings of men would be the most relevant and most reliable.

The most significant finding in relation to sources of mass media discourse on men is that opinion columns (articles contributed by experts and authoritative commentators) discussing men were mostly contributed by female authors and columnists (10%) compared with 7% from male authors and columnists.

Certainly women are entitled to hold and express opinions on men. As close observers and partners of men in relationships, families and businesses, women have a vantage point from which to contribute useful insights. But, the finding that women dominate opinion columns commenting on all men's issues studied reveals a disturbing reverse discrimination and inequity. Men's subjectivities, recognised as key components of knowledge in post-structuralist theory, are under-represented in discourse.

While the majority of media columnists writing on gender issues are women, in the interests of balance it is noted that not all write negatively about men. Bettina Arndt, writing in *The Age* under a headline "Stop sneering at men. They need our help", strongly attacked feminist and women's group criticisms of Australian Federal Government proposals to reform child custody laws to give men increased rights and access including possible joint custody. Responding to Labor MP, Nicola Roxon, who labelled the Prime Minister's announcement as "playing dog-whistle politics to men's groups aggrieved by the Family Court", Arndt observed: "She used the phrase 'men's groups' as if she was talking about something that had crawled out from under a rock." Arndt pointed out that the Prime Minister's move for reform was triggered by alarming statistics from the Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention at Griffith University which show that relationship breakdown and resulting loss of access to children is the major cause of male suicide, now running at four times the rate of female suicide. Arndt continued: "It remains a mystery why so many men's issues, including male suicide, attract blatant sneers. Perhaps women like Nicola Roxon, with strong feminist histories, are still in the grip of the anti-male fervour that poisoned sectors of the women's movement 30 years ago" (*The Age*, July 4, 2003, pp. 4-6).

Women writers such as Bettina Arndt and Janet Albrechtsen who have defended men or criticised feminist approaches frequently incur the wrath of other women writers in the mass media. In a column headed "Women behaving badly", Stephanie Dowrick took issue with female journalists who she said "seem to have it in for other women". Dowrick asked "What drives a woman to write so negatively and obsessively about other women?" The clear implication of Dowrick's polemic seems to be that women should not criticise other women in any circumstances. In a column titled "Women behaving badly", she commented: "Whatever their social class, men have traditionally held enormous power

relative to women, at least in the external world.” She then continued her attack on male sympathetic women in the following terms:

Consciously or unconsciously, penis-envying women have tended either to align themselves with men (becoming ‘one of the boys’) or to live out the worst conventionally male attributes such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, vengefulness and misogyny (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Good Weekend magazine, “Inner life” column, November 1, 2003).

Dowrick’s statement is open to criticism on three grounds: (a) it contains dubious logic with its implication that women should always support women irrespective of the merits of their case in a Lemming-like loyalty on the grounds of gender; (b) it generalises that aggressiveness, vengefulness and misogyny are male attributes (ie. characteristics of all men); and (c) it contains a derogatory description of women who are sympathetic to men as “penis envying”. The phrase “the worst conventionally male attributes such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, vengefulness and misogyny” resonates with the misandric rhetoric of radical feminist discourse continuing to be propagated through major mass media in 2003.

An even more polemic diatribe against men was published by Julie Doohan in a column in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. She describes the process of dating and marrying a man in the following terms:

You take him out of the pub when he can no longer stand and pour him into the hatchback he has designated you to drive ... Suddenly your weekends are taken up with your undivided attention and moral support for him while he is playing soccer, cricket, pool, football, riding dirt bikes, karate. You wait patiently for the final whistle and drive him to the pub for drinks with the boys ... He has coffee while you do the dishes, he watches the evening news while you prepare dinner ... You put a mirror in the bedroom that he stops in front of every time he walks past ... You prefer the fragrance of the air freshener, he prefers the smell of his own gases ... Suddenly all your friends have kids. Getting together becomes an opportunity for the female to have some kind of adult conversation, the male to drink and make himself look ridiculous ... (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Heckler column, September 23, 2003, p. 18).

While the title of this column suggests it is satire, the content represents men as lazy, egocentric, uncouth drunkards and fools. Its tone is one of sarcasm and patronisation and it uses sharply critical language such as “make himself look ridiculous” suggestive of disgust and dislike. This text is further discussed in Section 5.2, “Qualitative findings”.

As shown in this summary of mass media articles from a wide sample, this type of language and tone is common in portrayals of men and boys. Positive portrayals of men and male identities are overwhelmingly outnumbered by negative portrayals. The popular lament by women that “there are no good men out there” is, one could conclude, a reflection of these representations as much or more than reality. And the old adage “it’s a man’s world” is no longer credible to men. Instead, they see, read and hear criticism, blame and condemnation daily in mass media.

Leading media

Mass media content analysed came from a variety of publications and programs as outlined in Table 9 which shows the top 10 media by volume of content. This shows, as could be expected, that the four daily newspapers contained the most representations of men and male identities. Interestingly, the average favourability of tabloids (*The Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*) and broadsheet dailies (*The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*) was very similar.

Media	Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable	Volume	Average Favourability
The Daily Telegraph	47	63	390	500	43.9
The Age	45	91	278	414	44.9
Sydney Morning Herald	34	80	171	285	45.3
The Australian	23	50	181	254	44.1
National Nine News	10	8	127	145	39.1
The Sunday Telegraph	13	11	56	80	45.8
A Current Affair	10	1	41	52	42.5
The Sunday Age	9	7	13	29	49.5
The Bulletin	11	8	10	29	50.9
The Weekend Australian	5	11	13	29	48.1
Total	207	330	1,280	1,817	44.3

Table 9. *Leading (Top 10) media reporting on men and men’s issues.*

The Daily Telegraph which published the most articles reporting on men during the period of this study (500) was the least favourable newspaper with an average rating of 43.9 on the favourability scale used (where 50 is neutral). This was due to a high proportion of news stories reporting on crime perpetrated by men.

The Sunday Age was the most favourable newspaper towards men, with 29 articles referring to men published in its pages averaging 49.5 (almost neutral) on the favourability scale used. *The Weekend Australian* also published 29 articles on men, but was slightly unfavourable on average with an average favourability rating of 48.1.

The Age was noteworthy for a number of multi-page features it published on key issues such as men's health and male suicide, although it and other newspapers including *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* and *The Sunday Telegraph* were all unfavourable on average.

The current affairs magazine, *The Bulletin*, was the most favourable media overall in relation to men and male identity issues. As a current affairs magazine, *The Bulletin* has little interest in crime stories – a major source of unfavourable representation of men. Instead, it published feature articles reporting research into education, politics, science and topical issues such as the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War and achievement awards. For example, *The Bulletin* (October 28, 2003) reported Australia's 'Smart 100', a profile of "the 100 brightest, most creative people and the benefits they bring to our lives". Men won nine categories out of 10. Another issue of *The Bulletin* (December 9, 2003) published an annual review of "news makers" ranging from Army generals and inventors to sports stars of which 13 out of 16 prominent people profiled were men. *The Bulletin* averaged 50.9 on the favourability scale used, slightly above neutral (50.0) and was the only media in the sample to average above 50 (neutral).

The largest circulation magazine in Australia, *Australian Women's Weekly* focussed principally on women's issues, as could be expected, although the magazine is conservative in tone and focussed mostly on traditional families. It included a Husband of the Year competition which favourably represented men – albeit family men committed to their wives and children. Single men, gay men and adolescent males rarely appear in its pages.

Cosmopolitan contained extensive representation of men, mainly in the context of objectification (eg. “Guy without his shirt” section and features advising women on how to tell if a man is committed and how to keep a guy). *Cosmopolitan* also reinforced stereotypes of men as sex-obsessed (eg. “The Penis Monologues” lift-out).

Family Circle published very little on men other than articles about fatherhood and the importance of fathers being actively involved with their children. The prime focus of the magazine was children, mothering and domestic issues including cooking and food.

Men’s magazines such as *Ralph* and *FHM* do not present men with much to be proud of given their mix of smut, sexism, chauvinism and trivia, as evidenced in the samples cited in quantitative and qualitative analysis. Rather than being at the spearhead of representing men in positive and progressive ways, so-called new-age men’s magazines represent reactionary, stereotyped images of men. Significantly, men’s magazines contributed many of the unfavourable articles about men analysed in this study, as further discussed under “Qualitative findings” in the next section.

Television news analysed contained the most negative reporting and portrayals of men and male identities overall – 39.1 average on the favourability scale used where 50 is neutral and the average for all news (press and TV) was between 45 and 55. TV news predominantly focussed on major crime stories including murders, bashings, rapes, gangland killings, sexual assaults, armed robberies, and so on. TV news also reported male hero stories such as rescues and tributes to servicemen and women on occasions such as Armistice Day and the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War which occurred during the period of this study. But these positive stories were a small minority of the coverage pertaining to men. Given its large audience and the widely reported impact of television, television news is a major source of negative representations of men.

TV current affairs shows *60 Minutes* and *A Current Affair* broadcast a number of high profile reports on men and are particularly prominent in breaking sensational stories such as claims of sexual assault by prominent men, as instanced in this study. To be fair and balanced, one TV current affairs report by *60 Minutes* internationally warrants singling out as an example of quality journalism and representation of men positively and realistically.

A *60 Minutes* documentary segment entitled “Band of Brothers” filed by US reporter and former soldier Mike Cerré, gave a first-hand account of several days with Fox 2/5 Company, a US Marines unit which spent 189 days on active duty in Iraq in 2003. What is noteworthy about the report is that Cerré, a war veteran himself, takes a neutral position on the merits or otherwise of the war and does not sensationalise or eulogise the exploits of the soldiers. He even states in the segment that there was nothing special about Fox 2/5. “They were ordinary soldiers sent to do a job”, he said. The report showed the group of young men frightened, coming to grips with the stresses and confusion of battle, coping with the harsh elements of the desert and facing imminent injury or death. During the filming of the report, First Sergeant Smith, the unit’s mentor and senior non-commissioned officer, was killed by enemy fire. Tragically, Smith was due for retirement, but his departure from the military was deferred because of the Iraq conflict. Cerré traces the effects on the men as they see death first hand, their triumphant entry to Baghdad, and their return home and thoughts of what they would say to First Sergeant Smith’s wife. He reports with a tone of both respect and tragedy: “I went to war with Fox 2/5 Company and watched them become men” (*60 Minutes*, September 28, 2003).

The talk show analysed was *Oprah* presented by Oprah Winfrey, an international daytime television talk show with a large global audience. The program deals with a wide range of issues including health, beauty, self-fulfilment, fashion, personal success stories, personal crises and social issues. While commonly seen as a women’s program, *Oprah* in fact presented substantial content on men and men’s issues, several examples of which have been cited in this study. One program, in particular, involved six men talking about their concerns as fathers. They were given a significant amount of time to speak in their own words. Then their views were presented on video to their wives and the audience, after which open discussion was invited. Another significant *Oprah* special, cited in this study, involved a two-episode discussion of domestic violence which presented a range of views including men’s perspectives and considerable research on the issue.

Frasier was chosen as representative of TV programs in the general lifestyle category. While within the genre of comedy, *Frasier* is a psychologist who gratuitously dispenses advice on his radio show and the program deals with themes including love, dating, sex, marriage, family relationships, fatherhood and men. *Frasier* lives with his father and their housekeeper (he is divorced and unpartnered) and his brother, Niles, also a psychologist

and going through divorce, is a frequent visitor to their apartment. The program does not provide substantial representations on men given its humorous and satirical format which cannot be taken too seriously. However, both Frasier and Niles are presented as boorish and arrogant snobs and Frasier is shown as patronising of his long suffering producer, Ros. Frasier episodes contained mostly unfavourable representations of men.

Queer Eye for the Straight Guy became one of the most watched cable TV programs in the US in 2002 and launched to ratings success in Australia in September 2003. It was an obvious choice for analysis given its overt gender themes. *Queer Eye*, as it is affectionately abbreviated, represents gay men in a largely favourable context. The ‘Fab Five’ are talented presenters who, despite ‘camping it up’, are sympathetic and empathetic to the heterosexual men whom they “make-over”. However, the show depicts heterosexual men, before the intervention of the ‘Fab Five’, as being poorly dressed and groomed, domestically incompetent, unsophisticated, untidy and often unclean. Heterosexual men need to be rescued by the ‘Fab Five’ to the knowing smiles and gratitude of their long-suffering wives and girlfriends. *Queer Eye* is a complex format as it represents both favourable and unfavourable images of men. It is positive in that it shows gay men as talented, considerate and productive members of society and it also shows that heterosexual men can be sensitive and sophisticated – albeit with considerable coaching. On the other hand, gay men are shown in largely stereotyped ways and unreconstructed heterosexual men are presented extremely negatively.

5.2 Mass media representations of men and male identities – qualitative findings

A number of significant mass media portrayals of men and male identities were further analysed qualitatively and in depth to identify the underlying attitudes towards men and male identities that they reveal and the meanings that they are likely convey to men, boys, women, girls and societies about men and male identities.

Selection of media content for in-depth qualitative analysis was based on Huberman’s (1994) recommendation for qualitative sampling in three stages:

Typical or representative examples;
Negative or disconfirming examples; and
Exceptional or discrepant examples.

To maintain balance, three media articles in each category were selected for in-depth qualitative analysis as follows.

Typical and representative mass media representations

In this study, the most common and typical representations of men were found to be negative portrayals. Three short texts, already cited in this research, typical of this type of representation are further analysed qualitatively here.

Example 1.

Suddenly I was remembering all those other times I've been afraid. Fending off a gang of aggressive young men on a train station late at night. Walking home from a bus stop, being followed by a strange man in an overcoat. Backing away from a man who is smiling at me and masturbating in broad daylight in my local park. Locking my car doors while a man shakes his fist at me for taking the last parking spot outside the supermarket. This month the newspapers have been full of stories about men shooting their wives, murdering their fathers-in-law, men strangling prostitutes, men taking their own lives. I've been lucky. This kind of extreme violence has never touched me personally. Most of the men I know are gentle, talkative types. (And yes, I know women can be killers too.) But at the back of nearly every woman's mind lurks a fear of that naked masculine aggression ... (Sian Prior, "Figures and front mask the fear within", opinion column in *The Age*, September 29, 2003, A3, p. 2).

The context of the above paragraph is a simple, albeit unpleasant, incident reported in preceding paragraphs – a man kicks Prior's car door and shouts at her while she is stopped waiting to turn at an intersection. There is no evidence presented to show whether the man is unjustifiably aggressive or whether, for instance, Prior had not seen him and almost run him over causing him to react. However, even giving the author the benefit of the doubt, the text traverses from this simple, inconclusive incident to a series of recollections of past events and then, at the end, attempts to link these events to make a generalisation about men – ie. they exhibit "naked masculine aggression".

The grammatical construction of the text uses a series of incomplete sentences each beginning with a participle – “Fending off a gang ... Walking home ... being followed ... Backing away from a man ... Locking my car doors ...”. Use of participles such as “fending” and “walking”, rather than past tense verbs brings these unrelated events into close proximity and suggests they are ongoing, even though they occurred some time in the past. The close grammatical linking of these events also suggests an inter-relationship and creates a unification of what, in reality, are almost certainly totally unrelated events occurring at different times and in different places. Linking these events in a series of run-on sentences achieves the effect of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. To the reader coming across these incidents presented as a list in this way, the likely impression is that there is a lot of male aggression and violence about. Use of the words “all those other times” in the opening sentence primes the audience to believe that there have been many instances of male violence observed by Prior.

It is also significant that the author writes in the first person, sending a sign to the reader that she is an eye-witness to the described events (and the victim), giving her voice credibility and enlisting sympathy from the audience – two powerful factors in creating meaning.

On close examination, it is doubtful whether some parts of the text are truthful or reliable statements. For instance, the second sentence refers to “fending off a gang of aggressive young men”. How could one young woman fend off a gang – particularly a gang of young men? On examination, the narrative lacks credibility. The third sentence talks about “being followed by a strange man in an overcoat”. Breaking this phrase down reveals further questions about the authenticity of the text. The word “strange” is used even though, presumably, the author could not observe the man clearly given that he was behind her, and the basis for her description of him as ‘strange’ is unclear. Furthermore, the phrase ‘in an overcoat’ employs clichéd imagery – a man in an overcoat being a hackneyed shorthand image for a sexual pervert. Was the (strange) man following her really wearing an overcoat (not many men in Australia do), or is this a literary device – ie. fiction?

Then Prior employs a somewhat ironic twist and a circular argument in an attempt to present third-party endorsement to support her claims of pervasive male violence. She

mourns that “this month the newspapers have been full of stories about men shooting their wives ...” when, in fact, Prior herself is contributing to the filling of newspapers reporting on men allegedly committing various offences – even though nothing has actually happened to her. This statement represents is a case of the media reporting media reports.

What she reports the media reporting is also significant. In the space of a few lines, the author moves from a man kicking a car door and shouting to men “shooting their wives” “strangling prostitutes” and “taking their own lives”. The text implies that this is a logical progression of male aggression.

The phrase “I’ve been lucky” preceding the admission that “this kind of extreme violence” had never touched her personally shifts the perspective from violence being deviant behaviour to male violence being the norm – ie. she has been lucky not to have been killed by a man. Statistically, her safety was not luck. In reality, a very small number of people are attacked or killed in Australia each year. But Prior makes it sound a common occurrence from which she has narrowly escaped by sheer good fortune.

The acknowledgements that she had not personally experienced extreme male violence, that most of the men she knows “are gentle talkative types”, and that women can be killers too, suggest that Prior is finally going to withdraw from her negative rhetoric and represent a balanced view of men. But she immediately follows these acknowledgements stating “But” – a conjunction to indicate opposition and exception – and continues “at the back of nearly every woman’s mind lurks a fear of that naked masculine aggression”. The phrase “every woman’s mind” explicitly suggests that all women live in fear of men – a generalisation without foundation. And use of the word “naked” in front of masculine aggression is suggestive (symbolic) of primeval, primitive male behaviour.

From both a narratology and semiotic perspective, this text contains signs indicating that all or most men are extremely aggressive and violent, engaging in threats, assault, sexual perversion and murder on a regular basis. Its use of voice (first person eye-witness subject), tense (frequent use of participles instead of verbs) poetic imagery, clichés and adjectives (eg. “naked”) are selected and combined to create meaning beyond the facts presented. In reality, little or nothing has happened to Prior – no damage to her car was reported and the sum total of violence was a man “shouting”. In media terms, it is a non-

story. But, she manages to present images of male gangs, stalkers, sexual perverts, harassers, shooters, stranglers, murderers and suicides in the space of one paragraph.

Only close examination reveals the inconsistencies in the text. Most readers quickly scanning the text are likely to come away with an impression of pervasive male violence and aggression based on claimed first hand experience by the author.

Example 2.

You take him out of the pub when he can no longer stand and pour him into the hatchback he has designated you to drive ... Suddenly your weekends are taken up with your undivided attention and moral support for him while he is playing soccer, cricket, pool, football, riding dirt bikes, karate. You wait patiently for the final whistle and drive him to the pub for drinks with the boys ... He has coffee while you do the dishes, he watches the evening news while you prepare dinner ... You put a mirror in the bedroom that he stops in front of every time he walks past ... You prefer the fragrance of the air freshener, he prefers the smell of his own gases ... Suddenly all your friends have kids. Getting together becomes an opportunity for the female to have some kind of adult conversation, the male to drink and make himself look ridiculous ... (Julie Doohan, Heckler column in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 23, 2003, p.18).

The first characteristic of this text that stands out is the use of second person voice. This writing technique is not uncommon in highly personalised writing which seeks to create an intimacy with the reader by moving the reader into the subject and, by implication, excluding ‘third’ persons. But immediately the text indicates that it is not simply a discourse between subjects sharing a common experience. The words “you” take “him” show a mix of second person for women and third person for men to set up an oppositional binary and a conflict that runs throughout the text – an ‘us and them’. This framing of the narrative positions the reader with the author as subject (“you”) and men as objects (“him”).

The next words “out of the pub when he can no longer stand up” sets the scene of the narrative. She has to take him home; he is not only drunk but “unable to stand up let alone walk”. The phrase “pour him into the hatchback” employs a clichéd verb used for drunks

which emphasises the excess of the man's drinking and his helplessness – he is 'poured' like liquid or jelly, lacking shape, strength and substance. The final phrase of the first sentence referring to the hatchback "he has designated you to drive" resonates with resentment and even anger. The author portrays this man as dominating, domineering and patronising (his wife is given the hatchback which is presumably not the main car in the family), as well being a drunken, selfish, boorish fool.

While the text mainly uses active verbs in association with the second person to denote the active forthright female subject – eg. "you take him out of the pub" and "[you] pour him into the hatchback" – passive verbs are employed in connection with negatives to emphasise loss and a sense of victimisation – eg. "your weekends are *taken up*". The verb "taken up" suggests theft and invasion of the woman's free time and freedom by this demanding, selfish man. In other words, positive things are done by the author; negative things are done to the author by a man.

The pronouns "you" and "your" are used 10 times in the one paragraph, on each occasion doing something for "him" directly or indirectly – taking him home, driving him, giving him attention, waiting for him, driving him again, doing the dishes, preparing dinner, decorating the house, freshening up the house. Meanwhile, "he" is falling down drunk, poured into the hatchback, showing off at soccer and other sports, going to the pub, sitting having coffee while she works, admiring himself Narcissus-like in the mirror that she hung, smelling up the house, drinking, and making a fool of himself.

Phrases such as "he prefers the smell of his own gases" ventures into sarcasm and a patronising tone, as well as shifting voice to third person omniscient – a technique of fiction writers. The author could objectively observe that her husband farts if he does so, but she is unlikely to know that he prefers this smell. He is not likely to have stated he prefers passed wind to fresh air. In this phrase, the author is venturing beyond reporting of events and facts into subjective comments and the techniques of the all-knowing omniscient narrator of fiction. She is describing his thoughts, making them (or at least her highly derogatory representation of them) visible to the audience. This is a clear sign introduced to the text by the author to say dislike this man.

The paragraph concludes with an even more telling sign of what the text is about. The final lines describe get togethers with friends as “an opportunity for the female to have some adult conversation” clearly implying that she does not have adult conversation at home with him. But, most significantly in this phrase, use of the article – “*the* female” and “*the* male” – turns her personal anecdote into a generalisation about women’s and men’s social habits. Use of the article in “the male” signifies that not only the man who is the subject of her narrative but men generally drink and make themselves look ridiculous. Doohan’s text is a diatribe against men given vent in a high circulation mass media.

Example 3.

My children were three and seven when I ended my marriage. Their father kept contact with them for a year or so, but after three less than three months, I knew it wouldn’t last. Somehow, in that short time, his love for them just seemed to evaporate. I would watch helplessly as my little boy sat on top of his suitcase waiting for his daddy to arrive, legs kicking back and forth with anticipation, for a father who often did not keep his promise ... There’s a backlash against single mothers. It is being fuelled by commentators such as Arndt who never miss an opportunity to portray single mothers as manipulative and self-serving, a men’s movement that is deeply misogynous, and a Prime Minister who wants to drag women back into the kitchen where he thinks they belong (Trish Bolton, ‘When it comes to child access, many men just don’t want to know’ in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 4, 2003. p. 11).

The very first word of this text, a pronoun (which text and discourse analysts study assiduously) sets the tone. “*My* children” contrasts with the second sentence that also begins with a pronoun “*Their* father ...”. Pronoun use reveals that the author believes that the children are hers rather than theirs – although the main point of the text is that he has obligations and responsibilities to them. The first sentence also makes it clear that she ended the marriage. She may have had good cause, although the reasons are not stated.

The second sentence indicates that the father kept in contact for “a year or so” – a not inconsiderable amount of time if he was really intent on leaving his children’s lives as she alleges – but adds that “after less than three months, I knew it wouldn’t last”. The latter statement is interesting for its use of the first person pronoun “I” and the definitive verb

“knew”. She does not say she “suspected” or “was concerned” that it wouldn’t last. She “knew”. Such a statement indicates either fortune teller powers – or an arrogant and self-important viewpoint.

The author goes on to state “his love for them just seemed to evaporate”. Again, this statement goes beyond reported conversation or observation and imputes reasons and intent to the man. In reality, she is unlikely to know how he felt about his children and her claims contradict extensive research. Surveys and interview data suggest that separated fathers fret for their children – some even commit suicide in depression. This sentence illustrates a characteristic common in many discussions by women of men – a tendency to speak not only for themselves but for men as well. And not only for men’s actions which women could observe, but men’s thoughts, feelings and even the extent of their love for their children which, particularly when living separately, they have little if any capacity to know.

The sentence “I would watch helplessly as my little boy sat on top of his suitcase waiting for his daddy to arrive, legs kicking back and forth with anticipation” contains a number of signs which seek to affect the emotions of the reader. The verb “watched” suggests the author is simply an observer of this scene with no part in it and the adverb “helplessly” to describe her position evokes pathos and sympathy, when in reality the text reveals that she chose to end the marriage. Even though he may have been an undesirable husband, she was clearly not helpless. And the negative and judgemental tone of the author’s statements about her ex-husband suggest that she may not be merely a helpless bystander; her attitude towards him and stated views evident in the text, may be a contributing factor to his absence. This is not argumentative to suggest that she is to blame for her son’s fatherlessness; it is presented simply as a possibility. But it is a possibility to which the reader has little if any access. The man’s perspective is beyond the text and the reader is left with an image of a helpless woman and a little boy kicking his legs back and forth waiting for his daddy who never comes.

Use of the term “his daddy” stands out as an intentional linguistic device. Earlier, the author describes the man as “their father”. But when he does not come to visit his son, the terms switches to the more emotive term “his daddy”. The man is described with the more distant term when he is close up; then with the more emotionally close term when he is

absent. The phrase “legs kicking back and forth in anticipation” also is symbolic of the child kicked back and forth physically and emotionally between the mother and the father and presents a visual image of a sad lonely boy – sadness and loneliness caused by his father. The child may have been kicking his legs back and forth in boredom – many boys do. The author ascribes intention to the father and the son which are signs to the reader on how to interpret the narrative.

Then the subject broadens to writers, the men’s movement and the Prime Minister and further manifest signs are presented on how this text is to be interpreted. The term “backlash”, a feminist hallmark applied to any oppositional viewpoint, is used. A generalisation is made concerning commentators such as Bettina Arndt – they “never miss an opportunity” to denigrate single mothers; the men’s movement is not only women-hating but “deeply misogynous”; and the Prime Minister “wants to drag women back into the kitchen”. The terms “backlash”, “misogynous”, “drag” in relation to women, and reference to the “kitchen” are symbols of male violence, chauvinism and subjugation. This narrative is not about one single mother’s experiences of child custody and visitation. It presents signs suggesting that a more pervasive and sinister movement (or even conspiracy) by men generally is acting against single mothers.

The concluding words that provided the headline of the article, “when it comes to child access, many men just don’t want to know” confirms this polemical objective and provides yet another example of women generalising men’s intentions and feelings as well as their behaviour. From her experience as narrated, the first person author could observe that “When it comes to child access, *some* men just don’t *turn up*”. But whether *many* men “*don’t* want to know” and how they feel about their children can be revealed only through interviews, discussions and surveys among separated fathers. Such research, which has been conducted (eg. Hawthorne, 2002), suggests that the majority of separated fathers *do* want to know and want increased access to their children.

From a narratology perspective, the story suggests this woman’s ex-husband is a ‘deadbeat dad’ and, most significantly, that he is typical of many separated fathers – that is, if one takes the narrative at face value.

Semiotic and semiological analysis which focus on the meanings interpreted by the audience are problematic in this and the other texts cited because it is not clear without audience research whether, or to what extent, readers ‘see through’ such polemic. One interpretation is that the preceding text is about the understandable frustration and anger of a single mother whose ex-husband skipped his responsibilities to their son. In the mind of a reader armed with alternative experiences or statistics on the relatively small number of fathers who are ‘deadbeat dads’, the meaning could be that Bolton is presenting an extreme example non-typical of fathers and, therefore, while she deserves sympathy, her argument against increased father access should be rejected. A more extreme reading could be that Bolton is a whingeing single mother who threw her husband out, is bitter and hostile towards him which possibly accounts for his absence, and is now angry at the world for her predicament. In a structuralist view, there is one meaning coded in the text, but it is a matter of some contention how this is identified and what validity such a reading has. In a post-structuralist view, any one of these readings, or others, can be equally valid.

What is known about the audience of these three samples is that they are readers of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers respectively. Demographic data available indicates that, conservatively, 879,000 people potentially read two of the articles which appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (its audited circulation at the time) – 1.76 million audience in total. A further 689,000 people potentially read *The Age* column (its audited circulated at the time), giving a total audience of almost 2.5 million people. Demographic data also shows that these newspapers are read by a mass audience spread across a wide socio-economic spectrum, although most are better educated than average. The audience is approximately 50% men who are likely to read these texts quite differently than women. This suggests that many readers are likely to interpret the texts differently to the authors’ intended meanings. But others may not be equipped to make oppositional or alternative interpretations of the signs presented and are likely to draw meanings from the signs which speak their language (eg. “pour him into the hatchback”, “you take him home”, “waiting for a father who often did not keep his promise”).

The semiologist or semiotician can, at best, make but an educated guess as to audiences’ interpretations without conducting audience research. What can be concluded is that qualitative analysis of the texts cited shows the highly negative and at times vitriolic nature of representations of men and male identity in mass media today, despite introduction of

anti-discrimination and anti-sexism policies. Men could conclude that these policies work one-way to protect women, but offer no protection to men from highly discriminatory and sexist discourse. And the frequency of negative representations of men and male identities suggest that at least some, if not many, get through and impact audiences – men, boys, women and girls.

Negative or disconfirming mass media representations

Mass media representations disconfirming of the key finding of this study included mass media portrayals of men as heroes, leaders and success stories. Three short texts of this type are analysed in the following.

Example 4.

... that night in June 1953, the Chinese got there first and at 10pm the diggers were attacked with automatic rifles, burp guns and grenades ... One of the men, Private E.R. ‘Tubby’ Ballard, a 17-stone Tasmanian, was hit by a Chinese grenade. ‘I saw him lifted up and thrown down the hillside like a rag doll,’ Cashman remembers.

Then Slim Gargate went down wounded and Cashman suddenly found himself patrol leader ... Cashman helped Gargate down the hill and across the Bowling Alley (the narrow strip between the Allied and Chinese forces) to the safety of the Australian outpost ... and then called for volunteers to go back for Tubby Ballard. Don Harris, a private from Sydney, offered to go with him.

As the two young diggers crossed the Bowling Alley again, a Chinese machine gun started firing from a clump of trees near the Mound. The Australians reached a point where it was impossible for them to go further without being shot.

Cashman decided to try his luck. Standing up in full view of the Chinese with his Owen gun above his head, he shouted ‘*Skoshi towshong*’ (a Chinese phrase for ‘little surrender’ or temporary surrender). The Chinese had not expected this. The machine gun ceased firing and Cashman added in English, ‘I’m coming for my wounded and am unarmed’. In the bright moonlight, he hurled the Owen gun behind him and walked towards the Chinese repeating ‘*Skoshi towshong*’ with his hands held high.

Reaching the enemy position, Cashman called out loudly ‘Are there any 6 Platoon wounded here?’ Bemused, the Chinese let him pass. After a search of the slopes, the two diggers found Tubby Ballard beside a small creek He was subsequently rescued (*The Bulletin*, July 29, 2003, pp. 30-31 reporting on Ron Cashman, at a time a 20-year old corporal fighting on the front line in Korea to try to gain high ground called ‘The Mound’).

What is immediately apparent in this text is the minimalist unemotional language used to describe what is a harrowing and bloody incident. When one of the men, E. R. (Tubby) Ballard, a 17-stone Tasmanian, is blown up by a grenade, it is told as “I saw him lifted up and thrown down the hillside like a rag doll”. The language is colourful, but matter of fact. Similarly, the shooting of Slim Gargate is described unemotionally as “when Slim Gargate went down wounded”. The story teller, Ron Cashman, seeks no sympathy for himself placed in this invidious position and there is no sense of victimhood applied to any of the characters. Similarly, the author recounting Cashman’s story does not embellish, but simply tells Cashman’s experiences with simple economical language, letting the facts speak for themselves. This language possibly indicates emotional detachment used by the men to cope with the circumstances of war. However, the text is not ‘cold’ as it describes, quite vividly, an incident involving courage, comradeship and mateship, loyalty and pride – both in the soldiers’ sense of themselves and the author’s tone in presenting the story.

The narrative is one of courage. A 20-year-old Australian corporal, pinned down under enemy machine gun fire and with his comrades wounded behind enemy lines, decides to stand up and approach the enemy with a white flag asking to retrieve his wounded. Incredibly, possibly out of confusion, the enemy troops let him pass and rescue his comrades.

Use of the Chinese phrase *Skoshi towshong* in the text presents a sign to the reader that the hero has a credible position of knowledge, being able to speak some words of Chinese which suggests that he has been at the front line for some time and is not an inexperienced ‘rookie’. There is also symbolism in that the Australian soldier not only entered Chinese territory, but he spoke to the enemy in their language as well.

The imagery of Cashman walking with “his hands held high” in the “bright moonlight” towards the enemy position, his Owen gun “hurled ... behind him”, is strong and vivid. It signifies to the audience that he is decisive (he didn’t simply drop his gun) and brave. Conversely, the imagery of Tubby Ballard being thrown down the hillside “like a rag doll” by a grenade shows the fragility and vulnerability of the soldiers against the destructive weapons of war. That these forces can be overcome by sheer bravery and mateship gives the narrative a context against which Cashman and his colleagues are shown as heroes.

The naming of places is also highly symbolic. “The Bowling Alley” is suggestive of the soldiers being knocked down like ten pins and “The Mound” occupied by the Chinese machine gun which needs to be taken is perhaps a subtle reference to the futility of war. It is described not a hill or valuable high ground, but simply “a mound”.

From a narratology perspective alone, this text stands symbolic of men represented as courageous, strong and committed to their mates. Despite the negativity of the subject (war), the unemotional, economical language and understatement allows the events and names to stand out and take on a symbolic quality beyond the narrative itself.

Example 5.

In the late 1920s, labourer Pat Crawley would leave his Redfern house at 3.30 each morning, heading to Milsons Point to melt down asphalt for the teams of men who started work at 7.30 am building the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Mr Crawley was part of a workforce which probably reached 4,000 over the decade of building and was a workforce based on hard manual labour ... We tend to forget that the bridge was the outstanding engineering achievement of its age and that it was built by ‘ordinary’ men with intricate calibrations and hard physical labour ... Some worked 11 or 12-hour days and there were many accidents, including 16 fatalities (‘Men of steel who built the bridge with hard yakka’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 25, 2003, p. 7)

This text is an extract from a major news article previewing the opening of a photographic exhibition of the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Unlike the previous example, the narrative is not substantially developed, although it does focus on one worker as a way of

telling the story of 4,000 men who built the bridge. But we know only a little about Pat Crawley. His presence in the story is more symbolic.

Semiotically, however, there are many signs in this text which suggest meaning. It is fixed in time by the opening “In the late 1920s”. The audience is prompted to imagine this period, assisted by an accompanying grainy black and white photo of the bridge under construction. The text and visual image combine to speak of a time of industrialisation and pioneering achievements, just two decades after Australia became a nation.

We are told Pat Crawley lived in Redfern. This selection is unlikely to be accidental. Redfern was (and still largely is) a working class suburb on the low end of the socio-economic scale. The celebration of working class strength and values is further emphasised by the phrase “it was built by ‘ordinary’ men” in which the single quotation marks signal that the author is not using the term “ordinary” to mean plain or unremarkable. To the contrary, the author is giving a sign that he means these men were extraordinary and remarkable, even though they were mostly manual labourers.

Crawley leaves his house at 3.30 am, so he would be required to rise around 3 am or earlier, a sign of the extremely hard life he lived. The use of specifics such as the time of day this worker left for work, while seemingly a micro detail irrelevant to the overall story, is a semiotic device that creates meaning. Most readers can imagine getting up at 3 am every day and probably shiver at the thought. The men all start work by 7.30 am and work 11 and 12 hour days, facts selected and used in the text which speak to the nature of the task and conditions faced by the men.

The text tells that there were “intricate calibrations” involved, but on no less than three occasions in this short text, the audience is told that the building of the bridge involved “manual labour”, “hard physical labour” and “hard yakka”. Use of the term “manual” interspersed with “physical” and the colloquial Australian term for hard work “yakka” uses an interplay of language to provide redundancy in the communication. It is almost certain that any reader of this text would get the meaning that these men toiled hard and long.

The combination of “intricate calibrations and hard physical labour” in the same phrase implies that the men who built the bridge were not mindless labourers who toiled only for a

wage. It signals a combination of skill and hard work, a combination of brain and brawn. In this sense, the text is lifting these men out of the event and making them iconic. They are presented not simply as bridge buildings, but as symbols of revered virtues of Australian manhood – intelligence and skill combined with hard work and a down-to-earth, unpretentious demeanour. They are celebrated as quiet heroes.

Example 6.

“I was looking into her eyes and she was singing,” recalls Mike. “It was a happy song. She sang a line, I laughed. She’d sing the line again. And we both laughed. She was singing, laughing – and hiccuping and I’d say, ‘Do it again Mummy’. The hiccuping and singing proved the first symptom of a far deeper malaise that was to dominate their lives – the destructive shadow of Beryl Munro’s alcoholism and the beatings she later dished out to her cheeky, tough, sometimes defiant son.

“If she had only a couple of drinks and I had poured most of it down the toilet, she became mean, very mean, and that’s when she started to hit me.”

“These are difficult and delicate subjects for me, even today, but the point of the book, really, is that a slightly disadvantaged housekeeper’s kid does okay. I think that message is important. You can’t blame society for your problems – you just have to get on with it as best you can. That’s not to say that you can just wipe those things from your mind, but you can’t blame anyone else for things that happen in life. The thing I had to do was pick myself up, dust myself off and get stuck in, rather than blame anyone, including my mum.” (“Secrets and Ghosts”, interview with Mike Munro, TV journalist and author of *A Patsy Faced Nothing* in *Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 2003, pp. 106-112).

This text is a short extract from a long feature article based on an interview with Australian *60 Minutes* reporter and presenter of *This is Your Life*, Mike Munro, following publication of his autobiography, *A Patsy Faced Nothing*. The book’s title is based on what his mother belittlingly called him during his troubled childhood.

The text begins with Munro reminiscing of happy times as a child living with his mother, but immediately introduces the intrusiveness of her alcoholism. He describes her as

“singing, laughing – and hiccupping”. “Hiccupping” is a visual and auditory sign, working on several audience senses at once, and its use abruptly disturbs the positive flow of the text, symbolic of the way his mother’s drinking interrupted his otherwise happy childhood.

Nevertheless, Munro refers to her as “Mummy”, an affectionate term rather than a more formal and distant description as ‘my mother’. The second paragraph, a first person quote, reports how his mother’s drinking resulted in her becoming “very mean” and beating him with, as described later in the text, “belts and ironing cords”.

The selection involved in Munro pouring his mother’s alcohol “down the toilet” rather than down the sink is also a sign to the reader. Pouring the liquor down the toilet is more graphic than simply pouring it down the sink or the laundry basin or out in the garden. It suggests disgust towards her drinking and perhaps also has a metaphorical suggestion of her and his life ‘going down the toilet’.

What is most striking about this text from a narratology perspective is the author’s avoidance of blame and victimhood. Unlike many narratives which seek to apportion blame for their circumstances on others, Munro reports on his mother’s alcoholism in a documentary way, equally citing happy times as well as the misery. Furthermore, he explicitly states “you can’t blame society for your problems” and “you can’t blame anyone else for things that happen in life”. Critics might cite that Munro has been very successful which perhaps makes it easier to reflect compassionately on his mother’s deficient and at times violent raising of her son and it is true that Munro has enjoyed the benefits of education, professional recognition and financial independence. Elsewhere in the article, the reporter notes that Munro has travelled the globe and interviewed Madonna, Barbra Streisand and Katherine Hepburn among a list of celebrities.

But Munro makes it clear that he was hurt and scarred by his mother’s alcoholism following his father’s desertion (described elsewhere in the article). He says: “That’s not to say that you can just wipe those things from your mind”. But he expresses a get on with it attitude saying “The thing I had to do was pick myself up, dust myself off and get stuck in, rather than blame anyone, including my mum.”

Munro's story is salutary and perhaps inspirational to people who are victims of abuse or violence and it is a representation of a man with a courageous, forgiving, compassionate and sensitive approach to life.

Exceptional and discrepant mass media representations

Exceptional and discrepant representations can be deduced to be those outside the categories of typical or disconfirming examples and contradictory of both. In presenting a balanced qualitative analysis of mass media representations of men and male identities, three examples that are neither typical of the majority of representations of men cited or disconfirming are briefly reviewed.

Example 7.

Men are governed by two brains – one above the belt and another below. You won't find this fact in any medical textbook, but deep down we all know it to be true ... This quest to reconcile our upper and lower house members is what makes a man's life so fantastically infuriating ... Still, for all the trouble he gets us into, we love him. He is, from birth until death, our best friend, with much of the time in between spent trying to make him the best friend of whichever woman takes his – that is, our – fancy. Perhaps that is why he, like Our Dark Lord Satan, travels under so many names – dong, wang, cock, knob, prick, tockley, pecker, schlong, skin flute, love muscle, tummy banana, trouser snake, pork sword, giggle-stick, and so on (Editorial in *Ralph*, September 2003, p. 14).

This text extract confirms almost every unfavourable feminist cliché about men – obsessed with their penis, their mind below their waist, their brains in their underpants, personifying and talking to their penis as if it is a separate person. One can only wonder why a so-called men's magazine would publish such content which, in any objective analysis, trivialises, objectifies and demonises men.

Readers of this text encounter a number of signs that suggest men are sex-obsessed and promiscuous. The penis is given the status of a second brain and spoken about as "he" and "him". Clear signs of sexual promiscuity are conveyed in the phrase "whichever woman takes his – that is, our – fancy". Clearly, any woman will do for this penis/man.

There is also visual imagery suggested in the nicknames listed for the penis. Terms such as “prick”, “sword” and “love muscle” are signs of penetration causing bleeding, a weapon and strength. “Our Dark Lord Satan” and “trouser snake” use signs of the Devil and evil.

A sympathetic reading could view this text as light (albeit smutty) humour and interpret it as not serious. But, on the other hand, it was presented as an editorial column near the front of the magazine in a box opposite the editorial contacts page with the author’s signature on the bottom. These formatting conventions are signs that the text so displayed is an important, insightful observation from the proprietors or editor of the publication representing the publication’s philosophy. As such, it could be taken seriously by readers and create or at least reinforce negative views of men (and in men).

Example 8.

FHM (October 2003, p. 202) presented its “Bloke Test” which listed the following 10 questions as a quiz to determine ‘blokeiness’:

1. Stared down the opposition before a match?
2. Lost your cool on the pitch?
3. Thrown a wobbly when someone messed your hair?
4. Have you ever knocked yourself out?
5. Written off a car?
6. Had a brush with death?
7. Been bitten on the nuts by an animal?
8. Jumped a motorbike?
9. Been thrown out of a pub?
10. Have you ever set fire to a tree?

The first two questions clearly apply to sports, particularly football. While staring down opponents might be reasonably accepted as a psychological tactic, losing one’s cool on the pitch suggests aggression is a requirement for being a bloke.

Questions in relation to having written off a car, being thrown out of a pub, and jumped a motorbike confirm the quiz’s focus on aggressive behaviour as synonymous with being a

bloke. Also, “had a brush with death?” implies a self-destructive, risk-taking mode of behaviour.

Other questions asking readers if they have been “been bitten on the nuts by an animal” and “set fire to a tree” are puzzling and can only be explained as an attempt at humour and part of the magazine’s quirky style, or they could be taken as signs that men are wild, environmentally destructive and partly or largely out of control.

“Thrown a wobbly when someone messed your hair” seems out of context as it suggests a concern for grooming which is inconsistent with the other nine criteria. Nonetheless, the colloquial term “wobbly” is generally taken to mean throwing a tantrum or becoming angry which is consistent with the aggressive nature described in the text. Furthermore, this question suggests aggression for little reason is part of being a bloke.

In total, the 10 questions provide little which could be seen as complimentary of men.

Example 9.

I’m angry, because as a role model for you men I’ve had enough of the feminist attitudes that have shackled and turned too many of you into Sensitive New Age Guys. I know you’re only doing it to get shagged, but the problem is that, because you listen to women, most SNAGS become whipping boys for female man-gripes. That’s why here at the Capper Institute for Male Advancement I’ve developed a three-step system to let even the soppiest SNAG get a girl into their bedroom. Here’s how: When confronted by a gender-sledging chick, accept her view, but then come back with a sensitive yet assertive man-ism. That’ll shake them enough for them to be putty in your hands. Hell, you might even convert a lesbian or two back to the ways of man-love (“The world according to Warwick”, Warwick Capper column in *FHM*, August 2003, p. 29).

The opening phrase of this text states that the author is “angry”, although it soon becomes apparent that the text is written satirically. For instance, the author’s self-praise as “a role model for you men” can be interpreted as tongue in cheek by most Australians familiar with Warwick Capper as a high-profile, self-promoting, tight shorts-wearing Australian Rules footballer and aspirant sex symbol. Also, reference to the Capper Institute for Male

Advancement is clearly fictitious, although the acronym CIMA may be an allusion to semen.

Despite the attempt at satire, the text openly attacks feminists and dismissively criticises SNAGS (Sensitive New Age Guys), referring to them as “shackled” and as “whipping boys for female man-gripes”. The narrative alleges that the main motive of men is to “get a girl into their bedroom” and proceeds to give tips on how to coerce women into bed through clever word plays.

Signs in the text likely to be interpreted by readers in relatively predictable ways include reference to women as “chicks” and advice on how to get women to be “putty” in men’s hands. The latter resonates with symbolism of women being shaped by and to men’s desires. Partly, this can be seen to be a reflection of the author’s intention to be provocative. But chauvinistic men are likely to interpret the text as reinforcement of their negative attitudes towards women, while women are likely to be enraged by the text, or view it dismissively as the sort of sexist garbage men like reading – itself a meaning (and an uncomplimentary one concerning men).

The final sentence “Hell, you might even convert a lesbian or two back to the ways of man-love”, while also perhaps tongue in cheek, contains a number of significant semiotic elements. The verb “convert” suggests that lesbianism is a philosophy or belief from which people can be converted through persuasive argument. The phrase also enlists the religious connotations of the term “convert”, implying introducing or re-introducing lesbians to heterosexuality is a worthy and even holy cause. The term “man-love” is somewhat ironic given that the entire text is devoted to discussing anything but love – rather exploitive promiscuous sex.

Much of what is published in men’s magazines does not warrant in-depth qualitative analysis, as these media present themselves as light entertainment rather than serious reporting or analysis of social issues. However, men’s magazines themselves cross the line, mixing humour which is afforded a high degree of licence with comment on important social issues including health, sex and women. Men’s magazines have attracted considerable readerships as outlined under “Media sample” in chapter four, so their messages reach a sizeable audience.

It could be concluded that so-called men's media are men's worst enemies as they represent highly sexist, chauvinist, insensitive, violent and outmoded images of men.

Further analysis using qualitative content analysis software

In a second verifying phase of qualitative media content analysis, six of the preceding text samples were analysed using MAXqda – MAX for Qualitative Data Analysis, a software program for qualitative text analysis (Dressing&pehl GbR & Verbi GmbH, 2004). The three typical and three disconfirming examples were selected for this further analysis. These texts were imported into MAXqda and analysed against a set of text categories and codes. The preceding manual (human) analysis of the texts by the author focussed attention on signs such as pronouns, voice, tonal qualities and other qualitative criteria, but did not fully adhere to Mayring's (2003) suggested approach of inductive category development and deductive category application. Use of MAXqda allowed text categories to be set up based on the research questions posed, the theoretical framework of this study and understanding of the text studied, and for codes to be applied in a systematic way to the selected texts.

Like a number of qualitative text analysis programs, MAXqda allows dictionary-supplied categories to be applied to texts, or categories to be created by the researcher. Given the specialised nature of this study, categories were created in the program for:

1. Overall focus of texts;
2. Tone;
3. Messages;
4. Key words.

Specialised codes were created in each category reflecting the issues and messages identified in this study during quantitative analysis. Overall focus of text codes were created based on Nathanson and Young's categories of male representations identified in the chapters of their 2001 study – blaming men; laughing at men (ie. ridicule or trivialise); looking down on men and separatism; bypassing men; dehumanising men; and demonising men. The negative category of 'marginalise' was added reflecting findings of quantitative

analysis in this study, and positive categories correlating to each negative category were created to allow analysis to be balanced. For instance, ‘blaming men’ was matched by ‘supporting men’; ‘demonising men’ was matched by ‘eulogise or praise men’. In addition to 10 codes for overall focus, eight codes were established to identify tone (respect, friendship, love, partnership, anger, ridicule, sarcasm and fear) and 20 messages were tracked (10 positive and 10 negative) as identified in quantitative analysis and listed in the Coding List in Appendix A.

This computer-aided qualitative analysis was not conducted to an in-depth level given the extent of study of the selected media texts already undertaken using other methodologies and the concerns expressed by many researchers over the reliability of computer content analysis. However, this analysis further confirmed the predominant focus on male aggression and violence and overwhelmingly negative representations of men and male identities. Qualitative text analysis using MAXqda found:

The predominant overall focus was demonising of men, followed by trivialising of men.

The most common tones evident in the texts were fear, ridicule and anger. Respect, friendship, love and partnership did not appear in the texts selected.

The leading messages were that men are aggressors and violent and that they are criminals. Work and responsibility also featured in the texts, but not as frequently as violence and crime and irresponsibility was cited equally with responsibility. Hero, protector and committed/commitment each appeared only once, as did sexual abuser and deadbeat dad.

The leading key words found were ‘murder/murdering’, ‘killing/killers’, ‘drinking/drunk’ and ‘misogynous’ – all on more than one occasion in just six short texts totalling slightly over 1,000 words.

As an equal number of correlating positive codes for overall focus, tone and messages were created and available for coding, and computer-aided qualitative analysis was

conducted on three typical media articles as identified in quantitative analysis and three disconfirming articles, these findings can taken as reliable reflections of media discourse and confirm the findings reported in quantitative analysis and human qualitative analysis.

Qualitative codings and findings obtained using MAXqda are reported in Appendix E.