Module 3: Research plan

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LBST 300 Methods of Inquiry

**Possible Topic of Investigation for a Tutorial:**

A cross-cultural exploration of how men are represented in media platforms: "How are men represented in media platforms cross-culturally?"

This Tutorial will build on prior knowledge of masculinities to examine how men are represented in various media platforms across the globe. Because media is a platform which purveys dominant cultural ideologies, analyzing media for how it represents men allows for a visual understanding of how different cultures construct and represent masculinity. This investigation would establish how media platforms in one country represent one form of *idealized man* versus how another country's media platforms represent a different (or similar) *idealized man.* For example, in this Tutorial I might investigate how men are represented in Canadian magazine advertisements and how men are represented in Chinese magazine advertisements. From this investigation, I would be able to analyze the similarities and differences present in both countries' media representations of men/masculinity (e.g. this Tutorial might uncover that "toughness" is a masculine attribute represented in both Canadian and Chinese media).

Limitations of this investigation would result from the plurality of cross-cultural masculinities, the number of cross-cultural media platforms, and language barriers. For example, it is not possible to comprehensively analyze representations of men in television media if the researcher does not know the language of said television media. To investigate this topic in a one term timeframe, I would limit my investigation to visual representations of men in Canadian media (as a point of reference) compared to visual representations of men in the major media

platforms of 5 other countries. To establish a clear effort towards cross-cultural investigation, these 5 countries would be in different continents. As well, I would seek to make this Tutorial intersectional by investigating alternative masculinities (e.g. queer, racialized, etc.)

Knowledge gained from this Tutorial would develop further understanding of the plurality of masculinities, the culturally-specific dominant forms of masculinity, an emerging global hegemonic masculinity, and the pervasiveness of media in perpetuating masculine stereotypes.

**Proposed Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this Tutorial, I will be able to: 1. Analyze cross-cultural media platforms; 2. Recognize the dominant (hegemonic) form of masculinity in specific cultural-contexts; 3. Establish similarities and differences in media representations of men cross-culturally; and, 4. Criticize media representations for perpetuating hegemonic masculinity stereotypes.

**Literature Review:**

**Introduction**

Masculinities exist as a continuum—they vary from individual to individual based on personal and social contexts (e.g. race, class, cultural setting). The dominant idealized form of masculinity within a specific social or cultural context is known as hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is not embodied by all men but is dominant because of its idealization within a specific social/cultural context. Hegemonic masculinity ideologically legitimizes the

subordination of all other alternative and or minority masculinities (and women). This literature

review will explore previous research on how men and masculinities are represented in media

cross-culturally. This literature review take place in two parts. The first part will examine

previous research on specific representations of men and masculinity in media cross-culturally—

this will be limited to representations of Chinese masculinities in Chinese media and black

masculinity in American media. Next, this literature review will explore previous cross-cultural

analysis of representations of men/masculinity in media—this will be limited to men as

represented in advertisements in lifestyle magazines in China, Taiwan, and the United States.

This literature review will analyze and synthesize multiple academic articles to gather what

research has been conducted and what gaps remain in the literature.

**Part One**

Wen (2013) examines how masculinity is represented in Chinese media. Using content

analysis, Wen (2013) determines how "masculinity [is] represented in popular reality TV shows,

comic sketches, and TV dramas" (p. 1). Wen (2013) finds that masculinity is represented in

Chinese television media in two forms: unconventional masculinity and conventional

masculinity. Wen (2013) argues that "Chinese media have created a discourse in which

marginalized masculinity and hyper masculinity coexist" (p. 1). Wen (2013) finds that

unconventional or marginalized masculinities are only represented in "newer and less serious

genres, mainly reality TV" (p.1). In contrast, conventional masculinity is represented in

dominant television genres, including television dramas (p. 8). Wen (2013) finds representations

of unconventional masculinity to include female masculinity (e.g. "boyish" females) and

feminized masculinity (e.g. "androgynous young men") (p. 4; p. 5). However, these "alternative

masculinities are always represented as individual choices and never tend to be critical of the gender norms in mainstream Chinese culture" (Wen, 2013, p. 8). Wen (2013) notes that despite representations of unconventional masculinity, "Chinese television dramas contain more macho, masculine images than ever before" (Wen, 2013, p. 8). Wen (2013) finds that representations of conventional masculinity, especially in Chinese television dramas, reaffirm "toughness, rationality, and patriotism of the conventional [Chinese] patriarchal masculinity" (p. 8). In summary, Wen (2013) notes that "although it may seem as though different masculinities are often seen on the screen, their scarcity in TV dramas and the dominant position of TV dramas among other genres in the Chinese TV industry makes clear that the dominant Chinese media is working to protect conventional masculinity" (p. 9).

In contrast to Wen's (2013) exploration of masculinity in Chinese media, Goodwill et al. (2018) examine representations of black masculinity in American pop culture. The authors establish that central to black men's notion of masculinity is "familial involvement, independence, and self-esteem" (Goodwill et al., 2018, p. 2). The authors find that black men in popular culture are often misrepresented or marginalized, noting that "representations of black men in media are often laden with stereotypes that depict black men as violent, criminal, and hypersexual" (Goodwill et al., 2018, p. 2). Goodwill et al. (2018) note that "signs of domination and subordination that are central to our social system are situated in popular culture, and ultimately inform our social experiences" (p. 2). Like Wen's (2013) finding that alternative masculinities are marginalized in Chinese media representation, Goodwill et al. (2018) find that black masculinity (an alternative to the hegemonic Western masculinity which is White) is misrepresented and or underrepresented in American mainstream media. Despite cross-cultural

differences, both Goodwill et al. (2018) and Wen (2013) establish media as a purveyor of dominant forms of masculinity which marginalizes alternative or minority masculinities.

**Part Two**

Tan, Shaw, Cheng, and Kim (2013) examine the representations of masculinity in magazine ads from Taiwan, China, and the United States. The authors' first objective was "to examine how masculinity is represented in men's lifestyle magazine ads from various cultures" (Tan et al., 2013, p. 245). Their second objective was "to examine the cross-cultural differences in terms of the portrayals of masculinities in Taiwan, China, and the United States" (Tan et al., 2013, p. 246). To conduct their investigation, the authors use "content analysis of 636 ads from the three most popular men's lifestyle magazines" in these countries (Tan et al., 2013, p. 237). Tan et al. (2013) find that magazines from all three countries typically portrayed men as "refined and sophisticated," emphasizing "academic, financial, and occupational achievement" (Tan et al., p. 237; p. 245). As well, the authors found "no significant cross-cultural differences in the types of masculinity" represented (Tan et al., 2013, p. 237). The authors align their findings with work by Connell (1998) who finds that "the emerging hegemonic form of masculinity in the current global arena is transnational business masculinity, which is characterized by egocentrism, libertarian sexuality, and calculative rationality" (as cited in Tan et al., 2013, p. 246).

**Conclusion**

Despite variations in masculinities cross-culturally and, in representations of masculinity cross-culturally, hegemonic masculinities are dominant in media platforms. Wen's (2013) exploration of masculinity in Chinese media finds that alternative masculinities are represented

in marginalized forms, and that the Chinese model of hegemonic masculinity, idealizing a

"tough, determined, responsible, and talented" man is dominant in media representation (p. 10).

Similarly, Goodwill et al. (2018) find that black masculinity (an alternative masculinity to the

Western model of hegemonic masculinity) is misrepresented and therefore marginalized within

American media. This finding by Goodwill et al. (2018) asserts that American media is a

purveyor of the Western model of hegemonic masculinity which idealizes a "rich, white,

heterosexual, tall, athletic, professionally successful, confident, courageous, and stoic"

masculinity (Berdahl et al., 2018a, p. 426). In a cross-cultural exploration on the representation

of men/masculinity cross-culturally, Tan et al. (2013) find that a "globally hegemonic

masculinity" is represented in magazine advertisements in China, Taiwan, and the United States,

characterized by "academic, financial, and occupational achievement" (p. 245). This finding by

Tan et al. (2013) complements both Wen's (2013) and Goodwill et al.'s (2018) finding that

alternative and or minority masculinities are marginalized within mainstream media

representations, and that hegemonic masculinities are dominant within mainstream media

representations. Gaps in the literature include further cross-cultural analysis (e.g. analyzing and

comparing media representations in other countries) and further exploration of representations of

masculinity in media platforms (e.g. films, music, social media).

**Next Steps:**


Tutorial: Cross-cultural masculinities (LBST 390)

Department: Women's and Gender Studies

Instructor: Professor Maureen Bracewell

In this Tutorial, we will explore the social construction of gender in relation to masculinity, both in Canada and other cultural contexts. We will examine the concept of hegemonic masculinity and compare it to alternative or subordinated masculinities. This Tutorial will provide me with the background necessary to investigate media representations of cross-cultural masculinities in further Tutorials.


Tutorial: Masculinity in media (LBST 391)

Department: Film

Instructor: Professor Ki Wight

In this Tutorial, we will explore how men are represented in media platforms cross-culturally. This Tutorial will follow the research plan as stated above, to examine different cultural constructions of masculinity and different media representations of masculinity cross-culturally. This will be done through visual analysis of film and/or television.


Tutorial: Women in prisons (LBST 392)

Department: Women's and Gender Studies/Sociology/Geography

Instructor: Professor Kirsten McIlveen

This Tutorial will draw on Professor McIlveen's experience working with women in prison in Canada to explore the factors that lead to women's incarceration. I hope to conduct some interviews in this Tutorial, with currently or previously incarcerated women. This tutorial will draw on my knowledge of masculinities and incorporate gender systems theory into my investigation.

References

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