

Chapter One: Orientation to the Present Study

While women and femininity have been consistently researched from the turn of the century, it was only in the mid-1970s and early 1980s that critical academic inquiry began to appear in the area of both masculinity and gender relations more broadly (Metcalf, 1985; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). Ironically, this work has been strongly connected to the feminist movement which opposed the traditionally subordinate role afforded to women, and resulted in a reworking of conventional understandings of masculinity and femininity (Hanmer, 1990). An additional by-product of feminism has been an increased interest in the study of men (Connell, 2000; Whitehead, 2002). One area that has received much attention is the way in which men are represented in the media, particularly with respect to the increasing link between men's bodies and versions of masculinity (e.g. Benwell, 2003; Liet, Gray & Pope, 2001). Indeed, while body image dissatisfaction and disturbance were typically thought to be "female" concerns, and so reserved for study in women, Pope, Phillips and Olivardia (2000) found a range of unusual body image problems that seemed to be specifically targeting men. While the aetiology of these concerns is complex, it has been argued that the symptoms represent a response to the "threatened masculinity" aroused by feminism, and the use of the body as a means to assert a distinctly masculine identity (Pope et al., 2000). To contribute to work in this area, the present research attempted to address a gap in the understanding of the links between different dimensions of gender identity, different degrees of ego strength, and body image dissatisfaction and disturbance.

The **aim** of the present study was thus two-fold. Firstly, it aimed to explore the relationships between gender identity, ego strength and body image concerns in male university students using the Bem Sex Role Inventory, the Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strength, and the Adonis Complex Questionnaire-Revised, respectively. Secondly, the research considered whether particular combinations of gender identity and ego strength could predict higher scores on the measure of body image dissatisfaction.

The present research report is organised as follows. The literature review, which follows this orientation, is comprised of three chapters. **Chapter Two** is concerned

with masculinity, and begins with an introduction to the different approaches to engaging with this variable. After looking at the biological, psychoanalytic, sex role and social constructionist perspectives, the chapter then locates how masculinity was understood for the purposes of the present research, and in so doing, explains why other dimensions of gender identity (namely femininity and androgyny) were also included in the analyses. **Chapter Three** describes the ego strength variable, and draws extensively on Erik Erikson's theory of the development of the ego, while **Chapter Four** is concerned with the body image, and places particular emphasis on discussing a range body image concerns that seem to be exclusively targeting men, as well their aetiology.

Each of these three chapters includes a discussion of how the variable discussed was operationalised for the purposes of the present research. However, despite being discussed relatively independently, the present research was primarily interested in the relationships between the variables. As such, theoretical links between gender identity and ego strength are made in Chapter Three, while a portion of Chapter Four provides an integrative account of how body image could be related to both gender identity and ego strength.

Chapter Five is concerned with delineating the methodology used to answer the research questions. It provides descriptive information of the sample that was used, the procedure through which the data was gathered, as well as the measures and research design. After reviewing ethical considerations, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the univariate and multivariate statistical procedures used in analysing the data.

Chapter Six outlines the results of the research questions, and is followed by **Chapter Seven** which discusses these findings in view of the arguments developed in the literature review. This chapter also contains a summary of the conclusions drawn and the limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future research.