

Media and Masculinities: Adolescents' Experiences of Gendered Media Discourses in Denmark, Australia, and Italy

This paper presents the research project *Media and Masculinities: Adolescents' Experiences of Gendered Media Discourses*, which investigates how adolescents aged 15–19 in Denmark, Australia, and Italy navigate gendered discourses across films, series, podcasts, news media, and social media. Situated within media sociology and media audience studies, the project examines how gendered narratives circulate globally yet take shape locally within distinct cultural, political, and media environments. Across the three countries, the project explores how boys encounter, interpret, and engage with representations and performances of masculinity in an era marked by digital fragmentation and polarisation.

The theoretical point of departure assumes that digital platforms constitute crucial contemporary gender arenas where masculinity is articulated and re-articulated as a hybrid and relational performance. These dynamics may have implications for young men's experiences and attitudes towards intimacy, bonding, fathering, misogyny, homophobia, and aggression (McCormack 2014; Jarvis 2013; Anderson 2005; Roberts 2018). At the same time, hegemonic masculinity is being contested and reshaped (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Whitehead & Barrett 2001), creating ambivalent conditions for boys navigating emerging identities in late adolescence. While gender norms are shifting globally, comparatively little is known about how young men's engagements with media contribute to these transformations across different cultural contexts.

Methodologically, the study combines **data donations** and **mobile ethnographies** to produce a rich, structured mix of quantitative and qualitative material. Data donations provide insight into participants' actual media practices—such as streaming histories and social media activity—while mobile ethnographies invite adolescents to document and reflect upon their everyday media engagements through diaries, photos, and short videos. This design ensures minimal adult researcher presence, addressing limitations associated with surveys, interviews, and focus groups, which often risk influencing young people's behaviour and responses (Coulter 2021; Rooney 2017).

The empirical analysis investigates both the types of masculinities that teenage boys in Denmark, Australia, and Italy are exposed to and the affective, relational, and embodied ways in which platformed masculinities become woven into their friendships, everyday routines, and developing identities. Previous research indicates, for example, that Danish teenage boys' favourite YouTubers are predominantly male and centred around banter, gaming, and pranks—patterns associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Whitehead & Barrett 2001). The current project deepens this analysis across three cultural settings, enabling a comparative examination of global media flows and local cultural norms.

Fieldwork will be conducted sequentially: Denmark in early 2026, Australia in mid-2026, and Italy in late 2026. Hence, preliminary findings of the Danish part of the study will hopefully be presented, as well.

Overall, the project contributes new empirical insights into how adolescent boys engage with gendered media discourses across distinct cultural contexts. It advances debates in media and gender studies and develops methodological tools for researching young people's media repertoires. The findings aim to inform educators, policymakers, and media producers concerned with gender socialisation, youth wellbeing, and digital media environments.

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Bibliography:

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