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The working class heroes: analysing hegemonic masculinity in occupational reality TV

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Abstract

The emergence of a new genre of occupational reality television has generated a surprisingly large following. The programme follows the activities of the trawlermen at work. Using a number of detailed transcriptions, this paper provides a critical discourse analysis of how the notion of hegemonic masculinity is brought about in this particular television genre. The analysis identified three key patterns of discourse: Hegemonic Masculinity, Heroic positioning and Working-class masculinity. Several rhetorical devices were identified to better understand the function of these various discourses, the interplay of which produces the talk heard in the programme. This representation functions to exalt the trawlermen to a dominant position of the 'Hero', which validates them as masculine in an industrial capitalistic society.

Keywords: Occupational reality television, Trawlermen, Hegemonic Masculinity, Critical Discourse Analysis, Heroic positioning, Working-class masculinity, discourse.

Ethical Statement

This is an ethically sound study, the ethical issues are simple and straightforward and ethical clearance from the Faculty Ethics Committee has been granted. No participants were required for this research project because all data was obtained through publically accessible television archives and video footage. Those observed would expect to be observed by strangers. Therefore, informed consent, right to withdraw, briefing, debriefing and confidentiality were non-applicable in the present study. The data was subject to standard analysis procedures, thus those individuals involved in recordings were in no way at risk of harm. The experimenter (Nathan J. Blair) collected all the data reported in this project. The progress of the present research was monitored under the professional supervision of Tim Auburn.

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Introduction

Over the past six years a certain offshoot of reality television programming has generated a proliferation of series that focus on the lives and livelihood of men at work. The 'stars' of these shows are men engaged in some of the most archetypal, labour-intensive, and high-risk occupations in the world from ice road trucking to deep-sea fishing. "The lives of these men, which would traditionally be categorized as "low culture", have become a mass culture curiosity and a ratings phenomenon" (p.250) and have therefore become the subject of vigorous media discussion and an intriguing topic of academic investigation (Meltzer, 2010). The American cable network and the Discovery Channel in particular have provided a platform on which these fundamentally masculine programmes have amassed enough of an audience to generate a significant number of series (Lockett, 2010).

Arguably the forerunner of this occupational reality genre is an American series documenting the labour of Alaskan crab fishermen, aptly named *Deadliest Catch*. In its first year on air, the show experienced surprisingly high ratings that gave way to a further four series and seven primetime Emmy Award nominations. Shortly after the success of the pilot season broadcast in 2005, a reel of series following the same formula emerged. These were to include *Oil, Sweat, and Rigs*, *American Loggers*, *Salvage Code Red*, *Ice Road Truckers*, and of course *Trawlermen*. The first season of *Trawlermen* aired in 2006 and was the first of this genre in Britain. It follows the movements of the skippers and crew of a collection of boats, particularly 'rival' skippers Jimmy Buchan and James West. They are filmed by a team of cameramen and sound specialists as they battle with winter storms, heavy seas, and sleepless nights in order to bring in a catch that will (hopefully) settle them financially for the coming year.

While the research and literature discussing this genre in America remains fairly limited, academic inspection of this British series is minimal. The present research emerged out of attention to how the subject of masculinity is central to this particular species of television programming. Broadcast media has been a platform for the study of various representations of masculinity for some time now, a line of enquiry Flood (2007) refers to as *televisual* masculinity research. Gunter (1995) notes that,

from the inception of television into UK homes during the 1950's to the television broadcasts of the 1980's, the depiction of gender was highly stereotypical. "Men were generally presented as dominant, aggressive, rational and competent" (p.593; Flood, 2007). Since the 1990's the media's representation of masculinity has become far less straightforward.

Fiske's (1987) distinction between masculine and feminine forms of television narratives is one reading of televisual masculinity representation that corresponds with that of Trawlermen. According to Fiske, these masculine narratives draw on 'macho' displays of masculinity and glorify the uncommunicative 'man of action'. The emphasis of the narrative is on physical performance and heroic achievement, which works to define the male characters onscreen in these moments of performance. Characteristic *intensifiers*, such as dramatic camera angles and intense pounding music all work to heighten the drama and impact of this masculine representation. Trawlermen and programmes like it certainly seem to demonstrate these televisual representations of masculinity.

Carroll (2008) has categorised this particular genre as 'Men's Soaps'. The growth of these macho men's shows in America over the past decade might be seen as a response to the proliferation of a softer, 'metrosexual' image promoted in the television series of the past century (Meltzer, 2010). As noted earlier, gender representations on television have diversified considerably since the uniform constructs of the 1950's. British television today appears more open than ever to alternative depictions of gender. At this point it is important to establish a more coherent framework for what is meant when we discuss the notion of *masculinity* and the representations that construct it.

Masculinity studies have gathered considerable momentum since the turn of the 1980's, seeing gender scholars expand their analysis beyond women and towards a cultural scholarship on men (Lotz, 2007). According to Toerien and Durrheim (2005) masculinity is no longer considered simply a way of being, but "a field of conflict that men have to traverse in a quest for coherence" (p.36). They go on to suggest that to negotiate this conflict, men draw on various discourses in their everyday lives understood as cultural resources. Discourse is generally considered to be associated with "human meaning making processes" (p.392; Wetherell, 1998). Cultural discourses refer to the shared background assumptions of truths about the way the world works (Andersson, 2008). Therefore, cultural discourse of masculinity refers to the general assumptions people hold about how the majority of men in society talk, feel, and behave (Kiesling, 2005).

Edley (2001) refers to the principles and characteristics that are typically associated with men as *normative* forms of behaviour. The discursive psychologist sees masculinity as the consequence rather than the cause of such behaviour. Certain constructions and formulations will be more available than others because they have become culturally dominant or *hegemonic* (Gramsci, 1971). Brickell (2005) argues that "those performing masculinities are therefore the constructs and constructors of symbolic orders"; "they may perpetuate and/or resist hegemonic social arrangements" (p.31). Connell (1987) coined the theory of *hegemonic masculinity*, arguing that in this sense masculine characteristics are not given, but are rather "a range of possible styles and personae that emerge from the gender regimes found in

different cultures” (p.3 ;Wetherell & Edley, 1999). As Jefferson (2002) notes, the concept of *hegemonic masculinity* has been widely used in recent years. It has found application in a range of fields, from education to social psychology, and is often employed in studies of the media representations of men (Janson & Sabo, 1994).

In line with Fiske’s observations of contemporary televisual masculine representations, a large portion of Connell’s writing is aligned with investment in the ‘macho’ masculine personae. This is exemplified, as Wetherell and Edley (1999) observe, by the lead male roles of such films as *Rocky*, *Rambo* and the *Terminator*. For ordinary men hegemonic masculinity is presented as an “aspirational goal rather than a lived reality” (p.5), in accordance with the qualities of these fictional ‘heroes’ described above. Coinciding with these idealised qualities, most men fall within the category Connell describes as *Complicit* masculinity. These men accept and participate in the system of hegemonic masculinity and the characteristic traits that this entails: Bringing home a wage, being a father, independent, driven, un-emotional, courageous, aggressive, un-nurturing, tough, and self-centred (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2011). Wetherell and Edley (1999) establish that, as a version of the world, hegemony is reality defining for all men. This version is “plural”, “inconsistent” and above all, it is “achieved through discursive work” (p.31). They suggest that hegemonic norms should be understood as “defining a subject position in discourse that is taken up strategically by men in particular circumstances” (p.841; cited in Connell & Messerschmidt, 2011). Thus, masculinity does not represent a specific type of man, but rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practices.

Rutherford (1988) was the first to suggest that current conceptions of masculinity represent a tension between two dominant subject positions. The first is the *Retributive man*, representing a more traditional form of masculine identity recognised in *Complicit* hegemony. He is the major breadwinner of the family and principal source of income at home, tough, competitive and emotionally inarticulate. In contrast to this is the *New man*: a softer, more sensitive and caring individual, the stay-at-home husband and father. These two contrasting positions of masculinity are certainly identifiable amongst media representations of gender identity. For example, the emergence of the *New man* in contemporary television departs significantly from the oppressive patriarchal masculinities that once dominated the air time (Lotz, 2007). However, the recent influx of hard-labour occupational reality television shows, such as *Trawlermen*, seems to lean heavily towards the position of the *Retributive man* and therefore *complicit* with hegemonic masculinity.

While Connell’s original notion of hegemonic masculinity is well established within this field of research, Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that it is not sufficient for identifying and understanding the complexity of men’s identity strategies in negotiating positions of masculinity. Furthermore, they point out that positions such as *New man* and *Retributive man* provide too broad a sweep (Edley and Wetherell, 1997). They argued that these categories overlook the detailed array in which things are ‘worked up’ and versions of events are articulated. What they propose is an approach to masculine identities that examines how they are constructed and *brought into being* through discourse. The present study examined how these various positions are brought about through discourse within this particular context of the occupational reality TV show.

When investigating the representations of masculinity in this type of data, part of the enquiry involves considering previous discussions, brought about by this particular genre of presentation. One concern that has been brought to the attention of scholars is one of authenticity. A significant topic of debate about these reality programmes is whether they provide a realistic picture of the domain that they are documenting and how far it can be treated as an authentic representation or biased. For example, Macey and Padilla-Miller (2008; cited in Meltzer, 2010) suggested that the dramatic portrayal of competition that is worked up in *Deadliest Catch* and *Ice Road Truckers* might in fact render the action onscreen as trivial, detracting from its authenticity. This is a notion that Goffman (1959) described as the dichotomous categorization of *reality and contrivance*. In some ways this would be the wrong approach to take with this genre. The question of whether this is a real representation or not is somewhat missing the point, for it is exactly that, a representation. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, reality is socially constructed. Therefore, what should be questioned is not the authenticity of the show, but how it forms and how it functions rhetorically.

There is a growing consensus that the study of language is integral to our understanding of men and masculinity. Those who follow this school of thought maintain that, if masculinity is shaped through everyday discourse, then our analytic attention should be focused upon people's talk (Edley, 2001). What has emerged from this is a large body of research that follows the line of enquiry that gender is *accomplished* through talk. Wetherell et al. (1987) developed a basic model of analysis whereby the data file was examined with a focus on the broad patterns that emerged within the discourse. They referred to these broad patterns as *practical ideologies*. In other words, these were "familiar interpretative resources and methods of self-accounting" that men can version accordingly when presented with different "discursive demands" (p.9; cited in Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This form of discursive psychology aims to analyse the process of normalisation through which prevailing definitions of masculinity emerge. According to Edley (2001) these definitions are maintained, resisted and transformed through a number of key concepts, these are: *Interpretative repertoires*, *ideological dilemmas* and *subject positions*.

Tied to the concept of practical ideologies, Interpretative repertoires constitute these broad patterns of talk and are recognised more precisely through particular images, metaphors and figures of speech. People draw upon a lexicon of repertoires that is provided for us through our history and culture to "characterise and evaluate actions and events" (p.138, Potter and Wetherell, 1987). According to Edley (2001), this leads to the possibility for different interpretative repertoires of the same social object (such as 'man') to be constructed rhetorically. Often these different references on 'how to be a man' are in conflict and give rise to ideological dilemmas. Opposing images, words, evaluations and contrary maxims provide the seeds from which different lines of argument emerge. Billig (1988) describes ideological dilemmas as the argument between 'intellectual' ideologies; Marxist notion of a coherent set of ideas that represent the dominant sections of society as natural, and 'lived' ideologies; the incoherent beliefs, values and practices of common sense. Men struggle with these conflicting ideals and the way in which they choose to conduct themselves in their day to day lives is determined by how they "position themselves within this ideological field" (p.209; Edley, 2001).

Positioning involves the construction and performance of a particular vantage point (Bamberg, 1994). While each individual manipulates the available discourses to negotiate the prevailing subject positions, “reconstructing identities is not a simple matter of voluntary action” (p.193; Eagleton, 1991, cited in Edley, 2001). Althusser (1971) argues that within these moments of self-assessment, identification and *subjectification* all people are predisposed to *interpellation* through which we are both produced by and subjected to ideology. Critical discourse analysis attempts to address this paradoxical understanding of people as both the product and producers of discourse. In order to identify and explain the subject positions that emerge through discourse, both the local deployment and broader social implications of interpretative repertoires are considered along with both the rhetorical purpose and wider cultural significance of ideological dilemmas (Wetherell and Edley, 1999).

Edley and Wetherell saw it appropriate to adopt a similarly two-sided analytic approach. With one focus on Foucauldian-influenced discourse analysis, they identified issues of power relations, social process and ideological practice, but always with an emphasis on ‘sticking to the data’. This draws on a conversation analytical approach that focuses on the *action orientation* (Heritage, 1984) of peoples talk. Therefore this approach attempts to study both the way people are driven by ideological consideration to be “positioned by and *effected through* discourse”, but with an emphasis on the function of “everyday talk and its design features” (p.205, Edley and Wetherell, 1997). The present study adopted a similar methodological framework to examine the construction of masculinity in *Trawlermen*, a critical discourse analytical approach that investigates both local and global features of talk.

The current body of research into hegemonic masculinity stems largely from the first-person self-narratives of individual men and their everyday talk, a medium described by Goffman (1959) as *the presentation of self in everyday life*. For example, the characteristics usually attributed to hegemonic masculinity (“strength, boldness, winning challenges, cool toughness etc.” p.29) are typically identified in the highly invested imaginary positions of self-exalting personal narratives (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). In a programme such as *Trawlermen* the talk heard follows a different form of presentation, the production and editing of each episode has been intentionally formulated with a particular function in mind. Unlike Goffman’s presentation of self, “the empowerment of character is limited and managed by the show’s producers and media professionals” (p.257; Meltzer, 2010).

The narrative of television programming is constructed by several authors (the producers, writers and director). There are three common practices that are employed when arranging the symbolic elements that make up this construction: synecdoche (whereby the part stands in for the whole or vice versa), omission (in which certain scenes and details are left out) and personalisation (when the story is relayed through the personal experiences of the characters onscreen). Retrospectively produced, but done in such a way that it is coherent, “these techniques achieve continuity and give the viewer a sense of being led through the narrative by an omnipresent camera eye” (p.257; Meltzer, 2010). Many scholars have discussed the persuasive and legitimising power of narrative as a rhetorical device. While there is always an eye on the accuracy of the presentation of ‘fact’, discourse analysis maintains that talk is action oriented. The discourse in the show is a monologue of the story they want to tell, their *version* of *Trawlermen*.

Why place focus on the Narrator?

The show employs a narrator whose voice is heard, but whose face is never seen. "The narrator provides the frame for the story, the transitions, and the details about the process that we see and do not see onscreen" (p.257; Meltzer, 2010). As noted, the discourse presented in the final product is action orientated and it is predominantly through the omniscient voice of the narrator that this is communicated to the audience. In fact the narrator's talk accounts for an average of 8m40s per thirty-minute episode, while the trawlermen only 4m33s. He is the voice that mediates between the world of the Trawler men and the world of the viewer (someone who has likely had no experience of the events unfolding onscreen). The narrator produces a description and interpretation of the action on the boat. There is a systematic pattern in the way that this is rendered intelligible to the viewer and this is identified in the way that the various discourses are presented and worked up throughout the programme.

Typically, masculine representations are constituted in subtle forms of interactional activity, such as account building, turn-taking and case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986). It is the combination, interaction and adjacency of the narrator and the edited extracts of 'trawlerman talk' that forms this unique version of televisual masculinity. What is edited in are different turns, type connected excerpts that follow on from one another in a particular sequence that points to what actions are being displayed at. Through the close analysis of talk itself this paper methodologically considers how various interpretative repertoires are worked up, how they are constituted in terms of ideological dilemma and the subject positions that come about as a result. Furthermore, "when investigating any narrative", as Riessman (1993) poses, "it is important to question why an informant develops their tale *this* way in conversation with *this* listener" (p.61). The social implications and cultural significance of the discourses presented in Trawlermen were drawn out through the analysis and the function of this version of masculine representation was scrutinized.

Method

The present study was conducted following a systematic inspection and comparison of selected extracts of discourse. One of the aims of this paper was to build upon previous research investigating the way in which masculinity is accomplished through discourse, maintaining an empirical focus on rhetoric practices. A number of appropriate recordings were identified, transcribed and subject to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Analytical Materials

The entire corpus of information subject to investigation was obtained from previously recorded and publically available video footage. The material for this analysis comes primarily from the BBC television series of Trawlermen, exclusively the first series of five thirty-minute episodes. This series was filmed over a six-month period and was first broadcast in 2006. The whole sequence and process of analysis for this investigation is grounded in the data.

Procedures

The first episode of the series was transcribed orthographically (see Appendix A). This transcript was read through alongside the footage adopting the stance of

'unmotivated' looking (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998), but with a focus on potential for constructing masculinities. Any orientation to the issue of masculinity in this transcription was identified within the transcript. This stage of analysis sought to draw out observations of consistent patterns of talk throughout the data; this was inclusive and conducted in an open-ended manner. Any marginal cases were included rather than dropped because the later stages of the analysis would filter what should be selectively analysed and what should not. This first transcript was used as a framework or basis for selecting extracts from the other episodes. The remaining four episodes were examined under the same protocol as the first, but with the emerging patterns in mind, to identify sections to transcribe in the first instance orthographically again (see Appendix B). Reoccurring patterns of discourse considered relevant to the research question were identified and compiled into a corpus of more detailed transcriptions following the Jefferson transcript conventions (Jefferson, 1984; see Appendix C). The transcribed material was subject to critical discourse analysis (CDA). Each corpus was inspected in greater detail, identifying the action orientation, organisational features and constructive nature of each. The end product of analysis was to identify the patterns of discourse that inhabit all five episodes and the ideological function of these.

Analysis

This analysis is the end product of the present study. There is much that can be drawn out of the way that *Trawlermen* is produced and the patterns of talk within it. The present analysis identified three dominant discourses within the footage: 1) Traditional Hegemonic constructs of masculinity in the men's talk (identified through interpretative repertoire, ideological dilemma, and subject positions). 2) The dominance of the 'Heroic position' and the function of the Narrator in constructing this position through *Extremisation*. 3) The alternative position of the working-class male and how this is worked up and organized in relation to the previous discourse.

1. Hegemonic Masculinity

There is now a large body of evidence from numerous sources where issues involved in hegemonic masculinity are specifically relevant to working-class men like the trawlermen. Connell (2002) identifies these occasions to include "concern with men's status and authority", "affirmations of toughness and power", "assertion of men's freedom", and "anxieties about men's position as breadwinner and head of the household" (p.95). This final point is of particular significance in the data here. Wetherell and Edley (1999) identify the hegemonic masculine dilemma between two arguments, the attentive family man and the independent breadwinner. Ideological dilemmas occur when the available maxims and evaluations of contemporary common sense contradict those of historical and cultural ideologies (Billig, 1988). This same ideological dilemma can be drawn out in trawlermen. In one of the boldest examples of this the scene is set at deckhand Alan's house where he is sat with his family as he prepares to leave for ten days of trawling.

Ep 1 17:02

- 1 N last year over one hundred and thirty thousand
- 2 tons of fish and prawns we landed with a value of
- 3 ninety-six million pounds (.) hoping to add to
- 4 that tally is twenty-five year old deck hand,
- 5 Alan Dennerson who's preparing for a fishing trip

- 6 Lby why are you putting them in the bag?
7 Aln Because they're daddy's sea shoes
8 N It means leaving wife Lisa, seven month old Alex
9 and three year old Libby for ten long days
10 Aln Would you like it if I got a shore job?
11 Lsa I don't know I don't think I'd mind
12 Aln Would you would you prefer it then if I got a
13 shore job?
14 Lsa Yes of course I would
15 Aln Would ya?
16 Lsa Yeh
17 Aln (.) see I just don't think I could handle a shore
18 job (.) you don't like it when daddy goes to sea?
19 (.) you don't like it at all?
20 Lby No

In the extract above the narrator goes about reporting the details of the previous year's catch and landing figures, before suggesting that Alan is "hoping to add to that tally" (L3). The combination of this narrative pre-sequence and a short stint of talk between Alan and his daughter Libby (L6-7) infers that his intention is to make money, earn a living and to pay for his family. This final point appears to be of particular interest here and follows the conventional masculine construct of the breadwinner discussed above. Lines 8-9 describe the down side to the fishing trip that could bring home a decent wage. Here the narrator contributes to the ideological dilemma through the extremisation of the time Alan spends away from the family: this being "ten *long* days" (L9) rather than simply ten days away at sea. A device employed frequently by the narrator, extremisation is much like Goffman's (1959) *dramatisation*, however the focus of this rhetoric device is on the discursive reformation of interpretative accounts in extreme terms. Formulating the turn in this way works to construct the notion of leaving his family as problematic. This is an argument about going off on the fishing trip, it's dangerous work, but it puts bread on the table. The counter argument is that it takes him away to leave his wife on her own with his two children. In this sense he cannot fulfil his responsibilities as father and husband to his family, which brings to surface the other side of this ideological dilemma.

When Alan introduces the alternative scenario of a "shore job" (L10) it is framed as somewhat of a positive alternative ("would you like it"), anticipating a response appropriate to this. Lisa's evaluation of the question (L11) is rather ambiguous; she does not commit herself to an answer that would hold her accountable. With Lisa's return left open to discussion, Alan reformulated the question to evoke a preferred response: "would you prefer it then" (L12-13). Here Alan seems to be pushing the family-man position, while indirectly working up the idea of wife Lisa wanting him to be a stay-at-home husband. Alan elicits from her what she would prefer, setting up the sequence organisation that follows.

Lisa's second response (L14) resembles more of a preferred turn, "yes of course I would" is direct and given without hedges or delay. The repetition in line 15 ("would ya?") typically implies something problematic about the preceding turn. Supported by Alan's utterance: "I don't think I could handle a shore job" (L17-18). Alan is not

compromising to the alternative “shore job”, creating conflict here. As Edley and Wetherell (1998) identified, this particular conflict resides between working man and family man. Alan has a wife to be a husband for and children to be a father to, but he is caught in a struggle because of this financial dependency. If he is to put food on the table and bring home a steady income he has to fulfil the hegemonic role of the breadwinner.

Alan turns his attention to daughter Libby in line 18 (“You don’t like it when daddy goes to sea?”). This reiterates the idea of Alan being unavailable as a family man. The syntax is that of a statement, however the format is a yes/no interrogative (Raymond, 2003). This builds up a whole set of assumptions or presuppositions in it. If the receiver responds with a yes or no answer, it supports or confirms those presuppositions. These sorts of questions seem to have, as a preference, agreement with them, demonstrated here with a very straight forward yes/no interrogative and a yes/no answer to it.

There is not only a father/husband versus worker/breadwinner dilemma here, counterpoising these discourses works to make an inference about the type of men the trawlermen are. The production of the show creates a version of reality where being a trawlerman involves men like Alan going out to sea and putting himself at risk for ten days, yet regardless of the risk he couldn’t handle a shore job. In this particular instance, Alan here seems to be collusive with one of those arguments that makes up one side of the dilemma. This particular discourse is aligned more heavily with Connell’s notion of complicit masculinity. A similar reading can be made of the extract below.

Ep 4 25:19

- 1 N Kevin wants his net in the water as soon as possible (0.7) its all
2 hands on deck (3.2) but trainee ryan (.) is missing (3.0)
3 R hhh (.) ma ma heads really sore (.) can hardly open my eyes (5.6) I
4 really (1.9) cant be bothered at this moment (1.8) it cha theres no
5 point (1.0) theres ↑no point in doing a job if youre gonna to feel
6 like this (5.4) ah feel like cryen (1.0)
7 C sometimes I feel like cryin when I come down to go away but you’ve
8 just to go (0.8) ayu (5.0) you jsta miss your wifes birthday you miss
9 your anniversary you miss your kids goin to sch↑ool the first day,
10 (1.9) you’ve jst to do it (.) that’s it (.) simple as that (5.5)

In a sense, this occurrence is almost quoting the other argument in this ideological dilemma that the trawlermen seem to disassociate with. This is a good exemplification of Connell's notion of complicity because this discourse, as Wetherell and Edley (1999) put it, “*Instantiates* hegemonic masculinity since, here, men align themselves strongly with conventional ideals” (p9).

The type of ‘man’ constructed in the final cut of the show calls on the characteristic interpretive repertoires of the Retributive man. How this masculine version of trawlermen is being constructed is through these sorts of qualities. These are the predicates and characteristics of this category, which are identified here as being explicitly constructed throughout the talk that makes up that part of the dilemma (the full set of extracts which contribute to this can be found in appendix C1).

Examples of these interpretative repertoires are identified in this selection of extracts:

Joy in the dangerous work

Ep 2 00:31

- 1 N one hundred miles from the safety of their homeport of Peterhead (.)
2 the prawn trawler Amity is threatened by a gathering storm (0.6)
3 K whoa whoa who weh heh heh heyy yeh heh (.) yeee hahhahahaa(1.0) this
4 job's not dangerous this jobs exciting? (.) yyeeehahhahahaha< (1.2)
5 this is better than being drunk (.) the adrenalin (.) it's pumpin

Wetherell & Edley (1999) describe how the “buzz” of a potentially risky and challenging situation is a characteristic Complicit male feature.

Physical Strength

Ep 5 01:55

- 1 N being a trawlerman is a tough (.) ↑physically demanding job (0.2)
2 where only the <stro:ng survive> (2.1) Ryan will have to proo:ve
3 himself (.) by doing everything (0.3) from helping to bring in the
4 haul↑ (0.2) to cleaning the skippers wind↓ows (1.0)
5 K it's the young boys job to er (0.7) keep the windows nice and clean
6 so we can see everything (1.9) hes made the windows worse (2.8) they
7 look dirtier now than they were before he started >cleanin em< (0.2)
8 have to give him a l:esson how to wash windows correctly (3.0)

Similarly “skilled bodily activity is a prime indicator of masculinity” (p.851; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2011). The regular notion of physical achievement in Trawlermen serves to underline the men’s ability to endure physical punishment and reaffirms this Complicit hegemonic position as dominant (particularly when set in contrast to ‘weaker’ men such as the novice Ryan).

By constructing a version of masculinity for the trawlermen, the series also draws attention to these discourses or interpretative repertoires that seem to neglect the other side of their masculine dilemma. These extracts demonstrate the traditional hegemonic versions of masculinity identified throughout the footage and how these are worked up within the discourses analysed above. What has been drawn out of this is a dominant position that is worked up for these trawlermen against which these hegemonic themes are articulated. The hero figure “is primarily a male figure; thus the hero position is part of the metanarrative of masculinity, defining, as it does, idealized man” (p.303, Boon, 2005). What is perhaps unique within this series of episodes is that the hero discourse is mostly articulated through the narrator, not the men themselves.

2. Heroic position

Wetherell and Edley (1999) first identified this particular positioning strategy when interviewees formulated their narratives in a way that described the self with qualities such as those demonstrated in the extracts above. What was drawn out through the analysis of the transcripts is that the heroic position is not constructed through the

“narcissistic merging of self with an exalted masculinity” as described by Wetherell and Edley (p.17), but rather constructed by the narrator through rhetorical devices (the full set of extracts which contribute to this can be found in appendix C2).

The narrator is not just a neutral filter describing the action on board the boat, but an active component of this construction. Various rhetoric devices and systematic patterns of talk are used to construct this position and make it intelligible to the viewer. One of the ways in which the narrator successfully constructs the hero position for the trawlermen is through a particular sequence organisation, whereby the organisational features of the narrative infers the heroic position for the men.

1

Ep 2 02:24

- 1 N Last year nine fishermen died and thirty-four boats were
2 lost from the UK fleet (.) for the first mate Kevin (0.9) the risks
3 are all too real (2.3)
4 K Very dangerous craic this (0.7) I remember fishing off
5 Ireland once about ten twelve years ago (.) we were shooting herring
6 nets (1.1) and one of our friends got his legs caught in the net and
7 he was took overboard (2.3) by the time we got the boat around to
8 fetch him (0.9) he was gone (.) never to be found again

2

Ep 5 10:19

- 9 N trawlermen are thirty times more likely to di:e (.)
10 doing thei:r job (.) than the average wo:r↓ker (0.3) CAmeron the cook
11 underst↑a:nds the dangers of the current situation all too well,
12 (0.1)
13 C we were standing in ehh: (.) quarter: (0.1) in theh boat
14 (0.1) taken ehh: twists out of the: (.) the sweeps (.) and I:
15 got washed ↓overboard
((scene cuts to action on deck with trawlermen struggling to take the twists out of the
sweeps (2.4)))
16 K Neville will you keep your feet clear? just ↑KEEP YOur feet Clear:
17 (0.7)
18 C ah was (.) kindda unconscious so:: (.) I couldn't actually (.)
19 actually describe for ya felt like in the water (0.1) I just remember
20 (.) being f:ace down in the water (.) it was a <nasty experience for
21 (.) a ten minutes> (1.0)
22 K if the if the wire over the side just now was to break (0.1) they
23 could be dragged over the side (3.2)
24 C it stopped me going to sea for about (.) three weeks (0.2) that's it
25 (.) back again ehhehheh (.) glutton for punishment (1.0)
26 K tha:ts eh that's it clear now yeah, (0.4)
27 N with the cable clear (.) they bring in the few fish (.) that remain
28 (.) in the net

In these extracts the narrator demonstrates a particular way of framing this extremisation device. This systematic pattern of discourse functions to set up a version of the word. Concerning the way that they have been produced, the format is

almost identical. The main activity here is this personal account from the two men describing a dangerous incident (lines 4-8 and 13-25). What precedes this is a narrative pre-sequence framework, which provides context and statistics (lines 1-3 and 9-12). This pre sequence sets up the conditions of the men's vivid descriptions (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). This in a sense works to provide plausibility to the danger.

Another function of this discourse concerns its action orientation at a local level. Consider the two accounts given by the trawlermen; the crewmate who caught his leg and got taken overboard (L4-8) and Cameron who similarly got washed overboard himself (L13-25). One interpretation of these accounts would infer that these men were simply careless and negligent, that they did not take into account health and safety and are therefore at fault. This particular sequence organisation, a product of selective audio-visual editing, works to anticipate and ward off this particular reading. What it seems to do in turn, is articulate that these occurrences are not the effect of a casual or irresponsible approach to what the trawlermen *do* every day, but the consequence of the exceptional dangers that describe what it is that being a trawlerman involves. The narrator provides the evidence to support this representation of the men. Moreover, the narrator's talk brings these men into that statistic as well: "for the first mate Kevin, the risks are all too real" (L2-3), "Cameron the cook understands the dangers of the current situation all too well" (L10-11). This works to substantiate the inference that *this* is the environment they work in. The narrator puts the action into context that is factual and unambiguous, constructing a version of the world they inhabit, one of constant danger. The interplay between the talk of the narrator and the men described here implies that accidents like these can happen at any time and take them away, but the men are not held accountable. This is the environment that they brave every day in order to do their job as *Trawlermen*.

The way that *Trawlermen* is put together and produced has to be seen as believable for it to be effective. It is the role of the Narrator to make these positions of heroic masculinity seem plausible and the claims made credible. Pomerantz (1986) identified that the way in which a description is formed determines whether a state of affairs is portrayed as believable or dismissed as minor. Rhetoric devices are used to construct and formulate an account that is plausible. One of the ways in which speakers are able to legitimize claims involved in their descriptions is through the use of *extreme case formulations*. Extreme case formulations are often employed to "make a report or version more effective by drawing on the extremes of relevant dimensions of judgement" (p.68; Edwards and Potter, 1992). One of the boldest examples of this strategy occurs in the opening scene of the first episode. Here the Narrator sets the scene of the action due to commence and introduces the subjects of this story, the trawlermen.

Ep 1 00:05

- 1 N → every day trawlermen from Peterhead in Northeast Scotland risk
- 2 their lives to bring home their catch (.) and put fish on our
- 3 tables (2.0)

In line 1 the narrator describes the action on-screen as a daily occurrence. While many viewers are likely to be unaware and unfamiliar with this version of reality the narrator implies that, for the trawlermen, it is the norm. The use of extreme case

formulation here constructs the incidence as routine and normative, but it is nevertheless constituted in extreme terms. The notion that “every day” (L1) these men are risking their lives is an extreme case in so far that it is routine for them, but anomalous for *us* as viewers of this. *We* wouldn’t be risking our lives every day. Extreme case formulations are typically used to take something that is anomalous and place it in the ordinary (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). In this particular occurrence it functions to construct what they are doing as an everyday routine occurrence, but the extremisation of risk takes it out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary. Klapp (1954) explains that “because of the requirement of transcending the mediocre” in order to maintain the heroic masculine position, the men must prove themselves “by exceptional acts”, the most effective of which “represent in a superhumanly exaggerated way the things the group admires most” (p.57).

The claim that “every day” these men “risk their lives” to “put fish on our tables” (L1-3) draws on extremisation to point to and emphasise the great risk involved in the work that these men do willingly and regularly. Here the narrator implies that the trawlermen are doing a duty to *us*, the viewer. This constructs and draws on the heroic position for the trawlermen, going beyond the call of duty in the face of danger and mortal risk to ‘put fish on *our* tables’. In this case, “the group” are the viewers, who’s vicarious fascination in the *Trawlermen* and celebrity status they have bestowed them seems to reflect an admiration for their “exceptional acts” of courage in the face of danger. Granting them, in the opinion of Boon, *Heroic* distinction.

Extreme case formulation involves taking a position being advocated to its extreme in order to help make that position more pervasive (Coyle, 1995). The following extract demonstrates how the narrator uses this device to valorise the heroic position.

Ep 1 00:18

- 1 N these are the men who do the most dangerous job in Britain
((3m51s omitted)) 04:39
- 2 K one of the most dangerous jobs in the world they say, I’ll say
- 3 they’re right hahahh (.) whoo

The narrator’s claim that “these are the men that do the most dangerous job in Britain” (L1) is an example of how extreme case formulation is used to validate this heroic position for the trawlermen. Later in this episode, one of the deckhands, Kevin, makes an evaluation of this claim (L2-3). It is important to identify the dissimilarities in both interpretations. In contrast to that of the narrator, Kevin’s version is not an extreme description; “*one* of the most dangerous jobs” (L2). While Kevin does not reject the notion, his utterance is made laughable. This makes Kevin’s position on the matter somewhat ambiguous and serves to reflect the trawlermen’s attitude towards the notion of danger and the nature of the job itself. Edwards (2000) suggests that extreme case formulations can display investments such as certainty on the part of the speaker. Thus, the rhetoric device in a sense gives the narrator authority over the account of the trawlermen.

The narrator’s description of the action onscreen gains authority by valorising the notion of risk and danger. These topics are a salient characteristic feature of this genre of reality television and the version of reality that is worked up in its presentation. The notion of heroic masculinity trades off this in a symbiosis of risk

and complicit masculine repertoires (e.g. courageous, no fuss, fearless, unemotive). The following extract demonstrates how the narrator sets up the notion of risk and danger, which in turn points to and reflects the character of the trawlermen.

Ep 2 10:00

- 1 N one of the wires holding the nets has been snapped by the
2 heavy seas (2.0)
3 A we jus se she the net th both net's just single-ended it
4 means one of the weh one of the wires has eh eh broken
5 N with a broken wire (.) the crew can't bring in the nets
6 (.) which could get caught in the propeller< (.) James stops the
7 engine (0.8) without power (.) the high winds are blowing him
8 da::ngerously clo:s::e to a nearby boat (3.6)
9 A there's a boat just really close by us just now (.) it's
10 quite (1.1) whe wel leh it's less easy to manoeuvre the boat while
11 while the nets is over the side (.) so (.) there's a little bit of
12 ha:ssle (.) by the boat being too close to us (2.1)
13 N if the crew don't get the nets out of the water fast
14 enough (1.0) the two boats could collide (13.4) with the nets on
15 board (.) James gets Fruitful Bough to safety (.) away from the other
16 fishing boat (1.2)
17 J well my first concern there was now just to get everybody
18 to stand clear (.) ayem: (.) but: when you see it was broken (.) i::t
19 didnae look to bad theywer gonna get it back nae problem< everybody
20 is: (.) watchin what they were doin
21 A no:: ih nae goin sayin ah'm scared wisen up (2.1) it was
22 just all in a day's work (.) easa:y (0.4) easa:::y

Here the narrator mediates the action on screen to make it intelligible to viewer (L1-2) and constructs the dangerous environment of “heavy seas” (L2) and “high winds” (L7) in which the men are negotiating. The narrator formulates the report of this incident in extreme terms, describing the worst-case scenario (L5-6), while intonational features such as the prolongation in line 8 work to extrematise the risk. The trawlermen are not unaware of the apparent dangers that surround them, but appear unperturbed throughout these selected extracts of talk. This is identified in Alex's utterance of hedges, such as “quite” and “well”, which imply a ‘low possibility’ judgment of the dangers proposed by the narrator (Crismore & Kopple, 1990). The way that the narrator readdresses the point of risk of collision in lines 13-16 draws attention to the insouciant utterances in the preceding turn and the talk that follows: “little bit of hassle” (L11-12), “didnae look too bad” (L19), “nae problem” (L19). This works to reflect on the type of discourse available here: “The hero figure excels in martial skills: physical strength, courage, and an innate ability to confront dangerous situations without flinching” (p.301; Boon, 2005).

The question of whether these men were scared is rejected in Alex's response to a silent accusation: “nae goin sayin ah'm scared wisen up” (L21). Such a position would stand in opposition to the dominant position here, the Retributive man, fearless, gets on with the job, doesn't complain, “just all in a day's work...easy” (L20). The nature of masculinity is all inferred as part of this. The narrator sets the men up as being exposed to danger, but they are not cognized to it. It is not that they are

unaware, but adopt this pithy standpoint and impassive attitude toward it, a very masculine construct.

Adjacency is achieved through the interplay between the men's narrative and the role of the narrator in setting up this heroic position. The narrator counteracts what the men say, such as the utterances drawn out above. In contrast to these rather broad glosses, the narrator gets into the detail of it, which functions to make the risk and heroic discourse seem plausible. The men construct their descriptions of the action as part of an everyday job and everyday life, but through the Narrator the trawlermen get subsumed to this heroic position. Contrasted with the men's discourse and the Narrator, in a sense, wins out. The contrast between the function of the narrator and the men's talk works to make the narrator's account quite assertive.

3) Alternative position – Working-class man

Often these sorts of discourses and repertoires are constructed in opposition to an alternative position. In this case the working-class man represents a contrast with the construct of the 'hero', drawing the viewer's attention to the underlying socioeconomic ideologies that pervades this genre. In her investigation of Trawlermen's American counterpart, *Deadliest Catch*, Meltzer (2010) identifies that, "inherent in the programming is an ordering of priorities and values: of highest priority is income" (p.253). The notion of class, issues of economic status, and the trawlerman's position as a working-class man is one *version* of the life of the trawlerman (the full set of extracts which contribute to this can be found in appendix C3iii). The extract below demonstrates how this *version* is worked up in this sort of programme and narrative.

Ep 5 13:07

- 1 N before the crew make a wage (.) the boats running expenses must be
2 paid (0.4)
3 J you wouldn't believe what it would cost to run a a a vessel like this
4 for a year (0.2) .hhh to paint her (.) seven grand (0.5) set of warps
5 (.) which we need two every year (0.2) three four thousand pounds (.)
6 that's eight grand (0.1) sweeps, (.) nets, (.) five thousand per net
7 with all the attachments, (1.0) the list goes on and on: (3.6)
8 N it's not just the fishing gear that costs money (0.5) amity's engine
9 burns <one hundred litres of fuel an hour> (0.3) and with escalating
10 fuel costs (.) jimmy's bill gets bigger every year (0.6)
11 J last year probably my phone bill was ninety thousand pounds (2.1)
12 this year (0.2) I would expect to be in excess of a hundred and fifty
13 (.) hundred and sixty thousand pounds. (0.5)
14 N with such hu:ge co:sts to pay (.) jimmy speeds to Peterhead hoping
15 for a hi:gh price for his catch,

What is being worked up here is one picture of what it costs to be a trawlerman. The narrator introduces the subject matter of the talk that follows, "the boats running expenses" (L1-2). Jimmy's utterance, "you wouldn't believe what it would cost" (L3), in itself implies an 'unbelievable' figure, anticipating a large sum and works to reflect his own opinion on the matter. The narrator's contribution to the description of cost, "it's not just the fishing gear that costs money" (L8), draws on financial difficulties on more of a global level, "with escalating fuel costs Jimmy's bill gets bigger every year". The contrasting global versus local perspectives gives credit to the omniscient,

faceless voice and 'godlike eye' of the narrator. It also works to point out the lack of control Jimmy has over his financial difficulties.

In this instance it is Jimmy's narrative that gets into the detail of prices, but it is in fact the narrator who is doing the interpretation here. The narrator identifies these figures as "huge costs to pay" and that this has Jimmy "speed[ing]" back to land "hoping for a high price" displays something about the financial dependency of the trawlermen (L14). Success or failure of the fishing trip boils down to how they fare in the fish market. While the two discourses overlap, in contrast to the Heroic position this is mundane and practical in comparison. The narrator opens and closes this extract of talk by drawing attention to the 'reality' that "before the crew can make a wage" (L1) there are "huge costs to pay" (L14). This sequence organisation functions to give prominence to the notion of debt. The debt that the trawlermen owe and the constant financial struggle that it precipitates is a pattern that runs throughout this discourse.

Ep 1 18:48

- 1 N Six years ago Jo:hn and his ↑two: brothers took on a huge
2 loan to buy <ocean ventu::re for one and a half million pounds>.
3 (0.3) to repay the debt (.) the boat needs to catch valuable haddock
4 and co:d (0.2) and to do tha:t (.) he has to travel to the most
5 distant regions of the North Sea.
((1m11s omitted))
6 J it's not looking very good cos the weather's very bad still very bad
7 but (0.9) we're still to go (.) eh? (0.3) n:eeds must (0.3) the bank
8 manager's waiting on his (.) pound of flesh hehheheheh

Here the narrator again employs the extremisation device as he accounts the "huge loan" that skipper John Buchan and his brothers took out to pay for their fishing boat (L1-2). It is very apparent in the talk that the focus of attention is drawn to repaying the debt. The "need" (L3) to catch fish in order to do this points to the financial dependency being worked up in the talk. In contrast, this is adjacent to the notion that this endeavour takes the trawlermen off to the "most distant regions of the north sea" (L4-5). A formulation that evokes images of the heroic adventure, or conquest as it were, facilitated and made legible through the function of the narrator and the images presented to the viewer.

The trope John uses to describe his situation presents an image that these men appear to be positioning themselves in contrast to: "bank manager's waiting on his pound of flesh" (L.7-8). The bank manager is a category that brings up various sorts of images and ideas of what sort of person skipper John Buchan is alluding to. "Waiting on his pound of flesh" (L8) is about avariciousness, letting other people do the work and drawing off the profit. John ends this particular turn with an idiomatic phrase, "pound of flesh". One of the comments made about such phrases is that while they are a device used to close a topic, they are also very difficult to argue with (Drew & Holt, 1998). They are common sense sayings that everyone knows and understands and they possess an implicit truthfulness about them.

John gets the phrase out there and then by making it laughable at the end (L. 8) makes it a little ambiguous as to whether he believes it or not. On the other hand this reflects back into a stoic acceptance of the position they find themselves. The factual

seriousness of the weighted version of this utterance authenticates this account of the action. They receive this huge loan and are in debt one and a half million pounds, so have got to work even in the most extreme conditions to deal with that. What is worked up in the talk here is the detail of the men taking on a large loan and constantly trying to pay and keep up with that debt as “needs must” (L7). And there are these ‘others’, it implies, who are sitting back and drawing profit, which might otherwise be paid to them.

Ep 2 01:30

- 1 N a:fter four days at sea Amity has caught virtually ↓nothing. (0.3)
2 lo:sing mo:ney and de:sperate for a ca:tch (.) they're forced to fish
3 in rough weather. (0.3) in conditions like these the smallest mistake
4 (.) can result in a serious accident (0.1) but >it's a risk that
5 skipper jimmy buchan< (.) fee:ls he has to take. (1.0)
6 J it's a fu:ll force eight at the moment (.) probably even touching
7 force nine (0.2) and a (.) basically we shouldn't be shooting but
8 this is the pressure that comes onto the skipper, (0.4) I've got to
9 get a pay for my crew and so: (.) it's a gun (.) gun to my head kin'a
10 situation

The idiomatic phrase in line 10, “Got to pay for my crew so it's a gun to my head situation” works in the same way as the previous extract. In this instance there is a stress on the lack of choice these men have in what they do. The turns: “losing money and desperate for a catch” (L2), “forced to fish in rough weather” (L2-3), “a risk skipper Jimmy Buchan feels he has to take” (L5), and of course “a gun to my head situation” all seem to construct a discussion of power relations. There seems to be an implicit class war that the trawlermen are positioned in due to their financial circumstances. While exalted to a heroic position, they are servants to this ‘other’, corporate, white-collar position.

There is a play-off here between the narrator, providing the viewer with a description of ‘what it is like to be a trawlerman’, a ‘voice of truth’ as it were, and the trawlermen themselves. What they have selected out in these short extracts of talk supports the narrator's accounts, while the idiomatic phrase and the laughter imply that they are not bitter or resentful. This communicates a sort of stoic acceptance of the position they find themselves in, which works to authenticate the trawlermen; we see them as good, outstanding people. In a sense it also reproduces class differences and the distinction between different forms of masculinities. The bank manager, sitting back in his office picking up the profits and the stoic trawlermen who venture out into dangerous conditions, not for personal gain, but to repay the debt that they have been forced to take in order to carry on. In terms of these contrasting subject positions, both validate the trawlermen while at the same time they reproduce these conventional masculine discourses. One discourse identifies the danger, fighting the elements and nature, bravery and the fearless hero, and in contrast is the discourse of the put-upon stoic worker.

Conclusion

Analysis of this unique subsection of reality television identified a glamorising of the working lives of the trawlermen, valorising the danger and risk involved, in order to work up recognition of the working-class man. This process is accomplished through

the exploitation of power relations through talk and positioning. A number of research papers have identified many of the same 'themes' within this genre of occupational reality TV, however previous literature has focused almost entirely on the authenticity of these representations. The present study did not enquire as to whether this representation of Trawlermen is correct or not, but rather *how* this particular version of their lives is worked up and constituted *through talk*. The methodology used to analyse the data concerned both the local and global features of talk and while there has been debate over the appropriateness of this approach, this form of critical discourse analysis has proven to be an effective methodological framework for the present study.

It is through the combination of the narrator and edited extracts that the action orientation of the talk was identified in the analysis and the ideological function of the various discourses drawn out. Hegemonic masculinity is produced through various repertoires within the data constituting the dominance of a 'heroic position' that exemplifies this Complicit masculine discourse. The systematic use of rhetoric devices and focused themes exalt the men onscreen within this particular line of masculine representation. At other points within the programme a second, quite different subject position emerged. Here the notion of hegemonic masculinity turns to the subject of power relations. With the omniscient voice of the narrator providing 'the truth of the matter', recognised alongside an implicit class war, this particular discourse communicates somewhat of a stoic acceptance of the broader social position these men find themselves in. They do not risk their lives for personal gain, but to support their family and through financial dependency. Essentially 'alienated' within the socio-economic stratification of an industrial capitalistic society and absent from cultural imagery, these men receive little recognition as they "risk their lives / to put food on our tables". The ideological function of the discourse works to authenticate the trawlermen. Ultimately these men achieve heroic transcendence as *our* "heroes of the high seas". According to Whitehead (2005) the hero position over-arches social divisions, in turn this works to validate and glorify the trawlermen, thus these men who would conventionally reside on the margins of society, subordinate in reference to the affluent, white-collar, socially dominant masculine 'ideal', receive validation, recognition and heroic status in an industrial capitalist society.

The influence of unions within western economies was at its height in the mid-twentieth century. The turn of the '70's saw the diminution of the trade union's strength in the UK. This coincided with the displacement of typical hegemonic masculine ideals based on "hard work, toughness and a carefree homosocial existence" along with the working-class man's sense of masculine identity (p.12; Howson, 2006). Carroll (2008) suggests these 'Men's soaps' "produce a recuperative blue-collar masculinity" and "a world of blue-collar work in which skilled manual labour - always understood to be male - still reigns supreme, untroubled by the defeats suffered by hegemonic masculinity in the post-industrial service economy" (p.263). In fact the success of contemporary media representations of the New man has been linked to changes in social and economic practices, such as the shift from manufacturing and labour jobs (such as commercial fishing) to computer based service industries (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). The growth of these particular 'Men's soaps' may well be a response to this. What is contested here are the social, political and economic privileges that are associated with the symbolic status of hegemonic masculinity. Many scholars argue that Connell's original definition of hegemonic

masculinity is vague and that while hegemonic masculinity is achieved “through occupational achievement in an industrial capitalistic society”, masculinity is also hegemonic “as symbolized by the daring, romantic frontiersman of yesteryear and of the present-day outdoorsman” (p.1-2; Trujillo, 1991).

The findings of the present analysis suggest that the effectiveness of this televisual masculine representation depends upon the exposing of two contrasting subject positions or opposing discourses in the individual men: The Hero and the working-class man. One discourse identifies the danger, fighting the elements and nature, the fearless hero, and in contrast is the discourse of the put-upon stoic worker. As Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985) note, “the political meaning of writing about masculinity turns mainly to its treatment of power” (p.306; cited in Boon, 2005). The prevailing version of masculinity gains its power from the marginalisation and dominance over ‘weaker’ representations (Lockett, 2010). In this case, power relations concern internal hegemonic masculinity and the subordination of the blue-collar working class man by the affluent, white-collar, masculine ‘ideal’. This show exalts the trawlermen to an idealistic hegemonic position through the production and the narrative.

Connell’s (1987) view of this form of gender identification is an anti-essentialist one, however the analysis may appear somewhat biased towards this dominant position that exemplifies the Complicit man. The reason for focusing on this narrow form of masculinity is because it is so strongly pushed in the show. Analysis of the present data was unlike that of conventional gender identity research because the men are not constructing their own identities here, this is done on behalf of them by the narrator. Moreover, the narrator performs a tremendous amount of rhetoric work to push this particular line of heroic masculinity. In a sense what the entire production of the show does is suppress any variability amongst the discourse presented in *Trawlermen*, or allows it all in a very controlled way, a form of controlling information known as Gatekeeping (Donahue, Tichenor & Olien, 1972). Accompanied by dramatic audio-visual intensifiers throughout and an episodic structure that resembles that of myths and epics, the entire production of the series leans towards this heroic representation.

Research within the field of ‘televisual masculinity’ is surprisingly scarce. In view of the present findings, recommendations for further investigation are as follows: A discursive analytical approach should be applied to media presentations (independent or comparative) in which various forms of masculinity or gender more generally are likely to be explored within the talk (sports programmes, reality TV series, documentaries etc.). The focus on the analysis should enquire as to how *narrative derived gender identity* is accomplished through talk; that is, how the production and narrative of these televisual representations systematically construct gender identities on behalf of the characters onscreen and the function of this.

The Hero is found in mythology and entertainment, recognised across cultures and societies, whether it be through Arthurian legend or American films such as *Die Hard* and *Rocky* (Pallot, 1994). It could be argued that, while diverse in presentation and variable according to social positioning, the hero represents a single form of masculinity. The hero’s claim to masculinity is independent of socio-economic status and culture, but linked by a common display of transcendental courage. Through the

systematic portrayal of men who will get the job done, whatever the danger or hardship, the trawlermen of Peterhead have been reinvented by reality TV as the working class heroes of the masses.

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