



HELPING YEAR TEN BOYS TO EMBRACE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON MASCULINITY THROUGH CREATING A FILM

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Introduction

At the 2017 IBSC Conference in Baltimore, two of the plenary speakers, Joe Ehrmann and Andrew Reiner, both talked about masculinity. More specifically, they discussed the need to teach boys a healthy view of masculinity. In combining the 2017/18 IBSC Action Research topic of **Adaptability in a Changing World** and the highly pertinent topic of masculinity the idea for this project was born. Through an exploration of masculinity and the production of a film, would boys be able to become more empathetic, develop the ability to express emotion, gain a new perspective on gender roles or stereotypes, or become more emotionally connected or more vulnerable?

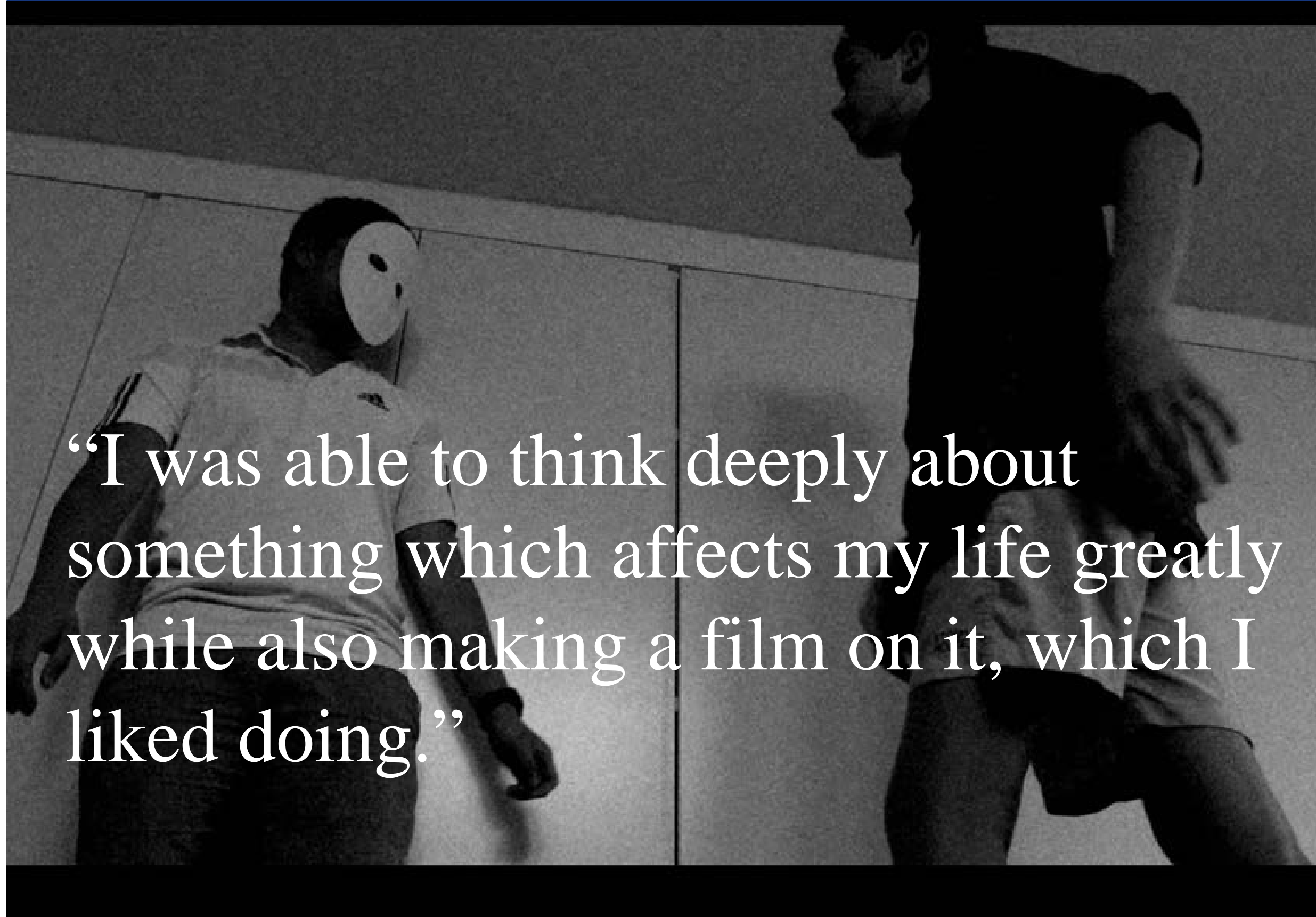
The Research Question

How might the production of a film on masculinity encourage Year 10 boys to embrace different perspectives?

Research Context and Participants

Shore (Sydney Church of England Grammar School) is an independent comprehensive school for boys from Year 3 to Year 12 (approximately 1500 students) with a K – 2 co-educational campus (150 students). The school promotes a Christian understanding of the world, celebrates the pursuit of personal best in a culture of learning and thinking, and challenges all to be responsible citizens with an attitude of service to others.

The participants in this project were Year 10 students in the Media and Production co-curricular activity, who all have an interest in filmmaking. I selected this group as I felt at their age the topic would be highly pertinent to them and that they would possess skills to produce high quality films. The group of 15 boys were split into five small teams of 2-4 to produce their films.



“I was able to think deeply about something which affects my life greatly while also making a film on it, which I liked doing.”

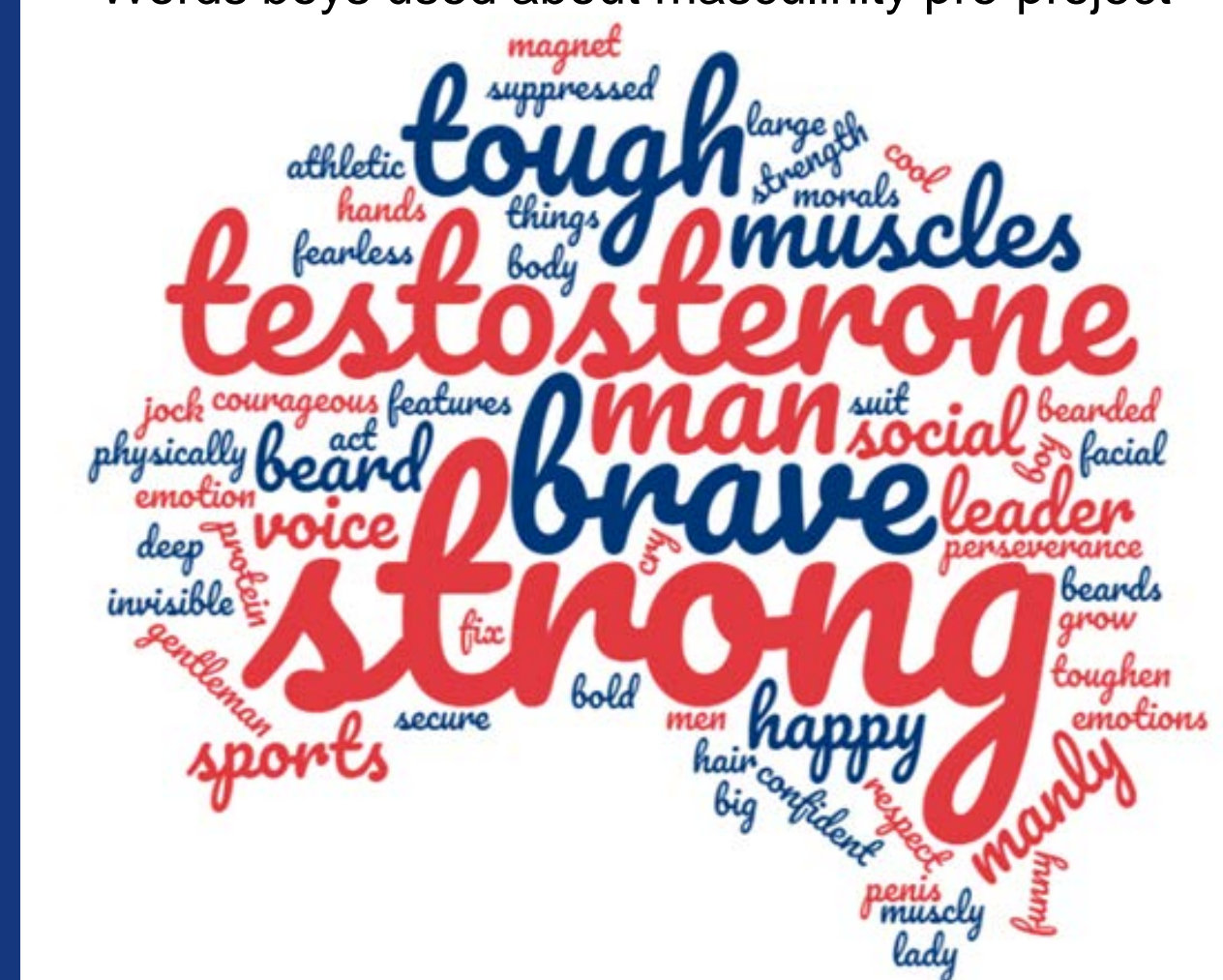
The Research Action

- The project commenced in mid-September. In the first week, the boys completed a pre-project questionnaire with a series of questions related to masculinity. This questionnaire was repeated at the conclusion of the project. In this first week, we also watched a TED Talk by Joe Ehrmann to expose the boys to his ideas related to masculinity.
- In the following weeks, the boys participated in a range of activities that explored masculinity including: researching the factors that influence the construction of masculinity; viewing YouTube clips on masculinity that they found interesting; reading articles related to masculinity; and engaging in whole and small group discussions.
- Mid-way through the project, the boys began the process of making their films. As they developed their films, further exploration of masculinity occurred as they discussed and story-boarded their scripts, and interviewed their peers and members of the public. This process exposed the boys to varied ideas and perspectives of modern masculinity.

Data Analysis

Data were collected during the project in the form of journal records, interviews, pre- and post-project questionnaires, and field notes. The data were then analysed to identify key themes and ideas presented by the boys. I identified any key transformational (adaptive) moments and looked for evidence of the boys adapting and embracing new perspectives.

Words boys used about masculinity pre-project



“I didn't feel my understanding was challenged; rather it became deeper.”

Key Findings

- The boys' interest in the topic of masculinity was piqued
- The boys' perspectives of masculinity changed
- The boys' use of language shifted
- The boys embraced different perspectives

Boy C embracing new perspectives:

Pre-action: “masculinity embodies the perceived optimum male qualities such as toughness, no emotion, chick magnet etc.”

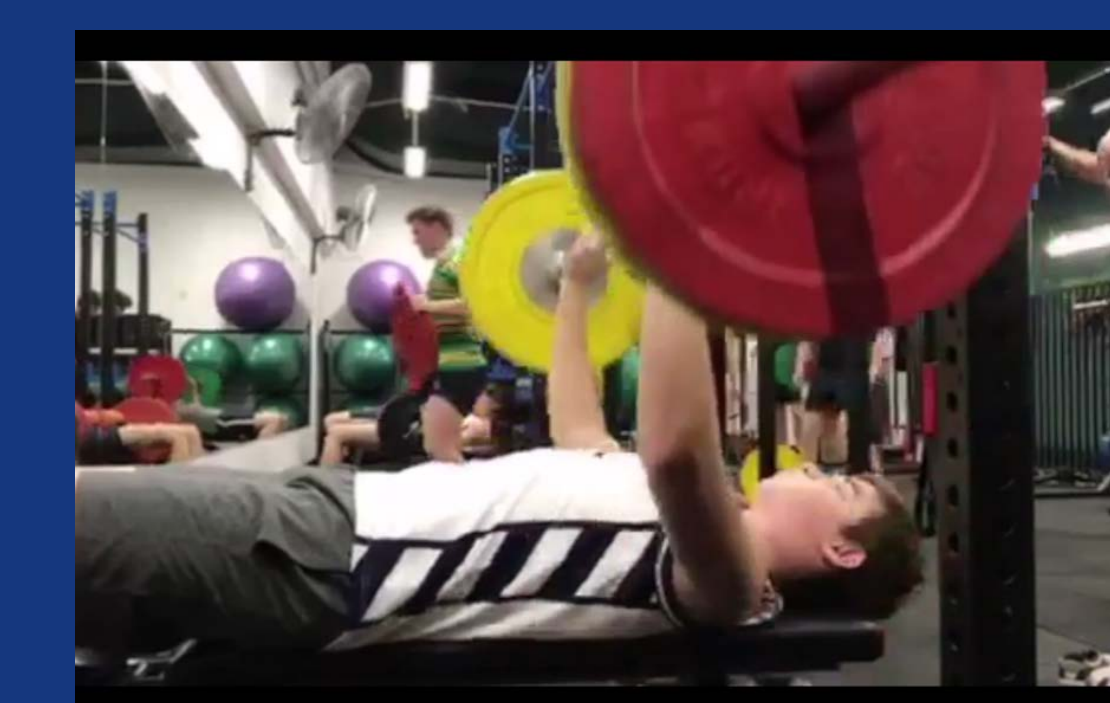
Post-action: “I believe masculinity is a male's ability to show their emotions, not suppress them contrary to popular belief.”

Words boys used about masculinity post-project



Conclusions

- The results of this project suggest that many young men still view masculinity in traditional forms. They are focused around the idea that a masculine man displays overtly masculine traits with a strong appearance that is appealing to others. He is powerful and successful and does not show emotion or weakness.
- By undertaking the project, the boys were able to embrace new ideas and perspectives on masculinity and in doing so adapted their own views and thinking.
- The boys now understand that masculinity encompasses the holistic man who has strong moral character and is able to show emotion and be aware of others. He is cause-oriented and relationship-centred, able to build connections with others through acts of kindness.



“It made me rethink entirely what it means to be a man”



Key Readings

Courtenay, W. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: a theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 50, 1385-1401.

Ehrmann, J. (2017). Healthy Masculinity. In: 2017 IBSC Annual Conference.

Reiner, A. (2016). Teaching Men to Be Emotionally Honest. *Nytimes.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/10/education/edlife/teaching-men-to-be-emotionally-honest.html>

Stringer, E. (2014) *Action Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.