

The Warriors' Cult:
Representations of masculinity on the subreddit /r/TheRedPill

Bachelor's Thesis
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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Internet on yksi aremme merkittävimmistä informaation lähteistä ja kantaa sisällään paljon mielenkiintoista sisältöä. Reddit on moniaiheinen internet- ja keskustelusivusto, jonka yksi kiehtovimmista yhteisöistä (subredditeistä) on /r/TheRedPill. Yhteisö kuvailee itseään seuraavasti: <i>“The Red Pill: Keskustelua seksuaalisesta strategiasta kulttuurissa, jossa on vähenevissä määrin positiivisia identiteettejä miehille”</i>.</p> <p>Vuosien 2017 ja 2018 aikana mediassa on keskusteltu paljon miehistä ja huomattavan usein heitä on kritisoitu esimerkiksi epäsovivasta seksuaalikäyttäytymisestä. Halusin omassa tutkimuksessani sukeltaa sisälle yhteisöön, joka pyrkii voimaannuttamaan miehiä yhteiskunnallisen keskustelun ja mediapyöryksen ajoittain myrskyisässä ilmastossa.</p> <p>Tutkimukseni aiheena oli selvittää millaisia maskuliinisuuden esitystapoja (representaatioita) The Red Pillissä esiintyy. Keräsin tekstipohjaista dataa, ja analysoin sitä kriittisen diskurssinanalyysin metodeja hyödyntäen. Tulkitsin dataa käyttäen Gilletten ja Mooren (1990) esittämää teoriaa, jonka mukaan miehen psyykestä löytyy neljä arkkityyppiä: Kuningas, Soturi, Taikuri ja Rakastaja (King, Warrior, Magician, Lover).</p> <p>Tutkimustulosteni mukaan The Red Pillistä löytyi kaikkia neljää arkkityyppiä vastaavia maskuliinisuuden esitystapoja. Huomattavasti yleisimmin esiintyvä niistä oli Soturi, siksi tutkielman nimeksi tuli <i>The Warriors' Cult</i>. Kuningas ja Taikuri olivat mukana keskivahvalla edustuksella, kun taas Rakastaja oli kaikista harvinaisimmin esiintynyt arkkityyppi. Maskuliinisuutta tuotiin esiin verbaalisesti muun muassa käyttämällä tyyliltään karkeita sanoja, tai ilmaisemalla mielipiteet muista piittaamattomaan sävyyn.</p>	
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Table of contents:

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Background.....	5
2.1 /r/TheRedPill.....	5
2.2 Understanding masculinity.....	6
2.2.1 Defining masculinity.....	6
2.2.2 The four archetypes of the mature masculinity: king, warrior, magician, lover.....	7
2.2.3 Previous masculinity research in online forums.....	13
3. The present study.....	14
3.1 Aim and research questions.....	14
3.2 Data collection.....	15
3.3 Method of analysis: critical discourse analysis.....	16
3.4 Ethical issues.....	17
4. Findings.....	17
4.1 Case 1: Rough and tough language	
4.2 Case 2: Combining calmness and hardness	
4.3 Case 3:	
4.4 Case 4:	
5. Discussion and conclusion.....	25
Bibliography.....	26
Appendices.....	28

1. Introduction

The internet has become a significant part of our lives. We use it to transfer information and as a more recent trend, we socialize via the internet. There is a considerable amount of different social networks and social media, through which people communicate with each other, exchange thoughts and experiences in the form of texts, pictures, videos, and audio recordings. The unique and perhaps the most important characteristic of the internet is the ability to offer us humans a means to connect with each other regardless of geographical distance and time. Online message boards, such as Reddit, are a perfect example of expressing both these characteristics. People can submit information on the website from anywhere in the world as long as there is an internet connection and a sufficient device connected to it. The second important characteristic of the internet is that communication via the internet transcends time, as the posts submitted on the websites will prevail there for a long time for anyone to read.

Social media and its various forms have become an important platform for constructing who we are. Constructing ourselves in these spaces happens through our interactions with others both directly and via submitting publicly visible content. The online space offers us notable amounts of possibilities to both observe content and to take part in producing it, which can both lead us to ask ourselves questions such as "Do I recognize myself from that text?", "How do I want to represent myself?" or "Who am I?". The online space can offer a unique platform for identity construction and representation, because the real or imagined restrictions of the offline life do not necessarily apply (Brickell, 2012).

The aim in this thesis is to find out what kind of masculinities are represented and how they are expressed in the subreddit /r/TheRedPill, which is a part of a larger internet discussion forum, Reddit.com. Reddit is a website where users can share content they like and have discussions with other people. In this study, I observed /r/TheRedPill and took screenshots of discussions that had interesting representations of masculinity. My method for analyzing the data was critical discourse analysis. After analyzing the data, I categorized the findings with an archetypal model of masculinity.

This thesis is structured in the following way. First I introduce Reddit.com and /r/TheRedPill, then I guide the reader through previous masculinity theories and research, after which I explain my theoretical framework of choice. Next, I introduce my research questions, data collecting process, and present the method of analysis. Then I explain my ethical choices and present the findings, and

lastly I conclude my findings and discuss their implications.

2. Background

2.1. /r/TheRedPill

Reddit.com is a popular social news aggregation (=the content is collected from multiple social networks into one unified presentation) and a discussion website equipped with the ability to rate the content shared (Wikipedia 2017). Reddit is the 8th most visited website in the world as of 2017, and around 75% of the visitors are from English-speaking countries (Alexa 2017). It can be said that Reddit as an online community has the majority of its users coming from a western background. On average, a visitor spends just under 16 minutes daily on the website (Alexa 2017).

Reddit is split into subreddits which are forums dedicated for a specific topic, for example /r/leagueoflegends includes content related to the video game League of Legends and /r/bitcoin has content related to the cryptocurrency Bitcoin. As of 24.11.2017 there were 1,185,562 different subreddits (redditmetrics).

One of the most interesting subreddits is /r/TheRedPill, which describes itself in the following way: *“The Red Pill: Discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men”* (reddit.com/TheRedPill 2017). The Red Pill, henceforth TRP, is a community where (mostly) men share their experiences of being a male in the western society. The posts usually have themes of self-improvement and leading a satisfying life, seduction and maintaining relationships, and criticism of women (often disguised in the form of real life narratives that “reveal women's true nature”). Next, I will go a bit more into the nature of the content inside TRP.

TRP likes to categorize men as Alphas and Betas, respective to their behavior in life. Alphas will get on top of things and control their environments, whereas Betas will adapt to situations and follow someone else's lead. Alphas have very good self-respect, whereas Beta's are seen as “nice guys” who are walked over in life. People who post in TRP tend to exaggerate by generalizing and like to use concepts like Alphas and Betas to describe their living experience. (reddit.com/TheRedPill 2017).

One other example of the same phenomenon worth mentioning is categorizing events and people

(including their attitudes to life) to “Red Pill(ers)” and “Blue Pill(ers)”. This (and the name of the whole subreddit too) is a reference to the movie *The Matrix* (1999), where the protagonist Neo is given the choice between two pills; red one that represents “knowledge, freedom and the (sometimes painful) truth of reality” or the blue that represents “falsehood, security and the blissful ignorance of illusion” (Wikipedia 2017). In TRP, any situations that go along the ideological lines of the community can be described as “Red Pill”. In the same way, situations that correspond to the common status quo (often seen as negative towards men) can be described as “Blue Pill”.

This subreddit is interesting in terms of its users representations of masculinity, because the subreddit has qualities that are cult-like; for example its thinking patterns, attitudes, abbreviations, and slang. The originality of the users' viewpoints in understanding what being a male is and how it is acted out provides an interesting avenue for research, and therefore I have decided that it is worthwhile to study TRP academically.

2.2. Understanding masculinity

This chapter introduces some contemporary notions of masculinity and a psychological model of archetypal masculinity developed by Moore and Gillette (1990) that the study draws on. In addition, the chapter discusses previous studies done on representations of masculinity in computer mediated communication (CMC), since the representations in TRP are created via computer-mediated communication.

2.2.1 Defining masculinity

Masculinity can be defined as the experience of identifying with being a male (Kahn, 2009: 2). This experience consists of complex behavioral, cognitive, emotional, expressive, psychological and sociocultural aspects that might be difficult to distinguish from each other (Kahn, 2009: 2). Yet, there are certain stereotypes to representations of masculinity. Schroeder and Zwick (2004) have studied representations of masculinity in advertising and propose that in those contexts men embody the active sex, “the business-like, self-assured decision maker” whereas women take on the role of the passive object, “the observed sexual/sensual body, eroticized and inactive”. Men are supposed to be active instead of passive if they wish to be in line with the dominant idea of masculinity-as-activity (Dyer, 1982 as cited in Schroeder and Zwick, 2004).

In trying to understand a complex real-world phenomenon such as masculinity, we often resort to

creating organized, logical, and structured models (Kahn, 2009: 5). These models have an important function to guide us through the multi-layered sphere of masculinity and possibly give some answers related to the questions of the origins of masculinity. I will use a 4-way psychological model of *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover* introduced by Moore and Gillette (1990) to understand masculinity. But first, let us become a bit more familiar with the background of the model.

The world famous psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung and his successors have proposed that on the level of deep unconscious, the psyche is based in "the collective unconscious" (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 9). The collective unconscious is made up of "instinctual patterns and energy configurations probably inherited genetically throughout generations of our species" (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 9). Moore and Gillette (1990) claim that these patterns are called archetypes and function as the foundation of our behaviors: thinking, feeling and our characteristic human reactions. They propose that archetypes as instinctual patterns are well explained with an analogy of a baby duck's behavior. The baby duck, in its search of a caregiver, attaches itself to whoever or whatever is walking by at the time. The newly hatched duckling does not have to learn from anybody, or anything, what a caregiver is. It is imprinted in its very being to act this way. It should be noted however, that this archetype is imprinted in the duckling and will guide its behavior, regardless of the outer world's capacity to actually provide a caregiver (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 10).

Moore and Gillette (1990: 10) propose that we as human beings are wired in a similar way to have an archetype for caregivers, both mother and father, as well as other human relationships and "all forms of the human experience of the world". They argue that when archetypal patterns are expressed in a skewed way, the manifestation can be "crippling psychological problems" in our lives (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 10). The imbalanced manifestation is called shadow. On the other hand, when the archetypes are accessed in a suitable, healthy way, this can lead to the subject's own benefit and the benefit of their peers. Moore and Gillette (1990) introduce four archetypes of the mature masculine: King, Warrior, Magician and Lover.

2.2.2 The four archetypes of the mature masculinity: King, Warrior, Magician, Lover

KING

The King is the most primal and the most important of the masculine energies. In its fullness, the King includes the best parts of the rest of the archetypes, and therefore is the most central one (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 49). The King energy at its best provides centeredness, structure, and calmness to the man's personality (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 54). According to Freud the King is the “primal father of the primal horde” (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 49). The King archetype is in many ways the father energy (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 49). Much like the father in a family, the King energy has a stabilizing effect on chaotic emotions and behavior that has spun out of control (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 62).

The King has two functions: ordering and the providing of fertility and blessing (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 52). The King provides fertility through his libido and sexual acts, but also his creative ordering of the world, which enables the land and its people to thrive (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 59). In other words, the King directs others towards a better life via creating structure and order. The providing of blessing is a crucial part of the King's function. In practical terms the blessing means that men who are honorable in their deeds, competent, and loyal, are subject to the King's blessings (e.g. to be seen, affirmed, and recognized by the King, and rewarded concretely in the form of money) (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 61).

The King in his mortal form has a duty: to cast the right order of the universe in societal form (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 56). He does so by codifying laws, in other words; receiving the laws from the King energy and passing them on to the ruled people (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 54). These laws are keys for peace, calm, and order in our lives. In addition to casting the laws upon the society, the King himself should fully embody the ordered structure in his own personal life, only then will the kingdom flourish (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 56). In other words, the King should practice what he preaches.

The King, when balanced, is a courageous and thoughtful leader, but oppressive and punishing when guided by the shadow (Kahn, 2009: 60). Overactive King archetype is the Tyrant, who abuses others and is merciless when pursuing his personal goals. The Tyrant hates all new life and beauty as they remind him of his own non-secure position of power. A good example of this is the story in the Bible, where Herodes, the Shadow King, orders the killing of all baby boys because he fears for his throne (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 63). A father possessed by the Tyrant might depreciate his son's talents, strength and youthfulness because he cannot face the diminishing of his own qualities (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 65).

The man possessed by the underactive King is the Weakling. He lacks calmness and centeredness and is not secure in himself, leading him to seek the approval of others. A Weakling can be paranoid, cultivating an attitude of “get them before they get you”, launching preemptive strikes and inviting retaliation (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 68). The Weakling lacks sufficient initiative, and sees himself as incapable and impotent (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 71). The Weakling often tries to replace his own lack of King energy by seeking and seeing it in others to an unhealthy degree, becoming a blind servant to someone in who he sees signs of King energy. This is dangerous, if the focus of Kingly admiration and following is someone with bad morals. A disastrous example of this is a national leader that steers the people towards a catastrophe (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 72).

WARRIOR

The most important principle of the Warrior energy is aggressiveness as a way of life. As Moore and Gillette (1990: 79) say: “Aggressiveness is a stance towards life that rouses, energizes, and motivates. It pushes us to take the offensive and to move out of a defensive or “holding” position about life's tasks and problems”. Therefore the Warrior's attitude towards life is that of action instead of reaction. It is about taking matters into one's own hands and controlling one's own destiny with fierce attitude and strategic precision.

The Warrior knows what he wants and what is the best way to get it; the Warrior is a master of tactics and strategy. The Warrior knows the limits of his own skills and strength and therefore with a clear mind can adopt the best strategy towards the situation at hand; if it looks like the opponent/problem/task is too powerful to be confronted directly, the Warrior will adopt an unconventional strategy, perhaps a well-timed surprise attack that grants the warrior momentarily edge which might lead to victory (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 80).

Another principle of the Warrior energy is the realization that life is short and fragile. The inner understanding of this grants the Warrior with “an outpouring of life-force” and enables the Warrior to take decisive action quickly (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 82). Swiftly of decision is important as overthinking a situation can lead to doubt, doubt can lead to hesitation, and hesitation can lead to inaction (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 83). Inaction in a battle can lead to defeat - therefore it is to be avoided.

As said before, the Warrior energy is concerned with tactics, not merely aggressive straightforwardness. The Warrior is also interested in skill, power, and mastery, both psychological and physical. He will not dramatize his actions for admiration, nor will he act to prove himself his strength. The Warrior does not spend any more energy than he really must. This is a form of mastery; of honed skill. The master Warrior has a courageous, unconquerable spirit, and on the other hand he has self-discipline and takes responsibility for his actions (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 83).

Emotionally, the Warrior is detached. He has a transpersonal commitment to something larger than an individual, for example an ideology, a nation, a task, or a god. This transpersonal commitment makes the Warrior's personal relationships less central to him (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 84). This is not always great in one-on-one relationships, because the Warrior energy is emotionally distant; he does not make decisions based on emotional relatedness but on his own ideal (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 87). A person accessing the Warrior should be aware of his attitude towards women, since he might regard them primarily as a source of fun (=sex), not people to relate to or be intimate with. A Warrior's woman might feel rejected repeatedly, constantly competing with the man's "true love", the transpersonal commitment, his mission, his work (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 88).

The overactive Warrior is a sadist who takes pleasure in cruelty and destruction (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 90). The sadist Warrior often has an aversion to anything feminine-like or soft (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 92). Workaholics are often people whose Warrior energy is overactive, as they see their mission more important than anything else, including human relations or personal well-being (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 92-93).

The underactive Warrior is a masochist, "a pushover", or a man who feels powerless and is unable to defend himself psychologically. The underactive Warrior does not set proper boundaries for the treatment of himself and therefore will become abused by others. This can eventually lead to an unexpected verbal or physical violence (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 94).

MAGICIAN

The Magician energy is concerned with knowledge and technology (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 97). All knowledge which requires special training to fathom belongs to the Magician archetype (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 98). Regardless of culture and age, the expression of the Magician energy has always existed within the masculine life. Examples of wielders of this energy are shamans,

medicine men, wizards, inventors, scientists, doctors, lawyers, and technicians (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 98). All these professions require extensive training and the gathering of knowledge and wisdom to evolve from the apprentice level to master. Gillette and Moore (1990: 98) extend on this:

Whether you are an apprentice training to become a master electrician and unraveling the mysteries of high voltage; or a medical student, grinding away night and day, studying the secrets of the human body and using the available technologies to help your patients; or a would-be stockbroker or a student of high finance; or a trainee in one of the psychoanalytic schools, you are in exactly the same position as the apprentice shaman or witch doctor in tribal societies. You are spending large amounts of time, energy, and money in order to be initiated into rarefied realms of secret power.

This secret knowledge is a source of great power. It is a different kind of power than the fierce force of the Warrior archetype, but this power also is within the Warrior in the form of his clarity of thinking (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 107). The Magician energy is said to represent a man's "bullshit detector", helping him to discern true information from the false (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 100).

The Magician energy is the archetype of awareness, insight, and reflection. It is also the archetype that governs anything "not immediately apparent or commonsensical" (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 106). It is the energy of introversion, not in the sense of shyness, but in "the capacity to detach from the inner and outer storms and to connect with deep inner truths and resources" (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 108).

When the Magician energy is unbalanced within a man, he will take advantage of others with the help of the secret knowledge he has acquired, instead of using the wisdom to aid others. A man under the influence of Shadow Magician will direct people in a way where the malevolence is hidden from plain sight, he is in other words, a manipulator (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 111).

Whenever a man is withholding information that could help others, or using his knowledge as a weapon to acquire power, status, or wealth at the expense of others, he is accessing the Magician in an unbalanced way (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 114-115).

LOVER

The Lover archetype is at first glance an opposite of the other three. The Lover is the part of the male psyche that cares for others and wants connectedness (Kahn, 2009: 62). The Lover keeps the

other masculine energies from becoming inhumane or too cunning. According to Moore and Gillette (1990: 120), Lover is the “primal energy pattern of what we could call vividness, aliveness, and passion”. Our desires for food, sex, comfort, and a sense of meaning are the territory of Lover; the Lover energy drives us to satisfy these desires (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 120).

The Lover is very sensual, interested in feeling all the sensual pleasures the world has to offer, as well as longing for connection with fellow humans and the world as a whole. The Lover is regarded as the source of spirituality (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 124).

The Lover is sensitive, which allows him to feel close to the unconscious – this leads to a passionate connection to himself (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 122). Artists are a perfect example of people accessing the Lover; they are sensitive and sensual, and their personal lives are stereotypically stormy and chaotic with relationship drama, general ups and downs in life, and substance abuse. The Lover lives “very close to the fiery power of the creative unconscious” (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 129). Any artistic or creative activity is accessing the energies of the Lover to create the initial sparks that fire up the imagination (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 130).

The sensitivity of the Lover grants an ability to read people's emotions and hidden motives (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 125). Intuitive “hunches” we might have on people or situations are within the area of Lover (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 129).

The most obvious manifestation of the Lover energy is seen, of course, in our love lives. When we are in love, the whole world seems more alive and seems somehow different to us, everything feels more meaningful, for better and for worse. This is because of the Lover energy (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 130).

The unbalanced (overactive) Lover is an addict of sensual pleasures, or a man too emotionally sensitive. Usually the addict sacrifices long-term well-being for the momentary pleasure. He might not be able to step back and detach from situations (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 133) and judge his actions in a sensible way.

The overly active Lover might also manifest in certain restlessness, where a man keeps on chasing the next adventure or the next sexual conquest, unable to settle down. He keeps chasing the next high of novelty, without even knowing what it is that he is missing and trying to find. He is a man

whose masculine structures have not yet solidified (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 135). What the unbalanced Lover needs is boundaries, detachment to life's situations, and encouraging discipline (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 138).

The underactive Lover archetype, “the Impotent Lover”, makes our experience of life dull and emotionally non-satisfying. The feeling of monotony in life and depression are the symptoms of a suboptimally working Lover (Moore and Gillette, 1990: 138).

2.2.3 Previous masculinity research in online forums

Kendall (2000) has studied the representations of hegemonic masculinity in an online text-only forum. Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity that is culturally exalted (Connell, 1995: 77). At the time of writing this thesis (late 2017 – early 2018), it can be said that hegemonic masculinity includes the practice and ideology of men being in a dominant position and women being in a subordinate position. Kendall (2000) found that in the forum, it was a common practice to joke or talk about women in a sexually objectifying way. This was seen as a part of identity construction and a performance of masculinity. Another way of performing masculinity found in Kendall's (2000) study was the distancing from femininity and women in general.

Online communication lacks visual and auditory cues apparent in face-to-face interaction, therefore the participants must compensate in a textual form, possibly leading to exaggeration in expressing their (masculine) identities. To add nuance and depth to the interaction, online communities might develop subcultures that have repeated patterns of speech. In another study, Kendall (2002: 86) showed that the men on the forum refer to women of sexual attractiveness as “babes” with different descriptions, such as “the Yale babe”, “the swim babe” and so on. This is a clear case of the development of a repeated, recognizable pattern of speech. Kendall (2002: 84) argues that the use of monikers in describing women allows the men to discuss and dream of “babes” without the potential loss of masculinity in the case of not having any sexual success with them.

Kendall's research (2000, 2002) and mine seem to differ by some degree even though the subject is very similar. First of all, Kendall took part in the community of her studies; she was an active participant in the forum she was researching. Her approach had ethnographic qualities in addition to just analyzing text. Because she was a part of the community that was the object of the research, her findings are to be interpreted with that in mind. My study has only minimal ethnography-like qualities; only the observation phase of the subreddit could be said to have those qualities, as that

was when I spent most time in the forums. While observing, I never took part in the conversations.

Secondly, the masculine representations Kendall (2000, 2002) witnessed were quite often based on an opposition dynamic with women. While taking a stance to women and their qualities is also used to construct masculine identities in TRP, I wanted to focus more on representations that stand on their own, representations that do not rely mainly on differentiation from women.

3. The present study

This chapter will explain the research aim and research questions, the process of data collection, the method of analysis, and the ethical issues connected to the research.

3.1. Aim and research questions

This study investigates the representations of masculinity in TRP, which is an interesting forum to study, since it is mostly very unapologetic in its content and attitude. Because feminism has been trending so much in the last years, it is refreshing to see a counterhegemonic forum, especially since masculinity has earned such a bad name lately, as many male celebrities have been accused of sexual harassment in the second half of 2017. There was also the “#metoo”-campaign (begun in October 2017) on social media that began to highlight the widespreadness of sexual harassing towards women. All these phenomena have gained large public audience and have possibly had a devaluing effect on masculinity and the male gender in general. Therefore, there seems to be a need to delve deeper into the representations of masculinity. By doing so, this study might either reveal some of the reasons behind the devaluing of masculinity or highlight the unjustness of the situation.

The research questions are:

- 1) What kind of representations of masculinity are found in /r/TheRedPill and in what ways are they constructed?
- 2) Do the representations have resemblance to Moore's and Gillette's 4-way psychological model of archetypal masculinities?

3.2. Data collection

The data for the study comes from the subreddit /r/TheRedPill. The data consists of examples of language use where representations of masculinity are expressed inside the forum. I decided to split

my collecting and handling process of the data into smaller parts to make it easier to do and explain. The order and the structure of the actions were the following:

1. Observation
2. Data collection
3. Data selection
4. Analysis of the data thematically with the concepts of King, Warrior, Magician, and Lover

First, I observed TRP intensely and thoroughly over a period of a couple months. I wanted to familiarize myself with the usual content, attitudes, and communication styles occurring inside the forum. Becoming familiar with the culture inside the forum via personal observation was a necessary starting point for this study, since I needed to gain a large amount of knowledge and experience about the community to be able to analyze the content in a legitimate way. The observation period proved very fruitful, since I was able to grasp the most commonly prevalent attitudes and also the slang terms and concepts used inside the forum. Without the observation process, I would not have had such a wide mental context through which to look at the discussions in the subreddit.

The next step involved the actual collection of the data. The main method of data collection was screenshotting. I took screenshots of conversations that seemed interesting and relevant in their content in regards for this study. I saved the screenshots in my personal computer and created a separate folder for the material where it would stay safe. The screenshots were taken within the period of November 2017 to January 2018, but some of the data excerpts were from forum discussions older than November 2017. In total the data consisted of 31 screenshots which in total had 112 comments on them.

After collecting the data, I began the process of critically selecting the data I would include in my thesis. I focused on conversation excerpts that seemed to provide content that I regarded the most relevant for my research questions. I also took advantage of Reddit's built-in upvote system, which lets the users decide the order of the comments inside a single post. I generally paid more attention to the comments near the top of the original post, since they are upvoted the highest number of times. I deemed this to be a plausible way of estimating the popularity of certain attitudes, concepts, and opinions inside the community. Still, I did not merely adhere to the most popular comments, because some very interesting data was also found with less upvotes.

After selecting the data I analyzed it thematically with the help of four archetypes of the mature masculine by Moore and Gillette (1990): King, Warrior, Magician, Lover. I relied on my own estimation and judgement to decide which sample of data belonged to which category, while taking into consideration the general themes in the different archetypes and their correspondence to the data.

3.3. Method of analysis: critical discourse analysis

The most suitable method of analysis for this study is Critical Discourse Analysis (=CDA).

Discourse, according to Blommaert (2005: 3), consists of all forms of meaningful semiotic (=use of symbols) human activity – all this is in connection with social, cultural, and historical ways of use (=in context). So, discourse can be shortly defined as use of symbols in context. Discourses are an instrument of power, but the way this power works is often hard to understand. The role of CDA is to make this power more visible and transparent (Blommaert, 2005: 25). Wodak's (1995: 204) view is of similar nature, proposing that the purpose of CDA is to analyze "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language".

There are many different methodologies of CDA, but Fairclough's (1992) theory is the most suitable, since it provides a practical tool for analysis. This theoretical framework consists of three dimensions (Blommaert, 2005: 29):

1. The first dimension is discourse-as-text, focusing on the systematic analysis of the linguistic features of the discourse (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, text structure).
2. The second dimension is discourse-as-discursive-practice. Now the focus is on the speech acts, coherence, and intertextuality. These three aspects "link the text to its wider social context".
3. The third dimension is discourse-as-social-practice. The scope is now on the "ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is seen to operate".

On top of these three dimensions Fairclough (1989: 26) adds a threefold sequence of actions that I have used in analyzing the data. The first involves description of data by explaining and highlighting its special and ordinary features. The second requires interpretation of data by making

sense of what is happening, why and for what reasons. The last step is the explanation phase, where I have tried to categorize the data into the four archetypes.

3.4. Ethical issues

Ethical issues are not to be dismissed when handling individual humans' submitted material collected from the internet. I had two main ethical problems regarding this thesis: whether or not I could publish this thesis with the screenshots of the full posts, and if I could, should I hide the posters usernames to increase privacy.

Concerning the privacy issue, I contacted the moderators of TRP on 15.5.2018 via Reddit.com's message function. I told them about this study and made them a proposal. I asked if I could publish the study with the screenshots, and would it be acceptable if I replaced the original poster's names with pseudonyms. They replied back to me and gave their blessing to both of the actions. Therefore I have named the original posters with pseudonyms ("Poster A, Poster B, Poster C...") in order of appearance, and the screenshots for the full length posts will be published.

4. Findings

Out of all the data collected, 7 excerpts have made it into the thesis. They are arranged in 4 cases where each case includes similar methods and styles of expressing masculinity. The examples will be gone through following a pattern. First, the archetypes found in the example are revealed as a brief introduction. Then the example is described, analyzed, and interpreted while focusing on the archetypal representations of masculinity. The screenshots of all the examples are included as appendix.

4.1 Case 1: Rough and tough language

EXAMPLE 1

In this example the representations of masculinity are very **Warrior**-based with a touch of **Lover**. The archetypes are at times expressed in their unbalanced Shadow forms as well.

Poster A is encouraging the readers to use whatever means necessary to reach personal happiness. He thinks that if being "cold, calculating, manipulative, psychopathic who get what he wants" is successful as a strategy of living, then it is alright. This is a clear case of underactive **Lover**, as well

as overactive **Warrior** since Poster A lacks empathy and connection to others, as well being consciously cruel to achieve his aims.

Poster A seems to enjoy creating a rough and tough masculine image of himself. He uses quite an aggressive tone and vocabulary to achieve this. For example, he uses quite blunt and perhaps unpleasant adjectives like “manipulative”, “calculating”, and “psychopathic”.

Even when Poster A is expressing consideration for others, his word choices are aggressive. He thinks that one can be ethically satisfied with his life, “without stepping on heads left and right”, but says that this is a more difficult approach. In this sentence, Poster A is accessing the **Lover** in a more balanced way, because he expresses concern for others and ethics, but the **Warrior** mentality of forcefulness still prevails in his talk of “stepping on heads”.

Poster A thinks that masculinity is about being honest with yourself to find out your mission and then fulfilling that mission in a way that is effective, but does not leave one with a feeling of guilt. **Warrior** energy is strong here, because the **Warrior** is concerned with a commitment to a (transpersonal) mission. Afterwards, Poster A argues that masculinity is amoral, since one person might feel guilty for doing something whereas another would not.

Lastly, Poster A is trying to sum up his ideology. He gives two examples:

- 1) An example of someone reaching his goals in a way that leaves them feeling “dirty and unethical”. Therefore true happiness is not there and the whole effort for reaching the goal was a waste of time.
- 2) An example of someone reaching his goals but feeling that they have turned into “über passive, ass-kissing push over in the process” and now feeling “like a total pussy”. Poster A again thinks that the person would not be truly happy - therefore the whole effort was a waste of time.

Again, Poster A uses quite rough language to express himself, using a blasphemous moniker to describe a non-masculine man: “über passive, ass-kissing push over” who now feels “like a total pussy”. He seems to be fond of representing himself in a coarse manner.

There is an answer to Poster A's comment by Poster B. Poster B agrees with Poster A that there

should be no judgement on how people get what they want and reach satisfaction. Poster B's language is also somewhat coarse; he says that most people are not by default “selfish assholes”, but “on here” (in TRP) there is a lot of bitterness because “being 'nice' got them fucked over”. Poster B ends his comment by claiming that niceness equals weakness and kindness does not. For him there is a nuance difference between the words. Poster B's explanation of being too nice leading to trouble is a case of underactive **Warrior**, but he seems to root for a balanced **Warrior**, encouraging people to be kind instead of nice, since to him niceness is weakness in disguise.

EXAMPLE 2

In this example, the representations of masculinity are mostly **Warrior**-based but there is also description of the **King** archetype, more accurately an underactive one.

Here, Poster C's comment divides the expression of masculinity into two: BP (Blue Pill) and RP (Red Pill) masculinity. Poster C thinks that BP masculinity is about “being good and noble, strength, honor, courage, and all that dumb shit”, whereas RP masculinity is about “unapologetically taking what one wants from life with any means necessary”.

Thus, Poster C creates quite a tough image of himself with his word choices. He uses extreme expressions with high personal integrity; he appears to believe very strongly in what he is saying. For example he calls bad qualities “dumb shit” as well as uses language that implies merciless self-righteousness: “unapologetically” and “with any means necessary”.

Poster C then goes on to hail a previous commenter who had thought of pirates as “alpha” because they take what they want and do what they want and have lots of money – he thinks this is very masculine, even if the pirates “arent good”. Here the explanation of BP masculinity seems to have a correspondence with **King** because of the description of traits such as nobleness and strength, but perhaps an underactive one, since it is being labeled in a light of naivety; “...and all that dumb shit”. The description of RP masculinity on the other hand is very **Warrior**-like but perhaps in its overactive form, because of the disregard for morality when pursuing things in life.

4.2 Case 2: Combining calmness and hardness

EXAMPLE 3

In this example, the representations of masculinity are very **Warrior**-like. Poster E is speaking for stoicism philosophy. He is basically instructing other men to reap benefits with methods he has found useful. He gives practical life advice in three sections.

First, Poster E introduces us to an unsourced wisdom by Marcus Aurelius. It is a technique called “A view from above”. He then explains that we should envision ourselves from third person view. Then we are to zoom out while keeping ourselves in the centre and continue to zoom out “until you can picture a view of Earth from the stars”. The point of this exercise is to gain a perspective to the insignificance of our problems and with the help of that realization “overcome emotional hurdles”. This is a representation of **Warrior**, since looking at ourselves from afar as a small piece of something larger is comparable to having a transpersonal mission/commitment, which is the territory of **Warrior**. Also the fact that this “zooming out” is a strategy to help people overcome their “emotional hurdles” reinforces the **Warrior** interpretation, since the **Warrior** is emotionally detached.

The second advice from Poster E suggests us to imagine ourselves in bad situations, for example be homeless or to have a physical disability. With this method, Poster E believes that we can become more grateful for what we have.

In his third advice, Poster E encourages us to put ourselves into uncomfortable situations by choice. For example, he suggests us to take cold showers, do NoFap (not masturbate), or exercise in the morning. These are all ways to harden us up and to reduce our neediness of comfort. Poster E claims that a certain time in our lives, “shit will hit the fan” and in that situation we want to have mental and physical strength to deal with it. Voluntary discomfort for the benefit of the mission (here, a better life) is very **Warrior**-like thinking.

Poster E likes to represent his masculinity in his disciplined, resilient, “tough-nut-to-crack” -type of attitude. The language he is using is not flashy nor coarse. His language is on point, simple, and organized. The communication style resembles in some sense the nature of the mental fortitude he is arguing for when he speaks for stoicism.

EXAMPLE 4

In this example, the representations of masculinity are all **Warrior**-like. This example is in the

comment section of the post in EXAMPLE 3.

A sceptic appears in the comments. Poster F is wondering if he is actually being “trolled into a miserable life” and wants to know about another commenter's experience of stoicism-like behavior on his character. Poster G answers that the techniques have made him more grateful and more likely to take risks for great opportunities that include discomfort. Then he explains how he is soon going to live and work in a foreign country and that he took the opportunity because “he could”, not because he thought it would be comfortable. Poster G likes to represent himself as someone who bravely and voluntarily accepts discomfort: “I took this opportunity because I can. Not because I know it'll be comfortable”. Poster G encourages risk-taking despite the possible struggle that comes along with it. **Warrior** is very strongly represented here, since the **Warrior** knows the shortness and fragility of life and therefore has the ability to jump into situations with whole-heartedness and decisiveness.

4.3 Case 3: Using knowledge as a weapon

EXAMPLE 5

In this example, three of the four archetypes are represented in approximately equal measure; **King**, **Warrior**, and **Magician**.

Here, Poster H is arguing for his philosophy. He thinks that reality is “soft and yielding” and will adjust itself to a confident man with willpower. He believes that life is full of self-fulfilling prophecies, that is, with a belief that a certain thing will happen, it truly will happen.

Poster H is constructing a representation of masculinity where the ideal qualities are strength and dominance. He thinks the most attractive thing a man can do is to make reality submit to his mission. He argues that masculine traits are strength and dominance whereas feminine traits are submissiveness and softness; therefore it is the function of the man to strongly dominate the soft world into submission, that is, his will. When talking of the masculine, Poster H uses words like “govern”, and when talking about feminine, he uses words like “surrender”. This shows how represents his masculinity, by expressing dominance with the basis of his sex. Yearning for dominance can be seen as an expression of **King** energy, which can turn unbalanced if the person feels like he is the center of the universe and that others exist in the world merely to serve him (Gillette and Moore, 1990: 67). In addition to **King**, this is an example of **Warrior** as well, because

strength and willpower are two of its important qualities.

Poster H says that the world, just like the women, will “shit test” you. In TRP, “shit tests” are usually understood as the tests of character that women will play upon men to see what they are made of. Poster H encourages us to view the world as a test:

“When you fail, reality is testing to see if you deserve to taste the sweet honey of success. When you come up against an obstacle, reality is testing to see what you are made of. Are you strong or weak? Submissive or dominant?”

He continues:

“She will know whether you are strong or weak by how you respond to her obstacles. If her obstacle makes you worried and cautious, she won't submit. If you ignore her obstacle and continue your quest as confidently as before, she will submit”

The above quotes by Poster H are expressions of the **Magician** energy, as he claims to know the working mechanisms of the reality. This kind of knowledge, hidden from plain sight, is the territory of the **Magician**. There are also themes of **Warrior**, as he argues that we should go on with our life confidently and ignoring all obstacles. Also, the (possibly unbalanced) **King**, who yearns for dominance is still prevalent.

Poster H says that the goal of a man is to make reality submit to his mission. In layman's terms, he is basically saying that men should strive to be successful in the world. He says that if a man does not “have the balls to contradict reality”, reality will rip him in half. In order for a man to succeed in materializing his mission, Poster H says that he should be “outrageously confident”. Poster H argues for a man to never give up believing in his mission: “Next time reality contradicts your mission, tell her she is wrong and keep marching”. Poster H represents the ideal masculinity in a way that includes qualities of self-confidence and resilience in front of obstacles. The **Warrior** archetype is strongly represented here, as Poster H talks about “having balls”, “striving to be successful”, and “never giving up believing in one's mission”. Courage and aggression-fueled motivation are traits of the **Warrior**, and so is the unconquerable spirit that never gives up.

Poster H thinks that the actual women desire a man who can make the world bend to his will: “if you have the mastery to bend reality over and ravish her, the ladies will come running”. This is an expression of **Warrior**, as women often admire the Warrior's “proficiency and dedication” and want

to have affairs with him (Gillette and Moore, 1990: 88). The use of the words here is also interesting, as Poster H tells us to “bend reality over” and “ravish her”. The word choices seem like a metaphor for having aggressive sex and dominating the woman.

Lastly Poster H tells that reality actually wants to submit to us, that it or “she”, pretends to be tough and masculine, but that is just a pretense. In truth, the reality hates having to be in control and that reality likes nothing better than a strong man taking the control out of “her” hands. His final words of wisdom for us are: “So give her what she wants. Assert yourself. Take the lead”. Poster H's representation of ideal masculinity includes traits of dominance, resilience, strength, courage, and leadership ability.

EXAMPLE 6

This example is from the comment section of the post in EXAMPLE 5. It includes a clear representation of the **Magician** archetype, as the cornerstone of **Magician** is knowledge that requires initiation; knowledge that is only acquired by concentrating a lot of time, energy, and resources to earn it.

There is a conversation how a highly upvoted post is “torn to shreds in the comments”. Poster I thinks that giving everyone a voice (chance to upvote and comment) comes with a problem; that in a sense, opinions are worth less than knowledge. He thinks that everyone has an opinion and that opinions are easy to acquire from outside sources. It could be said that he is arguing that opinions are cheap.

On the other hand, Poster I says the following about knowledge: “Knowledge takes work and time. It's an internal process. Not everyone has knowledge”. He thinks that truly relevant knowledge is only acquired by having to spend a lot of resources to gather it. It appears that Poster I wants to present his masculinity in a way that implies that he is an beholder of important, deeper-than-surface knowledge. Another indicator of Poster I's role as a beholder of knowledge is his casual use of concepts of “Dunning-Kreuger effect” and “Heinleins razor”. The reader is assumed to know what the concepts include, while Poster I himself not explaining them at all implies that he knows them thoroughly, or at least wants the reader to think so.

4.4 Case 4: A textbook example of a warrior

EXAMPLE 7

This example has almost perfectly fitting connections to the **Warrior** and therefore it deserves to be analyzed in the thesis, even though there have been many occurrences of Warrior already.

Here, Poster J says that Julius Caesar gained his success and fame through his boldness to alter his reality and that is why people still remember his story. Poster J expresses warrior mentality with his language, when he talks about Caesar coming from nothing, but through his boldness, managing to leave his mark in the history. Poster K does not agree, he thinks that Caesar became famous because he “knew his stuff and did better than his opponents”, not because he was bold. Poster K also makes a bit of fun of Poster J in his word choices: “Your operating by feelz”. He is implying that navigating with feelings is somehow a bad thing to do. Perhaps he thinks that a true warrior operates with something completely different from vague “feelz”.

Poster J responds that a major portion of Caesar's success was his boldness and doing things nobody else did and breaking the rules. Poster J emphasizes the boldness theme with rough language in saying “doing shit nobody else did”. Poster K responds that he does not, nor should others, buy into the “he who dares wins” -belief in military context. He argues that a majority of battles are won with planning, strategy, and skill, not courage and bravery.

In this example, the resemblances to **Warrior** are nearly perfect. Poster J is arguing that Julius Caesar gained his fame and success by being bold, doing things others did not, and breaking the rules. Being bold is **Warrior** at its finest and so are doing things others do not (unconventional strategy), but breaking the rules is leaning towards an unbalanced expression, as **Warrior** takes responsibility of his actions. It could be argued however, that breaking rules may be justified if the codifier of the rules is corrupt, for example a man possessed by the overactive **King**, who has become tyrannical.

Poster K’s opinion is slightly different: that Caesar's success was because of his expertise and skill and that those qualities led Caesar to victory over his opponents. Poster K believes that most battles are won with strategy rather than courage. Strategy and skill are very much at the core of the **Warrior**, but so are courage and bravery. It seems like Poster J and Poster K have their personal preferences for the best ways of the **Warrior**, but both represent the ideal masculinity in a

Warrior-themed way.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to see what kind of masculine representations are found in an internet community of males. The reason why this study was called for was the reasonable supposition that masculinity had earned somewhat negative connotations in the late 2010s. It was important to delve into a male-only arena and study it thoroughly to make sense of the current situation.

This study took an original approach in extracting and categorizing the representations of masculinity. The extracting was done with the use of critical discourse analysis and the categorization was done via a psychological model of masculine archetypes (Gillette and Moore, 1990).

The results of the study are interesting. A few main representation types were found: the coarse language users, the calm yet tough guys, the men who regarded information as a weapon, and the men who admired the classic warrior qualities such as skill, strategy, and bravery. The representations were constructed verbally by using different kinds of lexical choices and tones.

There was quite a bit of resemblance in TRP's representations of masculinity and the psychological model of masculinity by Moore and Gillette (1990). In TRP the **Warrior** archetype was the most prevalent archetype. The second most frequent archetypes were **Magician** and **King** which appeared approximately equally often. The least frequent archetype was **Lover** which was easy to notice because the lack of **Lover** was almost as noticeable as the abundance of **Warrior**.

Some observations of Kendall's studies (2000, 2002) had resemblance to this study. In both Kendall's (2000) study and this one some ways of performing masculinity had to do with distancing from the soft, feminine qualities, and women in general.

It could be argued that some excerpts found in TRP expressed disregard and disrespect for women or common human values in general. But as prevalent, if not more, were the cases where the conceptions of masculinity were driven by the pursuit of finding contentment in life. Numerous men in the forum were inspired to take courageous and determined action to make their life-experience more valuable, which can be regarded as a quest worth honoring.

Reddit and other internet forums provide an interesting and content-rich platform for future research of masculinity. Currently there are too few masculinity studies done on online forums. In the future, it could be studied whether uses of correct grammar and incorrect grammar have connections to the types of represented masculinity. Another interesting research idea would be to study the slang that men use in online forums to see if there are universal similarities in the slang found in different forums.

There might be some problems with this study and its results' universal validity as I have personally selected the data for analysis from a bigger group of texts. The interpretations of the speech acts and the connecting of the examples to the archetypes were done through my personal way of seeing the world. This raises a question of personal bias in the study. The readers of the study are advised to rely on their own discretion when reading the study and its results.

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Appendix

EXAMPLE 1

[-] 2 pistettä 4 päivää sitten*

So this turned into a bit of a rant, but whatever. If you want it, here's a TLDR: Different strokes for different folks.

I always got the idea that the whole "positive masculinity" thing is just another possible avenue to your own personal happiness. If being a cold, calculating, manipulative, psychopathic who gets what he wants is your thing, more power to ya. If you want to subject yourself to the more ethically satisfying, yet more difficult approach of finding self-actualization without stepping on heads left and right, that's an option too.

Masculinity to me is about being honest with yourself so that you can uncover your true mission and reach that goal in a way that is effective, but won't leave you feeling guilty and having trouble sleeping at night. Since what is as isn't morally acceptable is a matter of opinion, some people will feel perfectly fine with being the unfeeling psychopath while others would wreak of guilt. Thus, masculinity is amoral. You can be totally out for yourself and still be masculine just as you can be considerate of others and still be masculine.

If you're still not with me, think about it like this. If you reached your goals, but did so in a way that makes you feel dirty and unethical, then you're probably not truly happy and it was a waste of time. Similarly, if you've reached your goals but feel that you transformed into a über passive, ass-kissing push over in the process and now feel like a total pussy, then you're probably not truly happy and it was (again) a waste of time.

pysyväislinkki embed tallenna isäntä ilmianna anna kultaa vastaa

[-] 1 piste 4 päivää sitten

Exactly but, RP is a tool box that helps you get whatever you want outa life. There should be no judgement on how you get what you want and reach satisfaction

Thing is most people aren't innately selfish assholes, but on here there's a lot of bitterness because being 'nice' got them fucked over.

Niceness equals weakness, kindness does not. May be too nuanced for some.

EXAMPLE 2

[-] [S] 2 pistettä 4 päivää sitten

he already said that you fool.

BP masculinity = be good and noble and strength and honor and courage and all that dumb shit

rp masculinity = unapologetically take what you want from life at any means necessary

pretty sure GLO has said alphas are like leaches, and used pirates as a comparison, they are alpha, take what they want, do what they want, have a bunch of money and all they do is rob people. still very masculine, even if they aren't good.

And here's the funny thing

I AGREE WITH THAT

so no, nothing was discredited, but i did end up shedding a few tears for having given the impression that its a bp post even though it's not :(

pysyväislinkki embed tallenna isäntä ilmianna anna kultaa vastaa

[-] 1 1 piste 4 päivää sitten

Masculinity is a tool to gain control over yourself and the world around you.

Which is separate from your moral compass.

Guns don't kill people, people kill people as they say.

Masculinity isn't BP or RP, it just is. Stop trying to color an amoral quality.

pysyväislinkki embed tallenna isäntä ilmianna anna kultaa vastaa

EXAMPLE 3

Practical Stoicism Tools

Stoicism philosophy is on the rise. I have been practising it for a couple of years now and would like to share 3 of the most effective and practical mental exercise/meditations that I have used.

Method One: A view from above

'You can rid yourself of many useless things among those that disturb you, for they lie entirely in your imagination; and you will then gain for yourself ample space by comprehending the whole universe in your mind, and by contemplating the eternity of time, and observing the rapid change of every part of everything, how short is the time from birth to dissolution, and the illimitable time before birth as well as the equally boundless time after dissolution'

– **Marcus Aurelius**

Marcus Aurelius advises us to perform an exercise called 'view from above'. This exercise involves us envisioning ourselves from the third person. In this vision, we zoom out while keeping ourselves in the centre. We continue zooming out and contemplating the scale of the universe. For instance, your first zoom might encompass a view of you from above the roof of your house. Increase the magnitude and you might see a view of your street, increase the magnitude and you might see a view of your country. Keep going until you can picture a view of Earth from the stars. With this scale, we can gain a better perspective on the insignificance of our problems. When compared to the universe whatever problems we might appear incredibly trivial. For instance, if you were feeling down because a girl flaked on you or someone insulted you, try this exercise. It is far easier to overcome the emotional hurdles we experience when we put things into perspective.

Method Two: Negative visualization

'Remember that all we have is "on loan" from Fortune, which can reclaim it without our permission—indeed, without even advance notice. Thus, we should love all our dear ones, but always with the thought that we have no promise that we may keep them forever—nay, no promise even that we may keep them for long.'

– **Seneca**

Negative visualization despite the name is an exercise that will increase your default level of happiness if practised consistently. The exercise consists of you envisioning what it would feel like if you lost certain things from your life. Some of the things that you could consider during the exercise are:

- How it would feel to not have a roof over your head.
- How it would feel to lose social status.
- How it would feel to live in a third world country.
- How it would feel to have a physical disability.
- How it would feel to lose a loved one.

This exercise is not meant to be dark or morbid, it's meant to put things into perspective. Allowing you to see how lucky you truly are. It also prepares you for the worst case scenarios in which one of these things does happen. **You are not meant to fixate on these thoughts, but consider them from time to time.**

This is a very practical way for you to practice gratitude, naturally, when you consider things being removed from your life, you start to gain a sense of gratitude. Now gratitude is important because of a thing called 'hedonic adaptation', basically, it's a term that defines the tendency for humans to always go back to their default level of happiness.

If you won the lotto and became a millionaire, your base level of happiness will increase for a while. However, when you become accustomed to the lifestyle, despite all the new toys, you will return to your base level. Gratitude breaks this pattern, allowing you to enjoy each step on the ladder. You can be grateful when you own a box, and you can be grateful when you own a Lamborghini Aventador.

Method Three: Voluntary Discomfort

'But neither a bull nor a noble-spirited man comes to be what he is all at once; he must undertake hard winter training, and prepare himself, and not propel himself rashly into what is not appropriate to him'

- Epictetus

The last exercise has been advised to us by Epictetus. It is called 'voluntary discomfort'. In this exercise, we are going to deliberately put ourselves through uncomfortable situations. We will do this in order to train ourselves to not hold onto comfort with such high regard. We can perform voluntary discomfort in a number of ways. Some suggestions are:

- Cold Showers
- NoFap
- Exercising in the morning
- Walking in the cold without a jumper
- Fasting for a day
- Sleeping on the floor

All these things will change your relationship with comfort. Once you overcome the need for comfort, life will become much easier. Setting your goals and sticking to them will be far easier. When most people complain about being 'uncomfortable', you won't be able to relate. You are literally training yourself to be like a Navy Seal. This method will harden you up for life.

Eventually shit will hit the fan at some stage during your life. You want to have to mental and physical fortitude to weather the storm.

So those are the three stoic exercises. Stoicism is a practical philosophy that has survived the test of time due to its universal applications. If you practice these stoic meditations, you will be well on your way to the good life.

EXAMPLE 4

[...] 75 pistettä 5kuukautta sitten

I sometimes wonder if I'm getting trolled into a miserable life lol. Care to elaborate on the effects on your character? How long have you been doing this and what have you noticed?

[pysyväislinkki](#) [embed](#) [tallenna](#) [isäntä](#) [ilmianna](#) [anna kulta](#) [vastaa](#)

[...] 66 pistettä 5kuukautta sitten

Been doing this for a bunch of months. Except for making you insanely grateful for the things in life, it made me realize how many awesome things and opportunities we allow to slide by simply because they would make us uncomfortable. As I'm typing I'm preparing to leave to Kyoto for 7 months to live and work. I don't speak Japanese nor have I ever lived on my own for more than 1 months. I took this opportunity, because I can. Not because I'm sure it'll be comfortable.

EXAMPLE 5

TLDR

Life is a series of self-fulfilling prophecies. Reality is soft and yielding and conforms itself to the man with confidence and will-power. The most attractive thing a man can do is make reality submit to his mission.

A man's life is a battle between willpower and reality, his mission and what is possible, his inside world and the outside world. In contrast with the feminine traits of softness and submissiveness, the masculine traits are strength and dominance. In terms of archetypes, the feminine surrenders to her environment whereas the masculine governs his environment. That is essentially the difference between the alpha and the beta. The beta follows while the alpha leads. In this sense, the mission of a man is to influence the world rather than be influenced by it, to lead the world rather than be lead by it.

Like a woman, reality (or the universe or whatever you want to call it) doesn't just submit to anybody. She only submits to a power stronger than herself. Like women, reality is hypergamous. This means that a weak man with no self esteem and feeble will-power cannot influence reality, will never accomplish his mission, and will end up with a life that was chosen for him by somebody else.

Also like the human female, reality will shit test you. Let's say your mission is to start a successful business. But a year in you go broke and have to close down. As a man, there are two ways you can respond to this. 1) Believe that reality is correct, you have no business skills, and give up. 2) Reassert yourself, tell reality she is wrong, and continue on your mission.

The difference between a great man and an average man is that the average man looks outside himself for truth whereas the great man looks within himself for truth. View reality as a test. When you fail, reality is testing to see if you deserve to taste the sweet honey of success. When you come up against an obstacle, reality is testing to see what you are made of. Are you strong or weak? Submissive or dominant? View every hindrance as reality bluffing. After all, it's her job to sort the sheep from the goats. She will know whether you are strong or weak by how you respond to her obstacles. If her obstacle makes you worried and cautious, she won't submit. If you ignore her obstacle and continue your quest as confidently as before, she will submit.

The goal of man is to make reality submit to his mission. If you don't have the balls to contradict reality, plow through barriers, and assert your power, reality will rip you in half. There is no inbetween. Either reality has submitted to you or you have submitted to reality.

An example of a man who has submitted to reality is somebody who dreams of, let's say, becoming a film director but doesn't pursue it because he doesn't believe he's talented enough. That man is weak because he looks to the universe to know what's true or false rather than asserting what he knows to be true. He'll make a short film and enter it into a festival. When he doesn't win, he'll give up on his mission because, in his eyes, reality has authority and reality is always right. He has placed reality on a pedestal and follows her direction.

In order to make reality submit to the fire in your belly, you need to be outrageously confident. You need to be an optimist. You will need, for a time, to believe something for which there is no evidence. When you begin your mission, you will have to endure long stretches of time believing in a dream that only exists in your head. Some people will think you're crazy. Reality will throw stumbling blocks in your path. But remember that life is a series of self-fulfilling prophecies.

"The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the original false conception come true." - Robert Merton

Self-fulfilling prophecies become true because you believe they are true. If you have enough will-power, confidence, and strength (and perhaps a dose of irrationality), reality conforms to you. It becomes fluid like water and adapts to your frame. It yields to your tenacity. It surrenders to your masculine drive. Aside from growing a pair of wings and flying through the sky like a bird, you can accomplish anything so long as you look to yourself for truth and ignore whatever shit-tests the outside world throws at you. Next time reality contradicts your mission, tell her she is wrong and keep marching.

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Women, real women, desire a man who can influence the world around him with the strength of his character. If you want women, don't try to make women submit, try to make reality submit. If you can assert yourself and force the world to bend to your mission, if you have the mastery to bend reality over and ravish her, the ladies will come running. Life is a double-or-nothing deal. Either you have proved yourself to be weaker than reality and have nothing, or you have proved yourself to be stronger than reality and have everything.

Lastly, reality wants to submit to you. She wants to surrender. She pretends to be hard and authoritative and masculine but this is only a pretense. In truth, she hates having to assert herself. She hates docile, nervous men. She loves nothing better than when a strong man takes the control out of her hands. So give her what she wants. Assert yourself. Take the lead.

EXAMPLE 6

[-] **TRP ENDORSED** 2 points 2 months ago

The problem with giving everyone a voice is that opinion often overwhelms knowledge.
Dunning-Kreuger effect, Heinleins razor.

Opinion is easily influenced by outside sources. Everybody has an opinion. It's easy and validating to be part of the herd.

Knowledge takes work and time. It's an internal process. Not everyone has knowledge.

When everybody gets a voice automatically, the value of that voice approaches the lowest common denominator.

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EXAMPLE 7

be known now. For example, Julius Caesar came from a poor Patrician family - nobody knew the Caesar name at his birth. And yet through boldness he was able to alter his 'reality' that people still remember him 3000 years later.

| And yet through boldness he was able to alter his 'reality'

Your operating by feelz again. Cesar didn't become famous b/c he was bold, he became famous b/c he knew his stuff and did better than his opponents.

| Cesar didn't become famous b/c he was bold

A big portion of his success was boldness and doing shit nobody else did and breaking the rules. For example, it was illegal for a general to cross the Rubicon river with an army without the Senate's permission and it was illegal to enter Rome with an army. He did both.

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Actually...

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubicon#Julius_Caesar

Don't buy into "he who dares wins" when it comes to military. Overwhelming majority of battles are not won on courage and bravery but on planning, strategy and skill.