**Understanding Masculinity in Society**

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Masculinity is highly influenced by the society and culture that an individual is exposed to. The definition and the practice of masculinity are as per those interactions with culture, and they differ from one individual to the other. An interview with CK, a male-born and male-identifying individual, shed light on the nature of masculinity, its impact, and how it shapes the beliefs and gender roles within society. This paper will discuss childhood experiences in relation to masculinity and how individuals currently fit within such experiences. It will also identify the elements of toxic masculinity and the link between the same and cases of violence.

**The interview**

Interviewee CK was one of the best and most fun experiences I have had discussing a controversial topic in modern society, one that is less understood as time passes. CK provided formidable insight into what they feel masculinity is and the impact that the knowledge, thoughts, and ideas of masculinity have had on his current life. Born and raised as a boy, Ck has had a first-hand impact on determining gender roles and messages relating to gender in society.

It is the norm in most societies that gender roles are divided between males and females. CK has an African heritage, and the gender roles in society as he grew up were well-defined. The males were seen as the tougher human beings compared to the female gender. The roles assigned to the men were thus harsh and involved many risks compared to women's roles and responsibilities in society.

When growing up, hyper-masculinity was a norm for CK as he was made to believe that most, if not all, decisions had to be made by a male in the household. He witnessed such decisions through his father, who always determined the next move for his family as the head of the family unit. His mother's responsibility was to listen and obey. Such experiences build an element of pride in being a male in society as one had more say and control over what happened.

The message communicated on gender from childhood was, though not explicit, that women were most likely weaker than men and could not handle as much pressure as men. Thus, duties were only designated for men, such as risky ordeals in the process of providing for their families. CK identified how the norms in his childhood had changed, especially in recent years, where masculinity, in most cases, is considered toxic. The roles of different genders are also not well defined in the American culture, in that the males are no longer given the opportunity or space to practice their masculinity without societal backlash. Modern society equates males to females, and so long as everyone is human, they are equal (Eagly et al., 2020). Ck stated that he felt that it was why most men engaged in all sorts of activities to try to regain that feeling of masculinity, especially with the overemphasis on the support for the girl child.

CK defined toxic masculinity as the attitude that is associated with manliness traits that have a negative impact on others. Toxic masculinity does not imply that the masculinity idea is always bad. In most cases, masculinity becomes toxic when men use their dominance, control, and violence to assert their superiority and power over others (Harrington, 2021). CK stated that he had first-hand experience with toxic masculinity. He watched many of his relations, especially uncles and male cousins, use their dominance and masculinity to demand authority and power in their homes. He grew up believing that the male had dominion over the female based on experiences in his neighborhood. Toxic masculinity affected the way children grew, their perception of relationships between genders, and also the way that the less masculine genders were treated by society.

The interviews showed that the American perception of masculinity differed by party, age, and race. Most Americans look up to men who are more masculine than those who are not. They also view the element of masculinity as a good thing in society. With the changing gender roles and identity, however, Americans' perception of masculinity and what it takes to be a man is changing. Many of those that support sexual orientations other than that compelled by biology have different views on masculinity and believe that even men with feminine traits should be treated or viewed as masculine. It causes controversy in society, especially in relation to race, where many individuals of African American descent state it to be very important for others to consider them as very masculine.

**Hypermasculinity and violence**

The interview with CK led to the thought of hypermasculinity's impact on society and why it can be a double-edged sword. Hypermasculinity and aggression seem to go hand in hand in the United States and also many other nations globally. For instance, many offenders in prison are male, and many are behind bars in relation to violence and violent crimes committed against others in society. The question is, could it be that the belief and the view of masculinity in society contribute to hypermasculinity and the associated consequences?

In countries such as the United States, society has understood the violence associated with masculinity and has developed strategies to deal with it before it goes overboard. For example, males are likely to be more aggressive than their counterparts’ females in their late teens and early twenties. Strategies such as forced military conscription for males help deal with issues of masculinity, such as aggression at their most disruptive ages.

Hypermasculinity thus defines men that are on the extreme end of the gender expectations and those that are focused on performing their male roles with aggression and domination and engage in risky behavior to be identified as masculine (Schaefer et al., 2021). Such individuals tend to have a stereotypic view of the role of gender in society, and thus, their harsh actions and crude activities fit their role in society. A great example of such views in America is related to the violence that individuals from the military wreck on others in society. The military is still male-dominated, and members are often praised for their achievements and violence. In most cases, such individuals believe that their resilience, tolerance, and minimization of military pain are elements of their masculinity. They are, therefore, likely to engage in risky behavior even after getting back into society as they search for the thrill of feeling masculine. Such environments push the male past their psychological and physical limits providing an altered understanding of masculinity.

**Conclusion and lessons learned**

Masculinity is a social construct that influences the actions of those who identify as male. Masculinity is influenced by culture, race, and other social aspects, such as gender identity. Through the interview, it is clear that the experience of individuals in their childhood as males and in relation to their gender roles greatly influences their perceptions of masculinity. Toxic masculinity has a negative impact on other members of society, as such ideologies lead to male domination and violence. It is evident that individuals that are taught and grow up willing to engage in violence, especially when in social factions such as the military, find themselves in gendered conflict once they come back to society. The reason is that their notion of masculinity differs from what is accepted by society, making adjustment hard.

**References**

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