

The Macho Paradox

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The Basic Idea:

Violence against women has historically been seen as a women's issue, but is really more about men. Men are the ones committing the vast majority of the violence.

It is a mistake to call men's violence a women's issue. 99% of rape is perpetrated by men

These are not merely individual pathologies. It is not enough to ask what went wrong in his life? Most sexual violence happens between people who know each other

We need an in-depth national discussion about the culture that's producing these violent men. What defines manhood? What underlying social factors contribute to the pandemic of violence against women? It is about the structures of gender and violence.

We need a far-reaching cultural revolution. We must change the sexist social norms in male culture. We need to work on the prevention of sexual and domestic violence and all of their related social pathologies.

Transformative social change will come about only if a critical mass of men realize that it is in their self-interest to reduce the level of men's violence.

In other words, individual acts of gender violence emanate from an unequal and sexist cultural context, within which heterosexual men are conditioned to objectify and dominate women.

Most abuse in heterosexual relationships is not due to a man's inherent biological makeup but to his learned need for power and control.

Where can we find the widespread examples?

- Talk show hosts that popularize the term feminazi, fear "feminization of this country"
- Dismissing poor male behavior as 'boys will be boys'
- Language issues in the media
 - It isn't John beat Mary, it's Mary is a battered woman.
 - Rape statistics list the number of women victims, shifting the focus
 - In terms of school shootings, it isn't "kids killing kids"; it's Boys killing other kids.
- Headlines about military rape scandal, Woodstock 99, Kobe Bryant and others use this passive voice- pulling responsibility away from perpetrator
- Bystanders aren't intervening
 - When they do, their heterosexuality or manhood is questioned
- Most men don't identify as potential perpetrators (even those convicted of crimes)
- Definitions in media of 'real men'

- Images of scantily clad women are ever present: femininity and sexuality are intertwined
- TV, movies, comedy, video games like Grand Theft Auto
- Media desensitizes viewers to
- 'Friends with Benefits' 2004 New York Times Magazine article
- Sluts vs. players
- Social validation for girls can come from sexuality
- Porn, prostitution, strip clubs. Strip culture as mainstream
- Eminem, rap view of women- bitches and hoes.
- Action heroes, sports,

All of the above is bad for both genders

What can we do?

- Educators need to address the attitudes in male culture that encourage or legitimize some men's abusive behavior.
- Should target middle school kids. Early adolescence is a time of rapid growth, where they learn lessons of femininity and masculinity
- Change group dynamics in male-peer culture.
- Stand up as bystanders
- Media Literacy- Help kids deconstruct media images, especially as it relates to understanding and constructing their identities
- He has MVP Mentors in Violence Prevention- in athletes and army
- Male role models and leadership- be a voice against the one-dimensional, sexist, and distorted images of manhood
- Help boys see that they don't need to dominate others- to deny their own humanity- in order to make it as men
- Talk about teen relationships
- Pay attention to sports culture, coaches