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Consequences of Hypermasculinity

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Women have been and still are, undoubtedly, one of the most oppressed groups in American society. Systematically and historically women have encountered challenge after challenge, and have been consistently pushed aside for the strength and power of man. This patriarchal ideal has inhibited the flourishing of women for centuries. However, often overlooked, it has also inhibited the flourishing of men. The patriarchal society creates gender expectations of men and women. Men, although, are more rigidly and forcefully placed into unhealthy and restricting gendered boxes that have proven to leave long term, negative consequences. Society teaches boys the only way to be a significant man in society is through excessive masculine qualities, or hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity is socialized in young boys through the unrealistic expectations and norms of masculinity which both directly and indirectly causes various form of violence as well as domination over women.

Masculinity and Violence

Masculinity has been defined and created in numerous different ways. Most predominantly, however, being a man has been viewed as being powerful, dominant, and in control. To be a man is to have authority over others, but also over the self. Men are told never to show weakness, and to always be strong even in the midst of undeniable pain. For generations upon generations, society has expected young boys to hide their pain and vulnerability in fear of ridicule, leading to a world of hurting men. Men have been asked to suffer quietly in their pain, and embrace the expectations that have been set out for them. Through socialization at school

and the home, boys are taught to be masculine is to hide emotion, creating generations of boys and men suppressing emotion leading to violent outbursts towards others as well as the self.

Youth boys are socialized at school and in the home to understand and accept the toxic expectations of masculinity and the consequences of pushing outside of the restrictive bounds of such. At home, parents, often subconsciously, are the first mode of socialization of their sons to conform to the societal expectations of masculinity. The ways in which parents understand their child has become very intuitive, and is seen as a natural response to the child's gender. Lisa Elliott, American Neurologist, explains that "parents, even before a child is born, start thinking about the child differently, they buy different clothes. So the notion that parents are not responsible for gender differences is a psychological impossibility" (*The Mask You Live In*). Young boys follow the examples set forth for them in subtle ways from their parents. Fathers, in that sense, create a very unique and lasting impression on their sons as what it means to be a man in today's world. Convicted felons at a masculinity reconstruction meeting were asking to describe their understandings of manhood growing up. The men responded by saying "in my house we don't cry," "showing emotion is like you're weak," "if you hurt, you just hold it in," "it was okay to be a womanizer," (*The Mask You Live In*). These men were taught growing up, like so many other young boys, the rigid definitions of hypermasculinity and the necessity to perform. The expectations of hypermasculinity reinforced at home leaves young boys with an immense frustration of very truly being a man. As boys begin to understand these expectation of being a man, they begin to understand the consequences of stepping outside of those expectations through the socialization at schools.

Socialization at school takes primary form through bullying, teaching boys the necessity to be properly masculine through rejection of all things feminine, which leads to the suppression

of emotion, and reinforces the hierarchy of dominance. Bullying in schools reinforces the norm of hypermasculinity in two very distinct ways: one, by punishing those outside of the norm, and two, by rewarding those who remain inside of the norm. Traditionally in American schools, boys who do not fit the typical, hyper masculine role are ostracized, bullied and humiliated. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the shooters of Columbine are a keen example of this. Eric and Dylan were both very different than most other boys at Columbine, and were treated as such. Ralph Larkin, American sociologist and research conductor notes that “Eric and Dylan were stigmatized as losers, which subjected them to predatory treatment that they ‘deserved’ because of their degraded status. The predatory treatment they received was legitimated within the peer culture” (*Comprehending Columbine*). Neither Eric nor Dylan comfortably fit into the expected roles of a “real man,” and they were bullied and treated like outsiders because of such.

Alienating boys that are not properly masculine sends the message to boys and society that it is not acceptable to exist as a man outside of the set confines. Studies have found that 1 in every 4 boys is bullied in school, however, only 30% of those boys report it (*The Mask You Live In*). This notion implies the bullying is a highly relevant problem in society’s education system, however most boys are too shameful to address it. By not reporting, the issue and frequency of bullying has continued to develop at an unstoppable and rampant pace.

Bullies, on the other hand, are a public demonstration of the expectations to be hypermasculine. Bullies are generally tough, ruthless, dominant and violent. Bullies are not questioned because they are at the top of the high school, social hierarchy. Bullies find weakness and seek to destroy it in others, to divert weakness from themselves. Terry Kupers, psychologist and professor, explains this strategy as “you (the bully) pick out someone who may appear weak in that way. You maybe bully him and you starting hating that thing about him that you’re afraid

of in yourself' (*The Mask You Live In*). While ideally bullies are publicly hypermasculine and dominant, they are also internally conflicted with the seemingly non masculine aspects of themselves. This strategies of bullies creates generations of men who internally despise themselves, and their lack of manhood. Bullies, therefore, harm themselves by reinforcing their self hatred, and also harming others through the ostracizing boys that are different. In American society, bullies are the most prominent reinforcers and educators on American hypermasculinity.

The socialization at home and at school, then, teaches boys that to be a man is to suppression emotion. Men are tough, strong and in control, and therefore cannot show weakness. Boys are taught time and time again that men are in control of their emotions constantly. The idea of emotions as weakness has severely harmed many boys developing to become men. Terrence Real, author, therapist and speaker, explains this suppression of emotion as covert depression. Real explains this phenomenon as "men try to hide their condition, thinking it unmanly to act moody. And it works: National studies suggest that doctors miss the diagnosis in men a full 70% of the time" (*Depression: The Hidden Epidemic*). In the documentary *Tough Guise*, Real expands on the notion of covert depression by stating "a huge percent of the American Male population suffers from covert depression, something that does impair functioning on a daily basis" (*Tough Guise*). Real explains covert depression then, as harder to identify and highly relevant in the lives of most men today. Boys learn to conceal emotion, leading to men coping with various forms of depression. The learned suppression of emotion in boys generates men who are unable to cope with their own emotions. This teaches men how to carefully hide their depressive emotions and thoughts for fear of ridicule and shame. For this reason, the emotion in men builds and builds until it is entirely unbearable and there is a dire need for an outlet, which has historically and traditionally been violent outbursts.

Media sources, in fact, have been strong reinforcers of masculinity as violent. Films such as James Bond, Marvel films, gangster films and countless others, represent masculinity through the lens of being physical. To have a gun, and to fight is to be the ideal man. The ideal man will use violence to gain power. Nathan McCall, an American author, explains he and several of his friends learned masculinity through “gangster films like the *Godfather* and other films that featured tough, ruthless, white Italian gangsters” (Tough Guise). The “gangster” representation has morphed and grown throughout the years, but the main theme remains the same: to use violence to gain control and power. Boys learn to believe, then, that violence isn’t bad rather it’s encouraged. Violence is a form of expression and a mode to gain power. Therefore, boys seeming to be powerless use violence as a way to reclaim their sense of identity. The statistics of male violence in the United States, are clearly representative of the cultural value of violence. Jackson Katz presents that “85% of people who commit murder are men, 90% of people who commit physical assault are men, 95% of domestic violence is men, 1 in 4 men will use violence against their partner in their lifetime, over 95% of dating violence is committed by men and men perpetuate 90% of violence” (*Tough Guise*). These statistics expose violence not as a human issue, rather a male issue. Violence is especially unique to men because of the power that come from it, and that power is associated with masculinity. The positive reinforcement of violence as masculine, however, have had dire consequences on American society, and American men.

Bullying, suppression of emotion, and unhealthy outlets for mental health, which has historically impacted the frequency of violence in the United States, but more specifically the outbreak of mass shootings. Mass shootings in the United States are overwhelmingly done by men. Katherine Newman, author of school shooting book *Ramage*, found that “twenty-seven shootings involving twenty-nine boys. No episode with a girl shooter was found. Women can be

as verbally abusive as men, and commit homicides, but are much less likely to commit multiple, and especially, random killings.” (*Hypermasculinity and Violence as a Social System*). Mass shootings have been a male epidemic. Boys begin to learn and understand violence as a form of expression and a form of power like never before. Jackson Katz, hypermasculinity and violence activist, explains that “a lot of violence is as a result of men and boys compensating for not being big and strong and muscular... what can they do then? You can pack a glock and then all of the sudden, you’re a man” (*Tough Guise*). Katz states that being a man comes from power, and violence immediately grants a man power. For men, then, who are seemingly less masculine, violence is the granted way into social acceptance. Violence has become a normalized aspect of expression for boys and men, as well as a cultural norm of masculinity. Modern society accepts that men are violent, however fail to recognize what triggers such violence. Katz states later on, in the larger picture of mass shootings, “a lot of the boys involved in the string of school shootings talked about taking revenge on people through violence and asserting their sense of manhood” (*Tough Guise*). Boys who have been bullied use violence, specifically mass shootings, as a way to express their anger and frustration, while also implementing hyper masculine ideals. Boys are not given tools to handle emotions in the same ways girls are, causing boys to turn to the expectations of gender to be expressive through violence. To understand the influences of mass shootings, it is necessary to analyze the previous offenders of mass shootings. Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, as mentioned earlier, are essential examples to examine what causes the frequency of mass shooting and violence in the United States.

Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, for the most part, were very normal young men. As stated earlier, although, Dylan and Eric were both severe social outcasts, and found each other through their low social status of the high school hierarchy. Throughout high school, both of the boys

were heavily bullied and treated differently, and they learned methods on how to cope. Students explained Eric in school “even after being pushed aside in the hallway by other students, he showed no particular anger” with “a cool persona covering roiling anger and hatred, on-campus wimp with a computer identity as a tough guy, victim and homicidal maniac, and good kid versus incorrigible villain. Eric was overwhelmed with hatred. (*Comprehending Columbine*). Eric, specifically, became an expert in suppression his emotion to the extent that his life was dripping with hatred. Eric was so poorly treated, and was so trained on how to conceal his emotions that it eventually drove him to become a psychopath looking for revenge through violence.

One of the strongest and most impactful components of hypermasculinity is the feminization of emotion. The ideal masculine man is strong, poised, and in control. Jackson Katz, filmmaker and author, uses the example of the Marlboro man as the epitome of masculinity. Katz explains that “the Marlboro man embodies the idea of a real man as rugged, quiet, stoic, who doesn’t do much talking or relating to other people. The message of the Marlboro man is clear: interdependence, connection and relationships are forms of weakness, that stuff’s for women” (*Tough Guise*). The symbolism of the Marlboro man sends the message to boys and men that emotions are weak, because they are associated with femininity. To be a man is to be entirely non-feminine. American professor Caroline Heldman explains masculinity to be “a rejection of all things feminine” (*The Mask You Live in*). To be masculine is to be the antithesis of femininity. Therefore, emotions and a sense of community, are hyper feminized and therefore rejected by men. If men show emotion, they are devalued to the level of a woman or a gay person being called feminine names. Psychologist professor at NYU, Niobe Way explains that “we’ve made feminine relationship, emotions... so boys begin to devalue their relational

parts of themselves, their relational needs, their relational desires” and that “any sign of male intimacy is going to be perceived as potentially gay” (*The Mask You Live In*). Femininity is extremely devalued in American culture, especially as a man. Characteristics stigmatized as feminine, then, are rejected by young boys attempting to perform and demonstrate their masculinity for social acceptance. As boys grow up, they learn more and more the importance of emotional constraints, however with severe consequences.

In attempting to conform to the expectations of masculinity, men sacrifice their ability to communicate emotion leading to higher rates of mental health disorders and high rates of suicide. Mental health disorders in men have become a blaring epidemic. The impacts of mental health disorders have left lasting consequences on American society, specifically with men. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention states that “in 2017, men died by suicide 3.54x more often than women” and that “white males accounted for 77.97% of suicide deaths in 2017” (Suicide Statistics). Statistics from the documentary *The Mask You Live In* further show that “suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for boys” and “less than 50% of boys seek help for mental health” (*The Mask You Live In*). The repression of emotion within the culture of hypermasculinity, creates vulnerability to disorders such as depression and anxiety. Boys, at a young age, are not given the same resources as girls to express their emotions. Boys are told not to cry, to be tough, and to not talk about the pain in their lives. This learned sense of repression has dire consequences. The repression of emotion creates generations of men that cannot empathize with one another, nor find comfort with one another. Resources of help for mental health disorders are also very negatively stigmatized to the point where most people don’t feel comfortable reaching out for help. Hypermasculinity in the United States is highly problematic because it inhibits men from their ability to be truly happy. Hypermasculinity greatly discourages

men from their own emotions, and therefore leading to the reliance of unhealthy outlets creating generations of silently hurting men and boys.

Masculinity and Rape Culture

The socialization of hypermasculinity not only hurts men, but also has had very lasting impacts of women. Young boys are socialized to understand the hierarchy of gender, and that boys are on the top. Later on in their development, boys are learned that masculinity is associated with male conquest and male conquest is associated with power and dominance. The hyper masculine value of control and domination of women, through socialization of cultural values helps to create rape culture and patriarchy in modern America.

The process of learning gender is quick and absorbent. Elementary school students absorb the unwritten and subconscious rules of gender in their earliest years of development. School and media sources such a music, film, and television portray men in a hyper masculine, toxic manner that demonstrates to developing boys what it truly means to be a man in modern society, dominate and powerful. Media is one of the strongest modes of socialization in the United States. Children learn their gendered expectations in numerous ways throughout the media, that reinforce the same ideals of masculinity and femininity.

Presumably “masculine” men in films are all portrayed in the same manner: a ladies man. To be a proper man, in American society, is to be in control of women. The 2007 book *Dude You’re a Fag* by sociologist C.J. Pascoe, analyzes the socialization and reinforcement of masculinity in high schools. Pascoe explains that “the public face of male adolescence is filled with representations of masculinity in which boys brag about sexual exploits by showing off a girl’s underwear (as in the 1980s film *Sixteen Candles*), spend the end of their senior year talking

about how they plan to lose their virginity (*American Pie*), or make cruel bets about who can bed the ugliest girl in the school (*She's All That*)” (*Dude, You're a Fag*). These examples throughout film have been a repeated pattern in the representation of masculinity. Masculinity is dominating and controlling women for the purpose of performing gender. The proper way to be a man in film, is to flaunt sexual conquest of women. Most super hero characters, in fact, are accompanied with a beautiful damsel, or in some instances several, to accentuate the manliness of the hero. Men in films are affirmed in their masculinity through sex with women, whether it is one woman or several.

Music and music videos, more recently have also very strongly associated masculinity with objectification and sexual conquest of women. Several rap songs, for example are focused on sex with women. The song “Toot it and Boot it” by rapper YG, is a keen example of the ways in which men use women for sex in order to perform masculinity. The song states “I took her to the crib, you know I fucked, I toot it and boot it.” This song exemplifies the ways music has objectifies women as sexual objects. The lyrics in “Toot it and Boot it,” are exceptional example of the ways boys in high school demonstrate masculinity with the dehumanization of girls. Pascoe explains that “for the most part boys seemed to be proud of this stereotypical ‘love ’em and leave ’em’ behavior” (*Dude, You're a Fag*). Boys flaunt this subjection and disposal of girls as a form of reassurance in their own masculinity. Most boys, in fact, do not wish to treat women so disrespectfully; however they are taught that that in order to be socially accepted as man excessive performativity of heterosexuality is not just expected, but also implied. The woman in the song is no more than a temporary object for pleasure. Similarly, the popular song “Talk Dirty” by Jason Derulo essentially states, “I don’t care what you have to say, unless you’re talking dirty to me.” Popular songs, such as these, encourage young men to view women as

though they are objects. Men celebrate in sexual conquest and power over women. The use of women for sexual power is seen exemplified in young boys transitioning to become men. The popular song “Blurred Lines” by Robin Thicke also has been highly trivial in the ways in which rape culture is reinforced. Throughout the song Thicke states repeatedly “I know you want it” in reference to sex, however the woman seems standoffish and unsure. Because of this, Thicke is drawn to her even more and is insistent on having sex with her. The music video for this song, also, consists of naked women surrounding Thicke. Songs such as “Blurred Lines” accept and celebrate male sexual domination. Thicke is seen as an a true man, through his manipulation of a woman for sex and using sex as power, even if it is forced.

As boys begin to understand sex, for a lack of better resources, they turn to pornography. Porn has become the strongest educator on sex in the United States. CovenantEyes, a resource dedicated to educating and halting the impacts of porn, state that “51% of male students... first viewed porn before their teenage years” and that “the first exposure to pornography among men is 12 years old, on average” (CovenantEyes). For young boys, porn becomes the educator for sex, leaving last consequences on the understanding of consent. Porn consists of graphic, violent, and forceful depictions, that teaches boys to use women as objects. Some categories of porn in fact are entitled “rough sex,” or “18 and abused” or “gangbang” and so on. The use of porn as sexual education teaches developing boys a “raping” version of sex. Boys watch porn and mistake the rape or sexual harassment for sex.

Porn represents women, not as people, rather toys and objects whose purpose is to please and be quickly disposed of. Porn reduces the value of a woman to a sexual object. Donald Mosher and Mark Sirkin, psychologists, performed research on the socialization and impacts of hypermasculinity. Mosher and Sirkin found that “calloused sex attitudes embody some men’s

attitudes that sexual intercourse with women establishes masculine power and female submission, and is to be achieved without empathic concern for the female's subjective experience" (Measuring a Macho Personality Constellation). The ways boys are taught sex, then, teach male dominance, and an entire disregard for the female experience. Women are to be submissive in sex. Hypermasculinity, however, mistakes forced sex for submission. The statistics of rape and sexual harassment, in fact, are immense. The National Sexual Violence Resource center also reveals that 1 in every 5 women are raped during their lives, and that 91% of perpetrators are men (Get Statistics). The statistics of rape, in the United States, are a clear representation of the problematic consequences of hypermasculinity. As young boys begin to understand this form of sex, it translates into the culture of high school, college and beyond creating a culture of rape and a misunderstanding of women, as well as consent.

Hypermasculinity sends the message to men in order to be properly masculine, sexual conquest is a requirement, this ideal leads to the belief that men have a privilege to women's bodies, reinforcing the American rape culture. Throughout her study of masculinity in high schools, Pascoe uncovered the deeply rooted foundations of rape culture in teaching masculinity. During high school, boys implement and practice their understandings of masculinity through sex. On one instance, Pascoe recounts her interaction with a student who lied about his status as a virgin. Pascoe explained that "He was bragging about [being sexually active] I asked him, 'Are you still a virgin?' All of his other close friends were like, 'Yeah. He's still a virgin.' I said, 'Why did you lie about it?' He was like, 'I just wanted people to think I was cool.'" (*Dude, You're a Fag*). The praise of sexual active young boys, amongst other young boys, creates this need to be sexually involved with women, and that sex equates to power and masculinity. As boys begin to understand the necessity of being masculine, especially in high school, they use any

mean necessary to be sexually active. Girls in high school, then, are not people rather an opportunity to be powerful. At the high school Pascoe studied, one of the students subconsciously explained how masculinity is demonstrated in high school. The student explained that “I can get laid any time, anywhere,” Pascoe further analyzed this comment by noting that “while overpowering girls’ control over their own bodies certainly confirmed masculinity, it was apparently much more masculine simply to overpower them by sheer virility, so that the girls couldn’t help desiring a given boy” (*Dude, You’re a Fag*). Masculinity is directly correlated with this sense of control over women’s bodies. Men are socialized to believe they are entitled to a woman’s body. This sense of entitlement abundantly contributes to the immensity of rape and sexual harassment throughout American culture. Men feel entitled to objectify and use women as a mode of expression to be accepted as masculine in modern society, therefore discarding the experience and humanity of a woman. The domination of women sexually, however is not the only way men exert power over women to perform masculinity.

Masculinity and Patriarchy

Hypermasculinity teaches boys and men that to be masculine is to reject all things feminine which leads to and the subordination of women by the male expectation to practice dominance, therefore producing the patriarchy. American society lives contently within the confines of the patriarch. Patriarchy is defined as a system or government where power comes from men. The ability to be successful in the United States, depends on the ability to be a man and to effectively perform masculinity. Straight, white, cisgender men are granted unconditional power and control throughout society. To achieve this sense of privilege, though, relies on the presentation of masculinity. The modern view of hypermasculinity is the antithesis of femininity.

To perform masculinity, as stated earlier, is to reject or trivialize all things appearing to be feminine. This understanding of masculinity, as the opposite of femininity, has left severe consequences on the perception and treatment of women as well as gay men.

From the ages of preschool, boys understand that to be like a girl is to be weak. Boys learn that boys stick together, and are against the girls. In the book *When boys become boys : development, relationships, and masculinity*, Judy Chu and Carol Gilligan use the example of the “mean team” to demonstrate how social and gendered hierarchies are established. Chu and Gilligan explain that “the mean team was created by the boys, for the boys, and for the stated purpose of acting against the girls.” The Mean Team consisted of a hierarchy within a preschool aged group of boys that was controlled by one boy who had the authority to kick boys out of the club, if any of the rules were broken. One of the most important rules to abide by in the Mean Team, is not to interact with girls (*When Boys Become Boys: Development, Relationships, and Masculinity*). The boys, then, ostracized girls in their weakness and begin to identify a sense of hierarchy within themselves. In preschool, boys recognize the association of femininity and weakness, and to be a boy is to strong therefore not feminine. Boys not only recognize feminine as weak, but they also recognize the ideal way to be a man, and create hierarchies within the realm of masculinity. Psychology professor at Stanford University, Terry Kupers explains this hierarchy as “tough guys on top and weaklings, girls who are at the bottom of the heap. This is the origin of sexism and homophobia” (*The Mask You Live In*). The Mean Team is a necessary model to examine when talking about patriarch and masculinity, because it is a clear demonstration in the ways that boys understand themselves as well as girls. Boys are taught to view themselves as stronger because they are not feminine.

The words that are used derogatory towards men, in fact, carry meaning in the sense that they feminize, and therefore weaken, a man. Terms such as “pussy,” “fag,” “emasculate,” “sissy,” and so on “effeminate” men. Words that carry feminine meaning are used intentionally to humiliate men. To be associated with femininity, is to be humiliated. Michael Kimmel, gender sociologist, uses the example of a playground. Kimmel explains that “if you walk onto a playground with a bunch of boys playing you can start a fight by asking one question ‘who’s a sissy around here? That idea as being seen weak in the eyes of other guys starts in the earliest years of boyhood... proving to other guys that we’re not girls, we’re not women, we’re not gay” (*The Mask You Live In*). The performance of gender, then, is to actively refute femininity. This rejection of femininity, however, stems from the perception that femininity is weak. The social assimilation of gender and sex, then, creates the understanding that if femininity is weak, as are women. Boys will grow and develop with this subconscious training to view women and girls as inferior. Women are not as capable or strong as man. Always, a popular body wash company, exemplifies this in their several commercials with the “Like a Girl” theme. In the commercials, people are asked to replicate what it means to, for example, “throw like a girl” to which people react oafishly and without gust (Always #LikeAGirl). The phrase “Like A Girl” was coined as a way to weaken someone, however this has serious consequences on the perception of girls and women. Femininity is culturally recognized as weak, and therefore women are as well.

The cultural perception of masculinity as strong and femininity as weak, has created a society where the male voice is the most valued. This ideal can be examined and demonstrated eloquently by the history of the United States. The United States has been an established country since 1776, more than 200 years later in 2019 and there still has not been a female president.

Women occupy half of the American population, however in 2018 only approximately 22% of women have a voice in the government (Women in Congress).

Ari Shapiro, NPR reporter, states that the 2018 Fortune 500 list, only 24 CEOs are women (Why Major U.S. Companies Still Have So Few Women CEOs). The statistics of women in power reflect the cultural devalue of femininity and therefore women. Women are viewed as incapable to be in a position of power because of social perception of femininity. Because of this, women are not viewed as acceptable leaders. One reason of the lack of acceptance for women in positions of power, is the national and cultural sexualization of women, as explained earlier. Men are unable to take women seriously in the office, because women are gawked at as objects. Women are not taken seriously in the workforce, because women are not equal. Women are asked to work twice as hard as men, without receiving the same reward. Women in power are scrutinized, sexualized, and criticized time and time again because they are feminine, and therefore weak. The treatment of women in positions of power, then, repels women away from the political and corporate realm. Women cannot win in positions of power so there is no reason to try, again silencing women.

The earliest forms of sexism and association of femininity as weak plays out into the larger scheme of society as boys become men and girls become women. Boys and girls subconsciously accept that masculinity is strong and femininity is weak. These boys and girls, then, become leaders of generations that implement and pass down such values. The perception of femininity and women as weak withholds American society and people from true flourishing. 50% of the population is disadvantaged to have power in the public sphere, and the other 50% is held up to unrealistic ideals.

The confines of masculinity are incredibly harmful in the ways they encourage various forms of violence and control over women. The social construct and expectations of gender has been incredibly harmful to men and women in the United States. Gender creates rules to follow and guidelines to abide to. However, the reality of gender is significantly more complex than one idealized model. Gender is fluid. Men are feminine and women are masculine. The expectations of gender do no more than harm American people both physically, emotionally and politically. Men have emotions and women are strong. Gendered restrictions remove the humanity within people and create boxes for people to squeeze into. Eradicate the boxes. Implement acceptance.

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