

The first symptoms of gender are diagnosed almost immediately at birth, with the conscious or unconscious decision to forge masculine stereotypes into modes of dress, social and familial division of labour, emotional expression and parental discipline, ensuring that a cultural connection is forged between sex and every other aspect of human experience.¹ Parental attitudes play a significant role, with adolescent observation of family structure and function endorsing these norms, paralleled in the response to a conducted questionnaire, "I probably associate masculinity with strength because of my father, who was one of the strongest people I ever knew".² Such data corresponds with research conducted by Zilbergeld, dictating that the key components of male socialisation are learnt within the first six to seven years of life,³ with both verbal and tacit reinforcers asserting a stylised stoicism in boys. The role of the father within this microstructure epitomises masculinity for adolescent males, with an interviewee's absence of this making him feel "alienated from the practical skills and pragmatic approach to life my father had"⁴ yet "now naturally valuing a less traditional model of masculinity to my own children".⁵ A focus group of eight women brought to light the concurrent socialisation of males through motherhood and heterosexual relationships, with a middle-aged participant explaining the "dysfunction"⁶ of her family as her son "enjoys cooking rather than helping his father elsewhere".⁷ This enlightened the fact that familial structure, in terms of division of labour and gendered activities, is entrenched in historical and primitive stereotypes of hunter-gatherer, and enforce on men, specified "handyman" or "breadwinner"⁸ jobs and norms while sustaining a female inferiority. A homo-hysteric familial culture became apparent as a common ground of "I don't have anything against homosexuality, but if it was my son, I would be devastated",⁹ pervaded the female focus group. This destructive sentiment of false acceptance ensures a malleable male identity, yet on a deeper level, exposes the personal distance from unconventional manliness from not only males, but also females.

Bro, lad and bloke culture transform the intangible nature of toxic masculine practice into a living being of initiations, risk taking, female and homosexual ridicule and sexual conquest and

¹ Bem, S. L. (1993). *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

² Questionnaire. 104 respondents. Conducted: April 2019.

³ Zilbergeld, B. (1992). *The New Male Sexuality*. New York: Bantam Books

⁴ Interview. Daniel Pugliese. March 2019.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Female Focus Group (18-60). Conducted: 30th May 2019.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Hanlon N. (2012) *Breadwinner Masculinities*. In: *Masculinities, Care and Equality*. *Genders and Sexualities in the Social Sciences*. Palgrave Macmillan, London

⁹ Female Focus Group (18-60). Conducted: 30th May 2019.

degradation.¹⁰ It is within this environment, whether endorsed through sporting, education or friendships, that an unwritten code of gendered expression and social and emotional distance is established,¹¹ resulting in an array of socio-negative outcomes. In a conducted questionnaire, results detailed that 75% of respondents had been negatively influenced by their peers based on gender expectation, at one point in their life.¹² This social etiquette, not of crossing one's legs or only speaking when spoken to, but of going to dehumanising lengths in order to achieve a certain honour from their peers comes at the expense of both one's own, and others self-worth. A homosexual interviewee explains that this type of behaviour led him to feel "angry and frustrated" and as though he was "not able to be his true self",¹³ mirroring a common school culture of humiliation and widely perceived "constructive degradation".¹⁴ The encouragement of dangerous practices such as alcohol and drug use, sexual superiority and unsafe sex and homo-hysterical violence, culturally excludes both women and gender minorities, while forcing men in to self-regulation and self-sacrifice.¹⁵

¹⁰ Kågesten A., Gibbs S., Blum R.W. Understanding factors that shape gender attitudes in early adolescence globally: A Mixed-Methods systematic review. *PLoS One*. 2016;11:e0157805

¹¹ Anderson, E. (2012). *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. London: Routledge.

¹² Questionnaire. 104 respondents. Conducted: April 2019.

¹³ Interview. *Gay Adult Male*. April 2019

¹⁴ Fleming, P. J., Lee, J. G., & Dworkin, S. L. (2014). "Real men don't": constructions of masculinity and inadvertent harm in public health interventions. *American journal of public health*, 104(6), 1029–1035. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301820

¹⁵ Anderson, E. (2012). *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. London: Routledge.