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Hegemonic Masculinity in Society

In today's society, why is it so taboo for males to challenge the gender norms set in society? Why are men always forced to be strong and tough or risk losing their title as a "man"? Throughout history males have always been the "breadwinner" of the family while the women take care of the house, but has anyone ever thought as to why this is the case? It can be argued that gender norms could be the downfall of society because of how toxic and unforgiving it is to challenge said norms. This is not always the case, when women challenge the gender norms they are thought of as strong and brave but when a male does the same, he is seen as less of a man or not a man at all. I would like to state that males who challenge gender norms are strong and brave because of the hate and criticism males face when doing so. Mainly this is a problem within male thinking while many females think of these men as amazing and great people who are brave for going against society and being who they really are. I personally know many men who have been shamed and/or kicked out of their family/society because they decided to be who they want to be. It is such a shame to see people so unaccepting of who others are that the people who challenge society are kicked to the curb by the ones who are supposed to love them the most. I personally have been looked at in a different light when I challenged the norms of society. When I began painting my nails black, people thought I was gay, goth, or both. Truth is it just looks good and so I did it. I was expressing what was interesting to me and I should not be

until there is no one left to think differently.

The idea of hegemonic masculinity as introduced by R.W. Cornell is relatively simple, it is made of up societal norms such as a male being strong, brave, tough, and practically emotionless. There are many names hegemonic masculinity takes on, one example is toxic masculinity. When a male differs from what society says a man should be, other men and sometimes women will begin to look at this man in a different way. This is the issue that plagues men as a whole in society. Many men are afraid to show their emotions or be different from what society says a man should be. When push comes to shove, a man is defined as a strong, independent, tough, rugged, and emotionless being that takes care of his family and keeps everyone safe. While I do agree with some aspects of what society says a man should be and do, it would be inconsiderate and downright cruel to subject men to this idea of masculinity. A man being in touch with his emotions, his feelings, does not make him any less of a man but society says that it does. This type of thinking is what leads to discrimination against others who may not meet societal norms and causes pain to others when in reality society should make others feel good about themselves instead of bringing them down. It has been a staple in school for a long time that we should not bring others down because of who they are but once we get out into the real world, away from those who try and keep us safe, we see that society can be cruel and unforgiving at times. Even though hegemonic masculinity is a terrible ideal, sociology helps people better understand what exactly this ideal is. I believe that Cornell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and Durkheim's theory of the collective consciousness and his theory of collective representation are entwined. These theories help explain how and why people view society and

masculinity and the use of the collective consciousness and collective representation.

When one thinks about a man, what is the first thing one thinks of? Is it that he is strong? Is it that he can fight? Is it that he is not vulnerable? The answer, yes. Society provides a clear image on what a man is also known as hegemonic, or toxic, masculinity. Brett G. Stoudt provides a very good image of hegemonic masculinity in his essay "*You're either In or You're Out*". This paper focuses on an all boys school named Rockport and shows how the boys interact with each other. For example, at Rockport the grades are very competitive which speaks to a males need to be supreme in competition. The same is true about playing football with each other, the males must all be dominant to impress others. While this in itself may not be harmful to the boys in society, it gives them a sense of protection and value before heading out into the real world where this little bubble will be popped. It was beneficial for the students at the time but once they get out into society, they will be extremely unprepared. One thing about hegemonic masculinity is when it is broken, the male goes through an existential crisis and tries to figure out what happens now. Another way hegemonic masculinity is not good for society is because males can never let their guard down around other males. They must turn to females for emotional support when they need it. I believe that males should be supportive of other males' feelings and should be able to provide emotional support to those around him. I do not believe that it is healthy for men to be criticized for showing their emotion. Males are human and humans have emotions so why is it that females and others can show their emotions while men can not? The answer, this ideal of hegemonic masculinity plaguing the male species and society. This all breaks down into two different sociological theories by Emile Durkheim, the collective consciousness and collective representation.

the collective consciousness. In the collective consciousness, we make up the ideal for every situation we face. Ideally, as stated by the collective consciousness, men work and stay strong no matter what. This problem with the way the collective consciousness shapes hegemonic masculinity is that men are seen as something that is not true and very outdated. In the past, males made all of the money while the female stayed home and kept the house clean and watched the kids. The idea that females have to stay home with the kids has changed but the part about men making the money and providing for their families has not. I have no resentment toward this aspect of hegemonic masculinity but it can lead into a problem of men who do not work being seen as less of a man which, as mentioned earlier, can cause the male an existential crisis. When a man defies societal norms, he goes against the collective consciousness and in turn, makes him an outcast in society. Breaking these societal norms has begun to be more accepted but in some areas still is a major issue. When one thinks about the correlation between the collective consciousness and collective representation, it is easy to see that there is a major expectation for men to look like the stereotypical man. Durkheim's theory of collective representation states that it is a symbol, artifact, or narrative that embodies the collective consciousness. An example for collective representation is the flag of the United States of America representing freedom. To apply collective representation to hegemonic masculinity, one can imagine a man with painted nails. Traditionally, females were the only ones with painted nails and any male who did was frowned upon, labeled an outcast, and seen as gay. This is beginning to change with males painting their nails being seen as attractive but not in every case. It is still seen as weird, goth, and/or gay. In reality, the men who paint their nails think that it looks good and expresses them well. Just because a male likes to paint their nails, doesn't like

tools help others to see that this is all a manifestation of the collective consciousness and that it can be edited if others begin to normalize it.

Sociological practices and theories like the collective consciousness, collective representation, and hegemonic masculinity can help us change the way people think. In this case, by normalizing men with painted nails, long hair, or being emotional is the only way we can change the societal view through the collective consciousness. Realizing that this idea is not inherent in society, it was placed there through generations upon generations of toxic masculinity is the only way we can begin to normalize males being vulnerable, not fighting or competing for everything, and just being themselves.

In conclusion, the only reason why males crossing the line of societal norms being weird is because we let it be weird. We have the choice to adjust the collective consciousness and make hegemonic masculinity bad. We have the choice to make men feel comfortable being vulnerable around each other. We get the tools to do so from the sociological concepts of the collective consciousness, collective representation, and their link to hegemonic masculinity. Changing societal norms means not making males feel bad for expressing themselves physically or emotionally. It is implied that men can and do have feelings and emotions that should never be suppressed because it is seen as unmasculine. This could be one of the easiest things for a society to change if only we allow it to. Normalize males who don't like to fight, who want to express themselves, or who like something society says is not what a man should like. Doing so is the only way we can change societal views on men. Men are not emotionless buffoons who like to fight and stay dominant. The only reason that hegemonic masculinity exists is because that is what we have been taught a man is supposed to act like. A man should be allowed to be whoever

ideals if only we allow it.