

HYPERMASCULINITY, MASCULINE HEGEMONY & MACHISMO

HYPERMASCULINITY is a psychological term for the exaggeration of male stereotypical behavior, such as an emphasis on

- physical strength/muscularity
- aggression
- tattoos
- virility.

This term can be pejorative (critical/expressing disapproval), though it is also used when examining the behaviour (as adaptive or maladaptive) dispassionately.

One of the first studies of hypermasculinity was conducted by Donald L. Mosher and Mark Sirkin in 1984. Mosher and Sirkin have defined hypermasculinity or the "macho personality" as consisting of the following three variables:

- a) "callous sexual attitudes toward women",
- b) "the belief that violence is manly", and
- c) "the experience of danger as exciting".

They developed the *Hypermasculinity Inventory* (HMI) designed to measure the three components. Research has found that hypermasculinity is associated with sexual and physical aggression against women. Prisoners have higher hypermasculinity scores than control groups.

The phenomenon can result from personal, societal and cultural influences. Although the behaviour can stem from practice and belief systems, marginalised communities of men may also display attributes of hypermasculinity to rebuff stereotyped or generalised behaviour that disempowers them.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

- In gender studies, **hegemonic masculinity** refers to the belief in the existence of a culturally normative ideal of male behaviour.
- Hegemonic masculinity contends that society strongly encourages men to embody this kind of masculinity.
- Hegemonic masculinity is marked by a tendency for the male to **dominate** other males and **subordinate** females.
- This is not necessarily the most **prevalent** form of male expression, but rather the **most socially endorsed** that always contributes to the subordinate position of women.
- Characteristics such as aggressiveness, strength, drive, ambition, and self-reliance are evidence of the existence of hegemonic masculinity.
- The theory has been criticised because such hegemonic masculinities do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men.
- This can destabilize /delegitimise other (more evident) masculine identities and encourages insecurity among men.
- It can also work to make men less willing/able to seek help for (mental) health related issues – suicide rates?

MACHISMO is a word that describes prominently exhibited or excessive masculinity. As an attitude, **machismo** ranges from a personal sense of virility to a more extreme male chauvinism. Characteristics include domineering, fierceness, bravado (etc) in ways that are showy, loud and tough.