Jordan Lewis

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Op Ed 2

Masculinity

Masculinity is a sensitive subject, one that is not generally talked about by the people that are affected by it the most. While watching *The Mask You Live In* I noticed that there seemed to be some trends that I had never picked up on before during my gender studies. A tendency that seemed to appear was that drinking and drug use is higher in males. The simple fact that males consume drug and alcohol more than females is not surprising. What was different was the reasons for their drug use. The movie pointed out that while under the influence of drugs and alcohol it is more socially acceptable for males to show affection towards each other and it not be seen as “gay”. Generally in instances like that other males are just as intoxicated and don’t think about the social standards that tell males that they cant show affection towards each other. The other instance is that other males will just assume that the male showing affection is only doing it because he is under the influence and will give him a pass.

The movie also delves into male athletes and the struggles that they face. Many times athetes are conditioned to be hyper masculinized. Through years of practice and coaches yelling, telling them that they need to dominate other males and push everything deemed female away males are hyper masculinized. Through this process, I theorize that male athletes used drugs and alcohol more than the average male because they are even more desperate to be able to show affection. Being an athlete my whole life I have spent a vast amount of time with male athletes, especially in college. During this time I have seen athlete after athlete binge drink, and drink to extreme excess.

Like the movie noted males lash out and are violent as a sign of depression. As a society we have not widely recognized this as a sign of depression in people and especially males. As a society we stigmatize depression and generally attribute it to females because we are missing out on huge red waving flags that males are waving. Again I would argue that more male athletes are depressed than the average male, especially after they finish playing their sport. However we don’t see male athlete as having depression because being violent and aggressive is built into our sports, even the non-contact ones. If it is not “out of the ordinary” for males to be violent in what they are doing then we really wont see that it can be them lashing out. I would bring this point back to my previous argument and say that this is another reason why drug and alcohol use is more widely used among male athletes as a form of coping with depression.

There are many ways that, as a society, we are failing our boys and crippling our men. As a society we need to do a better job at recognizing signs of depression. We need to do a better job at giving males and especially athletes better messages about maleness. We need to do this so they don’t feel like they must resort to drugs an alcohol to make it through or cope with depression.