

Masculine fragility

Masculine fragility is the anxiety among males who feel they do not meet cultural standards of masculinity. Evidence suggests that this concept is necessary to understand their attitudes and behaviors.^[1] Male fragility has been characterized as the Me Too counterpart to white fragility.^[2]

Workplace

When men feel their masculinity has been threatened, they often attempt to regain their sense of authority. The threats may include having a female supervisor or being given a job traditionally viewed as feminine. They may react by engaging in harmful behavior, such as undermining and mistreating colleagues, lying for personal gain, withholding help and stealing company property.^{[3][4]}

Popular culture

- Cuban author Zoé Valdés uses male fragility as a recurrent theme.^[5]
- *Moonlight* has been called a "masterclass in masculine fragility." Chiron, according to writer Eli Badillo, embraced his fragility as a path to self-discovery.^[6]

Relationships with women

- Women who believed their partner had masculine fragility were more likely to fake orgasms and were less likely to provide honest sexual communication.^[7]
- Fragile men "feel more uncomfortable around women."^[8]
- Online harassment is a common response from fragile men,^[9] "who in response to displays of female strength, reveal themselves to be as fragile as eggshells."^[10]

Impact on health and behavior

Men with fragile masculinities are more likely to exhibit behaviors such as aggression (when externally challenged), and shame, and self-harm under stress (when internally challenged).^[11] There is a consistent association of precarious manhood beliefs and risky healthcare behavior and outcomes. Men with strongly held masculine beliefs are half as likely to seek preventative healthcare; they are more likely to smoke, drink heavily and avoid vegetables; men are less likely to seek psychological help.^[12] "Where manhood is fragile, men die young."^[13] Three-quarters of suicide deaths are men.^[14]

Age, fragility and aggressiveness

As young men try to find their place in society,^[15] age becomes an important variable in understanding male fragility. Men 18–25 respond more aggressively, with risky moves or aggressive posturing,^[2] for example, to threat to their manhood, and aggressiveness decreases with age. In some places, younger men have constant threats to their manhood and have to prove their manhood daily. The more the manhood was threatened, the more the aggressiveness.^[16]

Educational levels

Millions of men are falling behind women academically,^[17] for every 100 bachelorette degrees for women, there are 74 for men.^[14] Lower educational levels are associated with masculine fragility.^[8]

Political and global warming implications

A link has been shown between male fragility and aggressive political stances, as well as for Republicans who support such stances and are more skeptical of climate change. This suggests that "fragile masculinity is crucial to fully understanding men's political attitudes and behaviors."^[1] Much of Donald Trump's support comes from regions where men are most fragile and more susceptible to early death.^[18] In the U.K. evidence of this near-worldwide association between gender and left/right allegiance is seen, with men consistently voting Tory, and women voting Labour. Similar left/right findings are noted in Hungary, Poland and Estonia.^[19] The term industrial masculinity has been used to describe men who are opposed to the concept of global warming, and have a "strong foothold on the world." In their view, the "world is there for humans to conquer and extract resources," and react with denial or strong skepticism of climate change. A U.S. Gallup poll showed a correlation of climate denial and conservative white men. In Sweden denialism is most articulated by a small group of, almost exclusively, men and conservative think tanks. The nature-destructive industrial masculinity is now understood as doing bad, and it is important to understand the psychological barriers that underline masculine practices in shaping the environment.^[20]

Biological and evolutionary considerations for masculine vulnerability

Although the disadvantages of the male are usually described as socially mediated, males from conception are more vulnerable, with an excess of developmental and behavioral disorders. Social attitudes have been felt to compound these biological deficits. Evolutionary traits necessary for early hominid males, such as physical strength and spacial skills, are not as important in the modern world, but we have most of the same genes.^[21]

Precariousness

Manhood is thought to be a precarious social status.^[22] Unlike womanhood, it is thought to be "elusive and tenuous," needing to be proven repeatedly. It is neither inevitable nor permanent; it must be earned "against powerful odds".^[23]

See also

- Toxic masculinity
- Hypermasculinity
- Mythopoetic men's movement

- [Gender role](#)
- [Social role](#)

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Blue and gold set, Kaiser Maximilian II. 1557

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