

SC 31

Ymateb gan: Canolfan Ymchwil Gofal Cymdeithasol I Oedolion

Response from: Centre for Adult Social Care Research

11/3/2025

Introduction

As a researcher at Cardiff University specialising in issues concerning deprived areas, men, education, employment, health and wellbeing, and masculinities, I would like to present the following evidence to the Welsh Parliament Inquiry on Social Cohesion and the upcoming inquiry into Preventing Gender-Based Violence. In my professional opinion, it is essential for both inquiries and any initiatives aimed at addressing these social challenges to include discussions on masculinities, given that men are disproportionately represented concerning these issues. The evidence presented below demonstrates how masculinities contribute to these challenges and is partly based on my PhD research conducted in the South Wales Valleys, which included 13 in-depth interviews and 120 hours of observations with young men and adults.

Key Points

1. Masculinities and Social Issues

- **Protest and/or Hypermasculinity:** Often referred to as [toxic masculinity](#), this form of masculinity is closely associated with misogyny, homophobia, incel culture, racism, violent extremism, and [violence against women](#).

2. Understanding Toxic Masculinity

- **Origins:** [Toxic masculinity can arise from the exaggeration](#) of traits commonly associated with the culturally idealised version of traditional masculinity, such as self-reliance, autonomy, self-control, stoicism, and independence.
- **Behaviours:** An excessive emphasis on traditional masculine traits can lead to risk-taking behaviour, a fear of showing weakness, and an inability to express emotions. These behaviours have negative consequences for both men and women, [often manifesting as frustration, anger, or efforts to suppress emotions through substance use, all of which can lead to acts of physical violence](#).



3. Impact on Marginalised Men

- **Context:** Toxic expressions of masculinity can be found across various social classes; however, [among marginalised groups, such as economically disadvantaged men or those residing in low socio-economic areas, toxic masculinity](#) is often viewed as a redefined form of traditional masculinity. This redefinition is influenced by factors such as poverty, low levels of educational achievement, unstable employment, and insufficient income.
- **Expressions of Violence:** Marginalisation and disadvantage can exacerbate expressions of toxic masculinity, antifeminine attitudes, racial violence, and violence against women. For instance, unemployed men who are unable to fulfil the [breadwinner role \(male wage earner\) may feel emasculated](#) by their partners' employment and may respond by seeking to reclaim their sense of respect through domination and domestic violence. Similarly, men who face limited job opportunities may experience frustration and alienation, attributing their [unemployment to immigrants and racial minorities, which can lead to violent expressions of toxic masculinity directed towards these groups](#).

4. Influence of Media

- **Andrew Tait:** Media influencers, including Andrew Tait, have advocated for men to restore their sense of traditional masculinity and oppose gender equality and feminism. This resistance is associated with toxic masculinity and acts of violence against women. This narrative has particularly resonated with disaffected young men, as well as those from middle-class backgrounds, as indicated by [recent research that highlights incidents of sexism and misogyny exhibited by young men towards female teachers in elite educational institutions](#).

Solutions and Current Thinking

1. Addressing Root Causes

- **Deprivation and Marginalisation:** The primary solution involves tackling the key causes, such as deprivation and marginalisation. However, given the systemic nature of these



issues, additional solutions are required.

2. Promoting Positive Masculinities

- **Programmes:** Initiatives designed to combat toxic masculinity often emphasise the promotion of positive, healthy, and [progressive expressions of masculinity](#). While evidence indicates favourable outcomes, especially for men with higher social status or educational attainment, these programmes also carry particular risks, and the outcomes remain uncertain.
- **Complications:** Advocating for a reframing of traditional masculinity [reinforces it as the sole gender expression available to men and boys, thereby devaluing femininity](#). Moreover, emphasising masculinity risks veering into exaggerated expressions and negative toxic behaviours. Additionally, the terms "healthy" or "progressive" masculinities are vague and lack consensus on their definitions, complicating the assessment of such programmes.

Conclusion

As stated, engaging with concepts of masculinities is vital for the success of any intervention aimed at promoting community cohesion or combating violence against women. My preferred approach to addressing these issues through the lens of masculinities involves [community-based programmes delivered by trusted individuals with whom both young and adult males can relate](#).

Furthermore, rather than concentrating on masculinities and possibly endorsing a limited view of gender for men and boys, I advocate for disrupting toxic masculinities by promoting 'healthy' or 'positive' behaviours and raising awareness about the detrimental effects of toxic masculinity on both men and women. Developing this type of programme should incorporate the perspectives of users, women, and those who engage in racial or gender violence, community cohesion experts, as well as scholars of masculinity who comprehend the complexities of masculinity construction and its variability across different groups, contexts and regions.

This programme could also enhance employment and educational opportunities for young men. Research, [including my own](#), illustrates how hyper and/or toxic masculinity often leads to a disaffected relationship with education and a preference for traditionally masculine manual jobs. It also demonstrates that disrupting this form of masculinity through social influences can broaden the employment aspirations of marginalised young men.

Should any ideas in this evidence need further clarification, or if you require additional oral evidence, I am more than happy to provide both.



Best wishes

Dr Gater



THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION
2015



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE



Athena
SWAN
Silver Award



UK Quality Assured
Sicrwydd Ansawdd y DU

Registered Charity No. 1136855
Elusen Gofrestredig Rhif. 1136855