

# “gays in the closet, women in the kitchen”

[Psychology](#), [Abuse](#)



## "Gays in the Closet, Women in the Kitchen" Active Learning Assignment #1

To delve into the world of male masculinity is to open a can of worms. In the world we live in today, the "tough guise" persona is eroding against its own will. Men are becoming more feminine: they get facials, pedicures, and have spa trips. Aside from the frivolous things, however, men are finally beginning to open up more and become more understanding. There are also men fighting against this transformation. In my opinion however, this change hardly makes them less of a man. In fact, it makes them more of a man that women would want to be with. As Braid Paisley, the country singer, ever so eloquently puts it: "I'll pour out my heart, hold your hand in the car, write a love song that makes you cry, Then turn right around knock some jerk to the ground, 'Cause he copped a feel as you walked by. I can hear you now talking to your friends saying, "Yeah girls he's come a long way" from dragging his knuckles and carrying a club and building a fire in a cave. But when you say a backrub means only a backrub then you swat my hand when I try. Well, what can I say at the end of the day, Honey, I'm still a guy." One of the most interesting ideas in the documentary was the exploration of masculinity and its link to fear as a way of gaining respect. A clip shown quoted: "Never show weakness, the only pain that matters is the pain you inflict". Quotes like these are misleading; telling the young, influential men of the world that the only way to earn respect and power is by disrespecting women and putting down the 'little guy'. The over masculine, chauvinistic male persona is not the best way to succeed anymore. The business world has never before been as well balanced with men and women as it is in this century. As women have finally begun to find the equality they have long

worked for, and as these women strive for success, there are men holding tightly to what used to be a male dominant culture. With women and homosexuals gaining equality in the work place it is leaving less room for the men of the business world to succeed. There are particular areas, even in the business world, in which a woman might succeed more than a man. Instead of taking on certain qualities to become more adapt in these areas, men are backlashing and gripping tight to the past. What is interesting is to actually look into the past. Long ago, at the beginning of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, it was chivalry that was so important to men. When women were of a less threatening and intimidating nature, men were able to rule freely that which was theirs; they ran their companies, their homes, and their women with little refute. It is only now, in a world where women are of equal strength, intelligence, and with that men have become more aggressive. When they could learn to adjust and co-mingle with the uprising businesswomen, they resist because that is how they have been taught. The masculine nature that has been so firmly ground into the men of this century is a complex trait. These macho characteristics have been pushed onto these young men since they were children. If the socializing techniques between fathers and their sons or brothers are examined, it is easy to see how a young boy can grow up believing intimidation, or even violence, is the only way the get things done. As young boys, socializing comes in many ways: Boys will go hunting with their fathers and brothers, join a sports team, or play videogames. These activities, while bonding in nature, all teach the same lesson: in order to get what you want you must use force to take it. The problem with ideals like these is the ends to which they lead. If you were

to look around any elementary school yard or high school cafeteria, there would be many things you would see, but young heroes in their youth may not be one of them. While it is unfair to say that all young boys are violent and aggressive, it has been shown that it is almost always boys who cause such severe trauma as school shootings and other like events. While perhaps not all upbringings will result in such an event, there is one epidemic rising from the rooted beliefs of masculinity: bullying. In an article written by Bob Ditter for the American Camp Association, Ditter lists the methods young male bullies use upon their prey: boys abuse their victims physically by hitting, poking, kicking, or otherwise hurting their victim, they intimidate the victim by threatening to physically injure them and they shame or humiliate the victim verbally, especially by questioning their masculinity. All of these methods are tied together in a way that shows the target that the bully is bigger, stronger, smarter, and more of a man than the target is. Bullying has become a national problem; statistics show over 71% of secondary schools has had bullying incidents. It is in these efforts to assert oneself as a young and upcoming dominant male in our society that these young boys put down and even harm other young boys and girls. Over 75% of school shootings, most often in an act of revenge, are tied to bullying. In an effort of showing he was not a coward, a shooter interviewed in the documentary says: “Murder is not weak and slow-witted. Murder is gutsy and daring”. Because of the acts of one or more school mates, this poor boy felt the only way to assert himself was to kill other students. If these are the young men we are raising in this society, how dangerous must the future be? At what cost are we gaining strong men who can lead us on? Would it not be easier for us, as

a society, to equalize and share responsibilities? It would certainly be less violent. In the field of psychology operant conditioning is a very well-known technique. Operant conditioning is a method used to change or adjust operant behaviors through a reward / punishment system. More applicable, the textbook definition: operant conditioning deals with the modification of "voluntary behavior" or operant behavior. Operant behavior operates on the environment and is maintained by its consequences. It is this conditioning that creates the ideas in young men and boys minds that they must act a certain way. For instance, they watch a movie in which a strong man does very aggressive and violent things to obtain something he wants and, of course, he succeeds. After watching this movie, the young boy goes out into the world, sees something he wants (perhaps a toy his brother or sister is playing with) and uses force to get it. It only needs to work one time for this young boy to have learned that if you are bigger and stronger then you can take what you want from other people. It is not a matter of mindlessness that these conditions are brought to be but of simple human nature paired with our society's strict gender role assignments. It is human nature to want things, and in Neanderthal days taking was the only way of getting what you needed. It is in this DNA, in man's deep rooted macho identity, where the masculine ideals are bred. It is also due to our gender roles, which are placed upon us from birth, that men and women act in such different ways. As stated before, it is human nature for men to be assertive as opposed to passive. As stated in chapter 10 of Human Sexuality (the textbook), men are expected to be more dominant than women, men are also portrayed as competitive, powerful, and violent. It is these expectations that boys are

being raised with and often feel they cannot live up to. With media only emphasizing the hero's strength and adequacy, boys will try their very hardest to live up to such impossible standards. With testosterone pumping it is difficult to adjust to a world where things are softer and less at war than in a world where men and women coexist, especially when it is taught from a very young age that men are to be in charge. It is challenging to accept the idea of a world where either the man or the woman can be the dominant character in the home or work place. Perhaps through evolution, or other means of change, the transition from macho cave man bully to peaceful coworker will someday become less turbulent.