School Shooters Are Men

Let's Talk About It

Trigger Warning: Violence (sexual and gun)

Shania Twain, Trump
Think about the school shooters you hear about on the news...

They are often described as:
- mentally-ill
- abused
- white

And people blame:
- widespread violence in media (ex: video games)
- access to guns

Often their gender is left out of the conversation, but as "Adolescent Masculinity, Homophobia, and Violence" by Michael S Kimmel and Matthew Mahler argues, MASCULINITY should be examined as a factor in school shooters' motivation.

In their study of the school shooters from 1982-2001, nearly all shooters recounted being bullied, beat up, and gay-baited. Specifically, they were called "gay" not because there was any evidence they were a homosexual, but because they were different from other boys in ways that were seen as incompatible with masculinity, such as:
- shy, geekish, weird
- artistic, musical, theatrical, nonathletic
- bookish, honor students

CASE STUDY: Michael Carneal

- thick glasses, high school band
  - alienated & bullied
    - in middle school, he was pantsed and became hyper-afraid of others seeing him naked
- called "faggot" and labeled "gay"
- stole 2 shotguns, 2 semi-automatic rifles, a pistol, 700 rounds of amm o, claiming: "I just wanted the guys to think I was cool."
- "the guys" ignored him and on Dec 1st, Carneal opened fire on a prayer circle.
- he killed 3 and injured 5
- he told psychiatrists weighing his sanity: "PEOPLE RESPECT ME NOW"
Homophobia - being constantly threatened and bullied if you are gay as well as the homophobic desire to make sure that others know that you are a 'real man' plays an important role in the motivation of school shooters.

**Masculinity**

- Sees violence as a legitimate way to resolve conflict (encourages violence)
- Stoic, uncommunicative, unable to express emotions other than anger
- Ability to conquer women (emphasizes straightness and sexual violence)

"There is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports... Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself—during moments at least—as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior."

**Case Study Connection: Capitol Riot**

Trying to prove or reclaim one's masculinity by violent means is not limited to boys and young men in school and many examples can be found in our everyday lives, such as the unfortunate commonality of sexual violence perpetrated by men. The January 6th Riot at the US Capitol is another such example. Donald Trump personifies toxic masculinity and his authority position gave him the platform to spout misogyny as legitimate, so his loss in the 2020 election signaled a threat to male dominance in the United States. Spurred on by Trump and his touting of "conspiracy theories, narratives of victimhood, and frenzied calls to arms," an overwhelmingly white, male mob attempted to overthrow the government.

There were many examples of gender-based violence or intimidation such as women's restrooms being trashed and female politicians like Nancy Pelosi being sought out as targets for violence.
WHY IS IT ALWAYS WHITE BOYS?

Racialized boys and other marginalized groups have experience being subordinated and "can tap into a collective narrative repertoir of resistance." White boys who commit school shootings believe they had no other options: no political rhetoric to point to, no friends to validate them, authorities and parents seemed unresponsive, and there were no self-affirming practices available.

WHAT DO WE DO?

More broadly, we have to dismantle and abolish the "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks) because these systems enforce gender roles and expectations that we are socialized to adopt that ultimately "program" us to believe we must act in a certain way to be accepted by our peers. These gender roles and expectations are baked into our everyday lives and institutions so we can start with everyday actions to combat it!

+ Encourage men to express all emotions in healthy & safe ways
+ Do not enforce gender roles on others
+ Educate ourselves on our privileges and work to discover and unlearn our biases
+ Bring men into conversations about feminism and gender equity
+ Destigmatize getting help and encourage men to seek therapy
+ Stop gender policing (Kimmel)
+ Teach nonviolent conflict resolution skills
+ Denounce sexism and misogyny when we see it and call perpetrators into the conversation
+ Properly label gender-based violence as a gender issue (inclusive of men as perpetrators) not a women's issue
+ Stop glamorizing gender reveal parties
Sources:
Zine pages 1-6 (until section “Case Study Connection: Capitol Riot”) references:

Other Sources

“Not just a women’s issue: Dr. Jackson Katz explores why we need “more than a few good men” to end the cycle of violence against women.” The Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford, April 5 2016.