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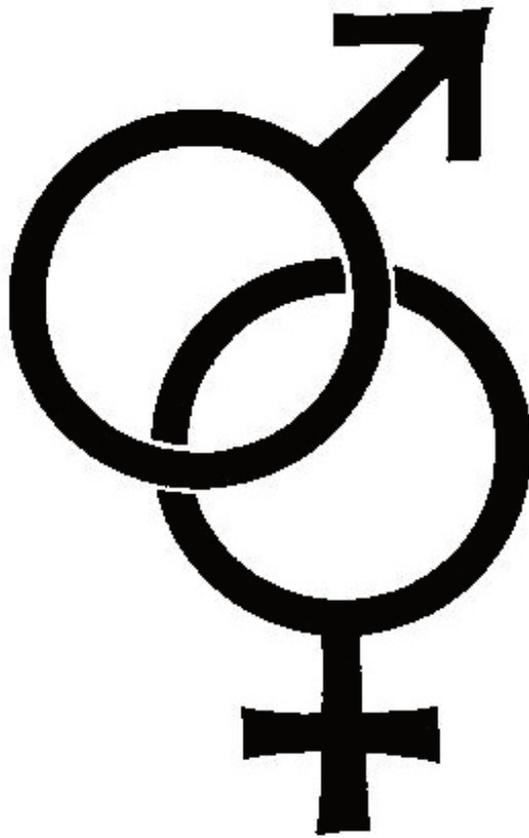
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Evolved Sex Differences in Modern Context

DAVID C. GEARY



Darwin's (1871) sexual selection – competition with individuals of the same sex and species for access to mates and discriminative choice of mating partners – is now widely accepted in the biological sciences as the primary source of evolved sex differences, but remains controversial in psychology and the social sciences. Nevertheless, I have argued that the associated principles of intrasexual competition and intersexual choice provide the unifying framework for not only understanding the biological basis of human sex differences, but also for more fully understanding cultural and historical variation in how these differences are expressed (Geary, 2010). Here, I use sex differences in patterns of academic achievement, behavioral aggression and risk taking, psychological disorders, and occupational achievement to illustrate how sex differences in a variety of evolved traits can manifest in a modern context.

Keywords: evolutionary psychology, gender, males, male studies

Psychologists and social scientists have documented sex differences in social behavior, cognitive abilities, and academic outcomes to name just a few for more than 100 years (e.g., Woolley, 1910, 1914; for summary see Ellis et al., 2008). The prevailing view 100 years ago and a prominent view today is that these differences are the result of some form of socialization (e.g., Wood & Eagly, 2002). Woolley (1914) introduced the idea that some human sex differences might be the result of evolution and sexual selection – traits that facilitate competition for mates (intrasexual competition) or that influence mate choices (intersexual choice; Darwin, 1871) – but then quickly rejected the idea. Sexual selection in fact languished in the backwaters of biological theory and research for 100 years (Cronin, 1991), but this has changed over the past four decades. Biologists have now demonstrated that traits that facilitate competition for mates or that influence mate choices become elaborated over evolutionary time and that their here-and-now proximate expression is influenced by pre- and post-natal exposure to sex hormones (Andersson, 2004; Adkins-Regan, 2005). In one of my books, *Male, female*, I used this theoretical approach to organize and integrate human sex differences across a wide range of traits, from parenting to play and social development to brain and cognition (Geary, 1998, 2010).

In many ways, the world within which most of us now live differs in important ways from the ecologies in which our ancestors evolved. For instance, given species-typical social experiences all children learn the language to which they are exposed with little effort or explicit instruction. But, success in the modern world requires much more than this; reading, writing, and basic mathematics are now critical to a productive life. I have proposed that these non-evolved academic competencies are built from more basic, evolved systems (Geary, 1995) through instruction and the domain-general abilities of working memory and fluid intelligence (Geary, 2005, 2007, 2008). In this view, reading and writing, as examples, are built from the evolved language system among others (e.g., theory of mind).

I proposed in *Male, female* that women's tendency to compete through the subtle manipulation of social relationships, for instance, by spreading gossip to sully other women's social reputation, resulted in an evolutionary elaboration of language and related competencies (e.g., face processing; see also Geary, Winegard, & Winegard, 2014). These sex differences in turn may provide girls and women with advantage in academic domains that are built from language and related cognitive competencies. I overview in the first section below the evidence for the prediction of corresponding sex differences in reading and writing, and reprise an earlier argument that men's advantage in some areas of mathematics are secondary to evolved difference in spatial abilities and in interest in non-living things (Geary, 1996). In the second section, I expand the linking of evolved sex differences to modern contexts as related to behavioral risk taking (e.g., violence) and psychological disorders (e.g., anxiety and depression). In the final section, I explore how evolved motivational and cognitive biases influence sex differences in occupational choices and success.

SEX DIFFERENCES IN ACADEMIC COMPETENCIES

Ellis et al. (2008) identified 21 studies published in the past seven decades of children's and adolescents' liking of school. In every nation in which it has been assessed and without exception, girls report liking school more than boys. It is also the case that girls typically get better grades than do

boys from elementary school through college in North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. This is nothing new, as the earliest study of this kind was published more than one hundred years ago (Miles, 1910). These differences emerge because the social organization of schools is better suited to girls and because in relation to boys, girls are more compliant with teacher requests, miss fewer school days, and turn in their assignments with greater frequency. At the same time, there is no sex difference in overall academic competence (Willingham & Cole, 1997), but there are consistent differences in some specific academic areas, including reading, writing, mathematics, and the sciences (Hedges & Nowell, 1995).

The largest differences favoring girls are for components of writing, including spelling and the correct use of grammar; about 7 out of 10 girls outperform the average boy in overall writing performance. Girls also have a small but very consistent cross-national advantage in reading achievement (Machin & Pekkarinen, 2008; Stoet & Geary, 2013), with about 3 out of 5 girls outperforming the average boy. The largest differences favoring boys are for the physical sciences, mechanics, and technology (Hedges & Nowell, 1995; Stumpf & Stanley, 1998); in some of these areas, more than 9 out of 10 boys outscore the average girl. Boys' advantage in mathematics is small and varies from one nation to the next (Stoet & Geary, 2013), but there are more consistent sex differences in some areas of mathematics (Halpern, Benbow, Geary, Gur, Hyde, & Gernsbacher, 2007). There is no question that the development of these and any academic competence is dependent on experiences, especially sound schooling. The question here is whether any more basic cognitive sex differences make learning of some academic areas easier for girls than for boys and easier for boys than for girls in other areas.

Academic Patterns

I have argued elsewhere that the working memory and attentional components of intelligence – there appear to be no substantive sex differences in intelligence, but more males at the high and low ends (Strand, Deary, & Smith, 2006) – contribute to the ability of people to modify evolved cognitive systems to learn how to read, write, do geometry, and other culturally-specific academic competencies (Geary, 2007). As noted, even with similar average IQs, sex differences can emerge in academic domains to the extent there are sex differences in the evolved systems on which the academic competences are built.

Reading

As noted, girls and women have a modest but consistent advantage on reading tests, across historical periods and nations (Hedges & Nowell, 1995; Machin & Pekkarinen, 2008; Willingham & Cole, 1997; Stoet & Geary, 2013). I have suggested that the advantage of girls and women in the mechanics of language production and in language comprehension evolved through their use of relational aggression to control social relationships, and secondarily may provide them with an advantage when learning how to read and in comprehending text that involves nuanced social relationships.

As an example, one of these likely evolved differences involves a bias for women to engage both hemispheres during the processing of some language sounds and during language comprehension (Kansaku, Yamaura, & Kitazawa, 2000; McGlone, 1980). Pugh et al. (1997) found that the representation of language sounds in the both the left- and right-hemisphere is strongly associated with

skill at making correspondences between letters and the associated sounds. In other words, individuals (more women than men) who process language sounds in both the left- and right-hemisphere may be more skilled at matching letters to their correct English pronunciations, a critical skill for decoding unfamiliar words during reading. Women's richer input layers in Wernicke's area (critical for language processing), as potentially related to the discrimination of language sounds may be an important source of this advantage (Leonard et al., 2008), but this remains to be determined. My point is that there are biologically-based sex differences in language processing that make the use of phonetic decoding, a critical early reading skill, easier for girls and women than boys and men.

However, an advantage in language processing may give girls a boost during the early phases of reading acquisition, when phonemic decoding is particularly important, but may be less important for skilled readers. In other words, the relation between the sex differences in language processing and reading achievement may differ depending on the skill level of the sample and the reading competency being assessed. These basic language processing differences might result in a sex difference among students (or adults) who are still dependent on phonological decoding (i.e., poor readers), but may not be as important for more skilled readers. In an analysis of sex differences in the academic achievement of 1.5 million adolescents across 75 nations or economic regions (e.g., Hong Kong), Stoet and Geary (2013) found such a pattern. At the lowest levels of reading competence, girls' skills are about $\frac{1}{2}$ a standard deviation better than boys' skills, but the gap narrows to $\frac{1}{5}$ of a standard deviation at the highest skill levels.

Independent of brain anatomy, sex differences in reading interests contribute to the sex difference on reading comprehension tests (Asher & Markell, 1974). Girls and women read more than boys and men and read more about romance and other interpersonal relationships than do boys and men, whereas boys and men read more about politics, competition (e.g., sports), and technical matters (e.g., Benton, 1995; Willingham & Cole, 1997). These sex differences mirror some of the sex differences seen during children's social development (e.g., in peer relationships), in adolescent and adult behavioral and social interests (e.g., engagement in group-level sports; Deaner et al., 2012), and as related to object use; I proposed that the latter is related to a male-bias in tool construction and use during our evolutionary history (Geary, 2010). In short, I am proposing that the sex differences in reading interests and through this reading comprehension reflect deeper sex differences that are a reflection of our evolutionary history. Girls and women are more interested in the details and nuance of their actual social relationships than are boys and men, for instance, and this interest is expressed in their leisure reading and contributes to the sex differences in amount of leisure reading and through this reading comprehension.

Mathematics

Mathematics is considered a gateway to employment in well-paying and prestigious science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions (STEM), and because of this the issue of sex differences in mathematical competence is a continuing source of review, conjecture, and heated debate (Halpern et al., 2007; Ceci & Williams, 2007; Ceci, Williams, & Barnett, 2009; Stoet & Geary, 2012). As noted, there are small or no average sex differences for many mathematical domains and in some nations girls have higher average mathematics achievement than boys (these tend to be nations with low overall achievement; Stoet & Geary, 2012). There are, nonetheless, several areas in which boys

and men have advantages – for instance, some areas of geometry and in solving word problems – and especially for problems that are novel, difficult, and when visuospatial representations can be used to aid in problem solving (e.g., Johnson, 1984; Penner, 2003). Overall, at the high end of mathematical competence there are between two and four boys and men for every girl and woman, depending on the difficulty of the test; the more difficult the test, the larger the gap (Stoet & Geary, 2013; Wai, Cacchio, Putallaz, & Makel, 2010)

In a 1996 target article in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, I argued that these differences are related, at least in part, to the advantage of boys and men in the spatial abilities that support navigation in large-scale space as well as to sex difference in interest in people versus things (Geary, 1996); the latter is associated with greater interest in STEM fields and, as noted, I suggested is related to men's bias toward tool construction in traditional societies and presumably throughout our, at least recent evolution (Murdock, 1981). I also proposed that the sex differences in variability in mathematical ability and achievement – there are not only more boys and men at the high, but often more at the low ends of these tests – can be indirectly linked to sexual selection.

Sex differences in navigational and other spatial abilities are found in species in which male have larger home ranges than females (Gaulin & Fitzgerald, 1986; Jašarević, Williams, Roberts, Geary, & Rosenfeld, 2012). The large home ranges in turn are typically associated with searching for mates. For humans, the sex difference in home range size is found in traditional societies (Cashdan, Marlowe, Crittenden, Porter, & Wood, 2012), and may be related to intertribal warfare, hunting, and long-distance political affiliations that are often associated with finding a wife or gaining social status. Sexually selected traits are typically more variable in their expression than naturally selected traits (Cotton, Fowler, & Pomiankowski, 2004) and thus boys' and men's spatial abilities should be more variable than that of girls and women (e.g., Levine, Vasilyeva, Lourenco, Newcombe, & Huttenlocher, 2005). To the extent spatial abilities contribute to mathematics achievement, boys and men are predicted to be more variable on mathematics tests.

BEHAVIORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SEX DIFFERENCES

Among the many sex differences covered in *Male, female* are those related to risk taking and violence (see also Daly & Wilson, 1988). Across species, both of these behavioral tendencies are more common in the sex with more intense intrasexual competition over access to mates, including boys and men. The obverse side to this is risk avoidance, which is more common in the sex that invests heavily in offspring and is more discriminating in mate choices, including girls and women. Benenson (2014) nicely captured the concept in a recent book on sex differences in social behavior, *Warriors and Worriers*. The title maps nicely onto broader sex differences in psychopathology, namely externalizing and internalizing disorders, respectively (Caspi et al., 2014). I touch on some of these differences in the behavioral and psychological sex differences sections below.

Behavioral Sex Differences

On the basis of more intense intrasexual competition among men than women during our evolutionary history, it is not surprising to find that boys and men outnumber girls and women when it

comes to violence and accidental injuries (Evans, 2006; Rosen & Peterson, 1990; Rushton, 1996). By the way, the best single indicator of more intense physical intrasexual competition in one sex or the other is a sex difference in physical size. This is indisputably true in humans, and is particularly large for upper body lean muscle mass and strength; when combined with differences in upper body skeletal structure, these differences suggest an evolutionary history of male use of projectile and blunt force weapons (Geary, 2010).

Violence

Consistent with an evolutionary history of physical intrasexual competition among males, there “is no known human society in which the level of lethal violence among women even approaches that among men” (Daly & Wilson, 1988, p. 146). In many cultures without formal laws and a central government to suppress violence (Pinker, 2012), murder can result in increased social status and marriage prospects for the perpetrator, although this is not typically the case in the modern world. In an analysis of same-sex homicide rates across modern and developing societies, including homicide records dating from more than 700 years ago, Daly and Wilson found that male-on-male homicide occurs between 30 and 40 times more frequently than does female-on-female homicide. Male-on-male homicide occurs most frequently during the initial mate-finding stage of the lifespan (i.e., late teens through mid-20s) and more frequently among unmarried than married men (Wilson & Daly, 1985). Moreover, roughly 2 out of 3 male-on-male homicides occur as a result of social conflict, rather than being crime-specific (e.g., during the course of a robbery) and more than ½ of the homicides are associated with “matters of status competition and the maintenance of face” (Daly & Wilson, 1988, p. 175). Status-related competition is in fact the core feature of male-male competition in many non-human species (Andersson, 1994), and thus Daly and Wilson’s findings are not surprising.

Men not only kill each other much more frequently than do women, they also kill women more frequently than women kill men (Daly & Wilson, 1988). This form of male-on-female violence, as well as serious nonlethal assaults, often stems from mate guarding and sexual jealousy. Again, mate guarding is a common behavior in males of non-human species, especially when they invest in the wellbeing of any resulting offspring. I am not, of course, excusing these forms of violence, but rather noting that we can better understand them and perhaps address them by placing them within an evolutionary context. Even if male violence was once effective and adaptive, it no longer is nor should be in the modern world.

Accidents

When successfully executed, a risky behavior can result in fame and sometimes fortune, but often just a boost in status among your peer group. When unsuccessful (and sometimes when successful), risky behavior often leads to accidental injuries. In a comprehensive assessment of childhood injuries and deaths in the United States, Rosen and Peterson (1990) documented a much higher frequency of these in boys than in girls. Boys experience near drowning nearly twice as frequently as girls and die as a result of drowning almost four times as frequently as girls. Boys are injured and killed more frequently than are girls while riding bicycles, playing on recreational equipment, and during unorganized (i.e., not supervised by adults) sports activities. For every girl that is injured on a playground, four boys are injured. For every girl who sustains a serious burn, three boys sustain an

equally-serious burn (e.g., while playing with fireworks).

Rosen and Peterson (1990) concluded that the sex differences in accidental injury and death rates were related to the sex differences in activity levels, risk taking, and the frequency of engagement in rough-and-tumble and competitive play. Evans (2006) made a similar conclusion based on the finding that the sex difference in traffic fatalities, including pedestrians who are killed, peaks in the late teens and early 20s, that is, during the mate finding stage of the lifespan. Again, engaging in risky, competitive behaviors is common in species in which male compete intensely for access to mates (Andersson, 1994).

Psychological Sex Differences

Whereas boys and men are more likely to act on their feelings, sometimes to their determinant and sometimes to that of others, girls and women are more likely to internalize their social and psychological issues. As a result, girls and women outnumber boys and men when it comes to anxiety, depression, and eating disorders.

Anxiety and Depression

One of the mechanisms underlying the sex difference in accidental injury is risk aversion. This in turn is associated with a fuller consideration of the potential adverse consequences of the behavior; boys and men are aware of these but they discount them and focus instead on the potential rewards. The affective component of this mechanism is likely to be lower thresholds for fear and anxiety, and rumination on potential consequences of one's decisions. The benefits are reduced injuries and other costs associated with risk taking, but these benefits may come at a cost of increased risk of anxiety-related disorders. Indeed, beginning in adolescence and continuing through adulthood, there are almost twice as many girls and women who suffer from socially important levels of anxiety and depression as same-age boys and men (e.g., Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Merikangas, & Walter, 2005; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987).

Rumination allows for a more complete evaluation of risks or the nuance of social relationships, but can also increase risk of depression. Compounding these biases, are girls' and women's use of relational aggression – gossip, social manipulation, shunning – for competing with one another; intrasexual competition is more physical and intense among men, but it also occurs (more subtly) among women. One consequence, I believe, is a higher sensitivity of girls and women to the nuance of social relationships that often provides a competitive advantage in attempting to monitor and out maneuver same-sex rivals, but also results in increased risk for internalizing disorders. This is analogous to the cost-benefit trade-offs associated with boys' and men's risk taking.

Further, girls and women use relational aggression to gain access to coveted resources, especially romantic partners (see Geary et al., 2014). Sensitivity to nuance of this maneuvering, as well as disclosure in interpersonal relationships and thus risk of social manipulation by former best friends, appear to make girls more vulnerable to anxiety and depression than boys when victimized by same-sex peers (e.g. Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001). It is not that boys and men are completely clueless when it comes to this form of competition, but rather it does not have the same

degree of social and thus emotional potency as it does for girls and women. The greater intimacy in girls' and women's close same-sex relationships provides important social support, but also comes with risks. Girls and women who co-ruminate too often – repeatedly discuss unsolvable and emotional personal issues – are at risk for later depression (Rose, Carlson, & Waller, 2007); co-rumination also results in increased stress hormone levels (Byrd-Craven, Geary, Rose, & Ponzi, 2008). Girls and women also react more strongly – and thus are more likely to become depressed – to conflict with important people in their life, especially “threats to intimacy and closeness in relationships” (Leadbeater, Blatt, & Quinlan, 1995, p. 12). Adolescent girls, for instance, are four times more likely than same-age boys to experience anxiety and depression following a lost relationship. On top of this, girls and women often experience symptoms of depression when negative life events affect their family or friends, whereas boys and men typically do not.

Eating Disorders

When it comes to men's mate choice preferences, “plump” women are considered more attractive than slender women in 44% of human cultures, as compared to 19% of cultures in which slender women are considered more attractive (Anderson, Crawford, Nadeau, & Lindberg, 1992). The preference for heavier women is strongest in cultures with unpredictable food supplies and thus a wise preference. Even in societies in which slender women are preferred by men as romantic partners, their preferences are still for women with an average body mass index, not the very slender women portrayed in fashion magazines (Rozin & Fallon, 1988). With these facts in mind, why do some women in modern societies develop severe eating disorders? For every adolescent boy or man with anorexia nervosa (self-starvation to stay thin) or bulimia nervosa (binge eating, followed by fasting or vomiting) there are nine same-age girls and women with a similar disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

My suggestion is the combination of men's focus on women's physical traits when they make their mate choices, women's self-focus on these same traits, and mass media presentations of increasingly thin fashion models create a sometimes deadly mix for some women. Specifically, women's motivation to compete for romantic partners is based, in part, on enhancing the traits that men find attractive. For some women, however, this competitive motivation is being expressed in unchecked and unhealthy ways, especially in perfectionistic and competitive women (Bardone-Cone et al., 2007). When these women are exposed to unusually thin fashion models, there appears to be modest increases in their dissatisfaction with their body and distortions of their beliefs about eating (e.g., Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2007; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). The combination can result in a run-away female intrasexual competition and develop into anorexia nervosa, if the woman views thin models as symbolic competitors – how they need to look to attract a high-status husband – and focus on their physical appearance as a means to compete, as many women do. The inherent motivational bias is the same as other women, but has spun out of control due to some combination of personality, media portrayals of “attractive” women, and other factors, no doubt.

SEX DIFFERENCES IN OCCUPATIONAL INTERESTS AND ACHIEVEMENT

In traditional societies, men are much more focused than women on attaining social and culture status, because success in these cultural spheres often meant the difference between reproducing

and not (Irons, 1979). To be sure, social status is important to women and their children, but the consequences of not achieving some modicum of success are not as severe as they are for low status men (see also Hopcroft, 2006; Low, Simon, & Anderson, 2002). It follows from these patterns that men will have an inherent motivational bias to devote time and effort into achieving success in their cultural niche. In the modern world, this translates into men being more focused on occupational success than women. They are predicted to be more likely to pay the costs, including working more hours, taking riskier assignments and jobs, and reduced social and leisure time than are women to achieve occupational success. All of these predicted patterns are found in the modern workplace (Browne, 2002): Across occupations “evidence consistently suggests that despite comparable educational qualifications, tenure, and occupational attitudes, women have not achieved occupational status comparable to that of men” (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997, p. 46). I am not arguing that bias does not sometimes contribute to these differences, but I am saying that bias is not a sufficient explanation for all of them.

In addition to motivational differences, there are cognitive and social traits that are proximate factors that contribute to the sex differences in occupational attainment as well as differences in occupational choices. I illustrate these differences for STEM fields, as these are often a source of social and political contention (National Academy of Sciences, 2006).

Cognitive Influences

More men than women enter high-paying STEM occupations and this pattern contributes to the overall wage advantage enjoyed by men (Paglin & Rufolo, 1990). The attainment of the educational credentials that allow access to a high-paying STEM career, such as engineering, is made easier by a number of cognitive factors; specifically, above average general intelligence and above average spatial, mathematical, and mechanical competencies (Gottfredson, 1997; Humphreys, Lubinski, & Yao, 1993; Paglin & Rufolo, 1990); these same competencies contribute to long-term success in these fields (Kell, Lubinski, Benbow, & Steiger, 2013). Sex differences in spatial, mathematical, and mechanical competencies contribute to the sex difference in the proportion of men and women entering STEM fields. Individuals who enter these fields tend to have SAT-M and Graduate Record Examination-Quantitative scores that are in the 600 to 800 range (500 is average and 800 is the top score) and the ratio of men to women with scores in this range is between 2:1 to more than 5:1 (Paglin & Rufolo, 1990). The ratio of top-scoring men to women on physics tests is nearly 3:1 and about 2.5:1 on chemistry tests (Stanley, 1993). A similar pattern is found for advanced placement tests, including tests in all areas of physics and chemistry (Stanley, Benbow, Brody, Dauber, & Lupkowski, 1992). In other words, many more men than women have the minimal spatial, mathematical, and mechanical competencies needed to succeed in many STEM fields. This said, I note to the reader that women who enter STEM careers are very similar to their male colleagues in many ways (Lubinski, Benbow, Shea, Eftekhari-Sanjani, & Halvorson, 2001); there just are not as many of these women as men.

As I mentioned earlier, at least some of these sex differences appear to be related to the sex difference, favoring boys and men, in evolved spatial-navigational competencies and are thus indirectly related to sexual selection (Geary, 1996). It is also likely that the sex difference, favoring boys and men, in object-oriented interests and activities contributes to some of these sex differences (e.g., in mechanical competencies). These in turn may indirectly reflect the male bias in tool construction

in traditional societies and presumably throughout our evolutionary history, as noted.

Social Influences

I suspect that social sex differences may be relatively more important than the cognitive ones for understanding the why more men than women enter and stay in STEM fields. When women and men are free to choose their own careers, their occupational interests and choices consistently differ (Su, Rounds, & Armstrong, 2009). On occupational interest tests, “young women (score) higher than young men on domestic, artistic, writing, social service, and office service vocational interests and young men (score) higher than young women on business, law, politics, mathematics, science, agriculture, athletics, and mechanical interests” (Willingham & Cole, 1997, p. 178). The sex difference in vocational interests is especially striking among the mathematically gifted. When they are in their 20s, for every mathematically-gifted woman who is working toward or who aspires to earn an advanced degree in a STEM area, there are eight equally-talented men (Lubinski & Benbow, 1994).

For these gifted individuals, the sex difference in the pursuit of an advanced education in STEM areas cannot be attributed to cognitive factors, because all of these women have the mathematical and intellectual competencies necessary to succeed in these careers, nor can the difference be attributed solely to a bias against women; gifted women, as a group, do not view mathematics as a “male” occupation and are not discouraged from pursuing math-intensive careers (e.g., Raymond & Benbow, 1986). Rather, the sex difference in the pursuit of STEM careers is driven in part by the occupational and social interests of these gifted men and women; see National Academy of Sciences (2006) for an alternative explanation.

People who enter STEM fields tend have a relatively “low need for people contact” (Lubinski, Benbow, & Sanders, 1993, p. 701) and tend to prefer work environments that provide many theoretical and investigative activities. Mathematically-gifted men who enter these fields do indeed show this pattern of occupational and social interests. As a group mathematically-gifted women “are more socially and esthetically oriented and have interests that are more evenly divided among investigative, social and artistic pursuits” (Lubinski et al., 1993, p. 702). In short, proportionally few of these women enter STEM fields because they have broader social and occupational interests than their male peers. The gifted women who do enter these fields are very successful in them, but as they move from graduate school to their mid-30s, more of these women than their male peers make trade-offs that will likely effect their career development; specifically, women but not men who have children shift their priorities so they can devote more time to their families and to the wider community (Ferriman, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2009). This pattern follows from an evolved sex difference in the motivation to achieve cultural success, as well as the sex difference in the level of investment in children (Geary, 2000).

DISCUSSION

Biologists are now in agreement that Darwin’s (1871) sexual selection represents a powerful set of processes has shaped and will continue to shape the evolution of all sexually reproducing species

(Andersson, 1994), including our own. To be sure, there is much to be learned, including how the expression of evolved biases is influenced by developmental experience and current context. There are also unresolved issues regarding the evolution of competitiveness in females, especially when they do not compete for mates (Clutton-Brock, 2009; Lyon & Montgomerie, 2012; Stockley & Bro-Jørgensen, 2011); it is now clear that females in many species are highly competitive with one another, although not typically to the same degree as males. These however are just nuances that need to be fleshed out within the context of the strongly supported theoretical framework of sexual selection.

With respect to humans, we will never fully understand developmental and cultural influences on the many sex differences that have been discovered (see Ellis et al., 2008) without placing them in the context of evolution in general and sexual selection in particular (Geary, 2010). We also need to explore more deeply how evolved biases in social behavior, motivation, and cognition are expressed in modern contexts and how these manifest themselves in our day-to-day lives, as with the illustrations I have provided here (see also Winegard, Winegard, & Geary, in press). For those readers who remain unconvinced, I ask you to reflect on the theory of evolution, of which sexual selection is one set of pressures. Evolution is not just another psychological, sociological, or anthropological theory; it has proven to be the unifying meta-theory for all of the biological sciences. Eventually, all psychological, sociological, and anthropological models will need to be reconciled with the principles of natural and sexual selection, which are not only compatible with social and experiential influences on the expression of sex differences, these influences are expected. The reader can choose to be part of the discovery process or you can let these forthcoming scientific advances pass you by.

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Foundations for a Pro-Male Ethics

JASON GREGORY



The ethics of care, or care ethics, aims to restore a concrete context to morality through the recognition that we are embodied selves. This paper analyzes care ethics and how they have been appropriated by prominent feminist philosophers and used to spread invective notions about men. There are many reasons why men should embrace care ethics and incorporate such ethics into a larger pro-male ethics. There are very good moral reason for men to find a balance between an embodied self and an abstract self. Care ethics, incorporated into a pro-male ethics, can help restore a more profound sense of personhood to men, but before this can happen, care ethics need disconnected from those who have misappropriated them for use as an ideological tool to spread misandry.

Keywords: care ethics, rationalist masculine ethics, pro-male ethics, feminist ethics, misandry, feminist-philosophers, alienation, equality, abstract self, embodied self, hierarchy, hypergamy, patriarchy.

The terror and tyranny of equality is something every man faces, where no man has a responsibility to care, only the agreement to not interfere. In this sort of rational ethic, every man confronts the egalitarian self—a *disembedded* and *disembodied* self—nameless, indistinguishable, faceless. There is no possibility of being face-to-face with each other for there are no others. Everybody is nobody—the same. Every man confronts the facelessness of equality, of being-as-nobody. Darkness covers us all under this egalitarian *veil of ignorance*.¹ Such is the terror and tyranny of equality.

Simple egalitarian ethics are not sufficient for humanity because there simply isn't enough humanity in them. The moral domain is too small. The self is decontextualized. The self is relatively meaningless as it becomes indistinguishable from others. The self, under the tyranny of egalitarianism, suffers a crisis of epistemic impoverishment. So, don't call me an egalitarian. I'm not one and neither are you, for you are more than an indistinguishable and faceless self.

If you consider yourself *pro-male*, then it's time to consider a more comprehensive ethics. It's time to expand your moral domain to include more than the so-called *masculine ethics* of rationalist abstract principles of non-interference. It's time to include, within your moral domain, concrete moral principles that restore context and meaning to the self and to others—giving us face-to-face experiences with each other, rather than faceless experiences of everybody-as-nobody. Without such concrete principles, there can be no restorative justice for men and boys and there will never be any genuine voice for men. Consider an ethics that restores to men and women the responsibility to actively care for and about each other.

In contrast to a *care ethics*, the so-called *masculine ethics* of rationalism that infests and manifests itself in various forms of egalitarianism are forms of violence against men that silences the *male voice*. They alienate men from experiencing an authentic self and from profound experiences with others.² These so-called *masculine ethics* promote an atomized individualism that has a logical end of aloneness, cut off from the interrelatedness-of-being. They promote a callous indifference that mangles, strangles, and mutilates an emergent self. They are systems that distort the personhood of men. As such, men are not the primary beneficiaries of these systems. In fact, men are the primary sufferers of them.

It's time for men to reclaim *care ethics*. Consider the principles embodied in a *care ethics* as an expansion of the moral domain that envelopes not only a notion of justice as fairness regarding principles of non-interference, but also includes principles of universal responsibility to care.

Care ethics have been misappropriated and used to spread the invective notion that men have been and continue to be a privileged class of oppressors. It is time to reclaim *care ethics* from those who would misappropriate them as a tool to spread hatred of men and boys.

A Brief History of Care Ethics

Though an *Ethics of Care* is sometimes called a *feminine* or *feminist ethics*, it has philosophical roots in Aristotelian virtue-ethics, Hume's sentimentalism, American Pragmatism, and Levinasian ethics.³ So, it's not entirely accurate to categorize an *Ethics of Care* as *feminine* or *feminist ethics*. In fact, it has been criticized for perpetuating the stereotype that women are naturally better caregivers and inherently better at nurturing/mothering. That critique tends to highlight the distinction between humanist-feminism and gynocentric-feminism as laid out by feminist-philosophers like Iris M. Young.⁴ It has also been criticized as a form of Nietzschean slave morality and there are plenty of other critiques on the topic, if one is inclined to further research it.⁵

Further research on *care ethics* leads inevitably to the feminist, psychologist, and professor at NYU—Carol Gilligan. She has been and continues to be a most prominent purveyor of care ethics.⁶ Her 1970s and 1980s *research* on gender differences and morality is often credited for sparking life back into an Ethics of Care.⁷ Much of her research was primarily a reactionary response to work done by Lawrence Kohlberg on the development of moral reasoning and judgment.⁸

Kohlberg postulated six sequential stages of moral development, the highest stage being primarily concerned with abstract notions of justice based on universal principles. See Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and Kantian ethics for a better understanding of these rationalist ways in which to derive ethical systems.⁹ Kohlberg's initial conclusions showed (arguably) that women typically only develop their moral reasoning to about stage three of this three level, six stage psychological theory.

Gilligan simply could not accept this conclusion and set out to prove Kohlberg's conclusion wrong. Gilligan essentially tried to demonstrate that Kohlberg's tests were biased in favor of the so-called *masculine ethics*. Specifically, Kohlberg often used the Heinz dilemma as a tool to assess moral development.¹⁰ In response to this test, boys, more often than not, would reason the primacy of life over property to find a *solution* to the dilemma. Girls tended to be unsure and evasive in their answers to this dilemma and Kohlberg interpreted these responses as an indicator of their being morally underdeveloped.

Gilligan interpreted the girl's responses as an indicator of their being as morally developed, if not more so than the boys. Gilligan saw that the Heinz dilemma decontextualized morality. The dilemma was not concrete enough and so it was seen, by Gilligan, as a form of violence itself because it removed from moral reasoning the particularities of a concrete context.

Gilligan wrote that "women's judgments pointed toward an identification of the violence inherent in the dilemma itself which was seen to compromise the justice of any of its possible resolutions. This construction of the dilemma led the women to recast the moral judgment from a consideration of the good to a choice between evils."¹¹

Clearly, a dilemma is a choice between two equally bad options, but for Gilligan, the dilemma, severed from context, was a violence to the possibility of justice. Gilligan interpreted the seeming timidity and evasiveness of the girl's responses reflected this level of awareness. As such, Gilligan concludes that their responses represented a much higher level of moral development than Kohlberg's initial assessment.

This was Gilligan's *epiphany*, as she calls it, giving her notoriety and an academic career that spans more than thirty years. During that time, there have been some who called into question her research methodology. A public dispute between Gilligan and Christina Hoff Sommers over the topic of the research data played out over a decade ago.¹² Regardless of Gilligan's research credibility and methodology, her idea has lent itself to philosophy.¹³

Any good introductory ethics or political philosophy course now contains at least a chapter or two on *Ethics of Care*.

The Misappropriation of Care Ethics as Misandry in Political Philosophy

The feminist political philosopher—Seyla Benhabib, uses *care ethics* in her work, *The Generalized and the Concrete Other*, to make a sharp critique of the so-called rationalist *masculine ethics* from Hobbes to Rawls.¹⁴ However, Benhabib's paper is a prime example of how *care ethics* have been used

to promote misandry and disguise it as academic philosophy. Though her critique of rationalist ethics is brilliant, the blatant, rampant, and profound misandry in her critique diminishes its overall quality, poisoning everything.¹⁵

She even violates one of the ethical principles that she promotes, failing to give voice and context to the particular men associated with her critique, lumping men, from Hobbes to Rawls, into the general category of The Patriarchy™, describing the male creators of these rationalist systems of ethics as nothing but men motivated by the unchecked narcissism of their male egos.

For example, Benhabib makes reference to a passage from Hobbes' work, suggesting that we should consider men to be like mushrooms that suddenly spring forth from the earth, "without all kind of engagement to each other."¹⁶ Benhabib goes from this passage to the conclusion that this vision of men is an "ultimate picture of autonomy... [that]...frees the male ego from the most natural and basic bond of dependence," one's bond to mother.¹⁷ As such, Benhabib suggests that Hobbes tried to replace one of the most intimate bonds of connection and interrelatedness, the bond of child to mother, with a bond of man to nature—relegating mother to the domain of nature and segregating her away from the narcissistic male ego and its desire for ultimate autonomy.

So, it is clear. Benhabib knows that this severing of connection is harmful to men. Man, disconnected from one of the most intimate bonds of interpersonal connection, contributes to the creation of a narcissist who "sees the world in his own image; who has no awareness of the limits of his own desires and passions; and who cannot see himself through the eyes of another." She goes on to say that the "narcissism of this sovereign self is destroyed by the presence of the other."¹⁸

Benhabib then channels Hegel, saying that the "story of the autonomous male ego is the saga of this initial sense of loss in confrontation with the other, and the gradual recovery from this original narcissistic wound through the sobering experience of war, fear, domination, anxiety, and death. The last installment in this drama is the social contract: the establishment of the law to govern all. Having been thrust out of their narcissistic universe into a world of insecurity by their sibling brothers, these individuals have to reestablish the authority of the father in the image of the law."¹⁹

Again, it is clear. Benhabib sees the creation of this man as a creation of a man severed from one of the most intimate bonds of connection—the facticity of his connection to mother, but Benhabib completely fails to attribute this state of affairs to anything other than the narcissism of male ego and The Patriarchy™.

Benhabib fails to provide a satisfactory account of why this happens, falling back on the tired narrative of The Patriarchy™. It must be The Patriarchy™. It must be the devaluation of women, mothers and all things *feminine* or *natural* that produces (or at least coincides with) the narcissistic male ego. Benhabib doesn't explore other options or theories. Instead, she simply resorts to scapegoating men in-general as an explanation for why these particular men contributed to the development of *rationalist ethics*.

Flipping the tables, one could as easily (and wrongheadedly misogynistic or not) say that these men developed their rational *masculine ethics* in response to experiences with the unchecked narcissistic female egos of their mothers and women who ruthlessly severed them from the metaphorical umbilical cord of the private sphere and home, throwing them into the world, alienated, alone, disconnected. One could as easily blame the mother's narcissistic desire for "ultimate autonomy." Perhaps the mother, when her narcissistic ego was forced into a confrontation with the other—her children, severed connections in order to preserve her narcissistic world of self-absorption and self-indulgence. Perhaps the development of these rationalist *masculine ethics* were nothing

but a response by men to accommodate the narcissistic female ego?

Benhabib isn't going to flip the table in this way. That would require giving some sort of contextual heritage to these men. No, for Benhabib to critique these men, she needs them stripped of such relevancies. She needs them to exist as nothing but narcissistic male ego. For her, not even The Patriarchy™ can exist without it. Which, in turn, props itself up with the patriarchal structures of law—the social contract, which “only forces them to become less destructive” because men in-general are nothing but the purely destructive mania of narcissistic male ego.²⁰ And all these structures, in turn, according to Benhabib, prop up the narcissistic male ego in a circular fashion that removes the contextual relevance and influence of mothers and women.

In this way, Benhabib is guilty of doing exactly what she accuses these men of doing—stripping individuals of their concrete particularities, making the other generalizable, undifferentiated, indistinguishable, substitutable. In this way, Benhabib also is guilty of relegating women and mothers to the realm of *feminine* or *natural*.

When she removes the contextual relevance and influence of women, mothers, and sisters from her perfectly circular world of narcissistic male ego and The Patriarchy™, she diminishes the role and power of women—their influence on the creation of these particular men and of men in-general. She minimizes the ways in which the private and public spheres overlap. She minimizes the power that women and mothers have within the realm of closely binding kinship ties and familial interrelatedness.

As she accuses these men of trying to minimize these private spheres of influence, so Benhabib also tries to minimize them. She fails to articulate the power wielded by women and mothers in these private spheres, failing to acknowledge how the private and public spheres overlap and influence these men in-particular and men in-general. She fails to articulate and clarify how these private spheres of influence and connectedness are sustained by men operating in the public spheres of economics and politics.

In her zeal to condemn men in-general and these men in-particular, from Hobbes to Rawls, she fails to see that these private spheres of influence are propped up and enabled by the men who have enough economic status to afford them.

As such, Benhabib never bothers to question the price. She never bothers to ask about the cost to men. She never bothers to consider women as the primary beneficiaries of male economic sacrifice and *care*. She never bothers to consider the women who charge a price that costs men their context and particularities of self. The price charged to men for admission to the periphery of these private spheres is the cost of the *disembedded* and *disembodied* self, as Benhabib writes.²¹

In order for men to acquire the status and economic power needed to enable these private spheres of influence, men typically have to “sell their souls to the company store.”²² Men have to climb over other men and up corporate ladders, clawing, scratching, and biting at each other's throats, competing with each other to make themselves distinct enough economically in a system that, from the start, strips them of their individuality—making every man the same, equal, indistinguishable, substitutable, disconnected, impartial, and alienated.

As such, status hierarchies, for men, represent the hope of achieving a more profound experience of personhood through access to those private spheres. Access is something bestowed upon men, if deemed *worthy*, by gatekeepers of the private sphere. Thus, gatekeepers have an immense power to determine whether or not a man has accumulated enough status to be *worthy* of experiencing a more profound sense of personhood through the interrelatedness-of-being, the kind of

personhood only experienced via the private sphere.

His motivation, contrary to Benhabib's misandric contention, is not the unchecked narcissism of male ego, but the search for access into the private sphere of connectedness and interrelatedness-of-being. It is a search for a self that he cannot find anywhere else, for everywhere else is permeated with the egalitarian undifferentiated self that exists only in relation to other undifferentiated selves—the faceless others. It is a search for a self that only exists within that private sphere and only in relation to those particular others who also exist within that private sphere.

From this perspective, it is possible to view the project of rationalist *masculine ethics* as an attempt, in part, to create a public sphere that allows for the acquisition of hierarchical status in an egalitarian system that is supposedly *just* and *fair*. It's the seemingly impossible attempt to accommodate, within the public sphere, both equality and hierarchy.

Hierarchical status, within an egalitarian public sphere that is supposedly *just* and *fair*, are the means by which distinctions are made among those who are without distinction, those selves who are all the same—all for the hope of gaining access to those private spheres of context and *care*. As such, the rationalist *masculine ethics* can be viewed as an attempt to gain access to the *care* supposedly inherent in and excluded to the private sphere.

Contrary to Benhabib's misandric contentions about the unchecked narcissism of male ego, the rationalist *male ethics* seem more like an attempt to placate and acquiesce to the *narcissistic female ego* of the private sphere which demands a tithe be paid in exchange for admission to her private realm—her sphere of influence and *care*. As a gatekeeper to her private realm, she requires the provision and protection of men operating in the public sphere to enable her private sphere. As such, the security and livelihood of her private sphere is directly linked to status hierarchies existing and constructed in conjunction with the rational *masculine ethics* existing in the public sphere.

The Misappropriation of Care Ethics as Misandry in Existentialist Philosophy

This brings us face-to-face with some important existentialist questions. Which came first—the private sphere or the public sphere? Does existence precede essence or does essence precede existence?

One prominent feminist-philosopher seems to know the answers. Virginia Held, says, “Without care-givers, no infants would ever grow up to be *Hobbesian* men or rational calculators.”²³ However, without *Hobbesian* men to *care* for the *care-givers*, there would be no care-givers either. In her zeal to paint men in-general as The Patriarchy™, she fails to comprehend the simultaneous occurrence and interdependence of *rational calculators* and *care-givers*. Even with all her talk about the interrelatedness-of-being, she fails to articulate comprehension of the coincidental occurrence and interdependence of the two, preferring to cast a misandric shadow, privileging the importance of mothering in the private sphere over the importance of governing in the public sphere.

In Held's paper, *Feminism and Moral Theory*, she puts into play the importance of mothering as more than a basic biological function.²⁴ According to Held, the essence of mothering in the private sphere precedes existence of an essence in the public sphere.

In her own words: “The most central and fundamental social relationship seems to be that between mother or mothering person and child. It is this relationship that creates and recreates society. It is the activity of mothering which transforms biological entities into human social beings.

Mothers and mothering persons produce children and empower them with language and symbolic representations. Mothers and mothering persons thus produce and create human culture.”²⁵

And in only a few lines down, her zeal to paint men as *rational calculators* of The Patriarchy™ manifests itself. She downplays and denigrates the importance of governing in the public sphere—likening it to base biological functions of ants, beavers, fish, and packs of predatory animals.

In her own words: “In comparison, government can be thought to resemble the governing of ant colonies, industrial production to be similar to the building of beaver dams, a market exchange to be like the relation between a large fish that protects a small fish that grooms, and the conquest by force of arms that characterizes so much of human history to be like the aggression of packs of animals.”²⁶

So, in her misappropriation of *care ethics*, she has reduced the public sphere accomplishments of men to that of base biological endeavors. Here she applies her misandry, spreading the invective notion that these accomplishments and sacrifices were made by men who happen to be nothing but worker drone insects, mindless fish, and aggressive predatory animals.

Before the immensity of this misandry soaks in, there’s more. In only a few paragraphs prior, Held wrote this: “In the development of moral theory, men ought to have no privileged position to have their experience count for more. If anything, their privileged position in society should make their experience more suspect rather than more worthy of being counted.”²⁷

So, Held tries to claim the primacy of private sphere mothering over public sphere governing, reducing the latter to nothing but the manifestations of men who are nothing but biological *labor machines*—insects, fish, and predatory animals. All the while, she maintains that men, as these biological *labor machines*, occupy a “privileged position in society” and should therefore have their lived-experiences be made more “suspect” and perhaps count for less in the tally of moral development theory.

Held also wants her cake and eat it too. She wants mothering to be given primacy status for its role and influence in the creation of human culture, but at the same time, she wants mothers to have little to no culpability when it comes to assessing anything that has ever gone wrong with human culture, preferring to blame those *privileged men*—those biological *labor machines*, insects, mindless fish, and predatory animals.

As with Benhabib in the previous section, Held fails to reckon the overlapping and coinciding influences between the private and public spheres. She fails to recognize the simultaneous occurrence and interplay of both spheres. Instead, Held tries to give the private sphere primacy and say that this sphere bestows essence and value upon the public sphere.

In fact, she holds the public sphere accomplishments of men and their lived-experiences as *suspect* and perhaps to be not as *worthy* as the experiences of *care-givers* in the private sphere. Held completely devalues the *care* given to *care-givers* by the men (the *rational calculators* of The Patriarchy™) who sacrifice their lives in the public sphere—for the benefit of *care-givers* who exist within the private sphere. Rather than viewing these sacrifices made by men in the public sphere as forms of *care*, she denigrates their sacrifice and labor, likening these men—their sacrifices and labors, to insect drones, mindless fish, and packs of predatory animals.

The Misappropriation of Care Ethics as Misandry in Democracy

In the previous two sections, we saw two prominent feminist-philosophers, Benhabib and Held, calling the accomplishments, sacrifices, labors, and *caring* of men in the public sphere the unchecked narcissism of male ego and the mindlessness of insect drones, fish, and predatory animals. All the while, these feminist-philosophers are promoting the *care ethics* inspired by Carol Gilligan...and she is flabbergasted at the idea that feminism might be seen as being anti-male.

Here is what she said: “That sort of view that feminism is against men...it just doesn’t, but from the beginning, it never made sense to me. And so, I was asked recently by a group of young women, at a young women leadership conference-program at Harvard, ‘do I think of myself as a feminist?’ So, I said yes. Would you like to know how I define feminism? So, I said I thought feminism is one of the great liberation movements in human history. And it is the movement to free democracy from patriarchy... [and that]...is a hierarchy...that divides fathers, some men from other men, the men from the boys, like African American men were called boys, not real men. And it divides all men from women. And it places fathers over mothers and children. And, in fact, in making those separations, it divides everyone from parts of themselves. So, psychologically, patriarchy is always unstable... [and is]...contradictory to democracy, like slavery and imperialism.”²⁸

So, Gilligan wants to free democracy from hierarchy. That is some clever rhetoric, conflating feminism with democracy and painting them both as a libertine struggle against hierarchy—The Patriarchy™. However, stripped of her clever rhetoric, Gilligan is basically repeating the same old tired story—feminism is an egalitarian movement. Feminism is about egalitarian principles. Never mind the fact that the impartiality of egalitarian principles are often contrary to the partiality of Gilligan’s *care ethic* principles. Also, never mind the fact that egalitarian principles are largely the product of rationalist *masculine ethics*.

Also notice that in contrast to Benhabib and Held, we can see in the video Gilligan’s ostensible resistance and hesitation about naming men as a privileged class of oppressors who have women under their boot-heel. This hesitation reflects the sentiment of feminist-philosopher, Iris M. Young, when she makes this statement in *Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics*: “If we claim that masculinity distorts men more than it contributes to their self-development and capacities, again, the claim that women are the victims of injustice loses considerable force.”²⁹

This sort of sentiment begs the question, as Young articulated it, “of what does male privilege consist?”³⁰

Just because men tend to be stratified on various forms of status hierarchies, what ground do we have to say that this makes them privileged? If we view these status hierarchies as forms of oppression that divides fathers, brothers, men, and races, why do we tether the word privilege to males-in-general? If we are promoting a *care ethic*, why would we minimize the experiences of these men as *suspect*, like Held suggests, and accuse them of being privileged? If we are practicing a *care ethic* that seeks to liberate men from hierarchy, why are we not listening to their voices? Why are we minimizing their experiences as *privileged*?

If men overwhelmingly suffer the psychological trauma of being a *disembedded* and *disembodied* self, as Gilligan and feminist-philosophers like Benhabib would say, in order to occupy positions on these various forms of public sphere status hierarchies, *privileged* should not be a fitting descriptor of them.³¹ If the occupancy of these positions requires men to sell their souls, become alienated, alone, faceless, to be cut off from deep meaningful connections with others—if men have

to become the *disembedded and disembodied self*, then it would be important to flip Young's question and ask...*of what does female privilege consist?*

If practicing a *care ethic* while simultaneously articulating the *psychological trauma* and oppression of men, as described by Gilligan, it's important to consider and question who may be the primary beneficiaries of this *psychological trauma* and oppression of men.

Do not the mothers and women operating in the private sphere of *care* and influence benefit from the *psychological trauma* and oppression of these men? Do not these mothers and women reap the economic benefits of male sacrifice? Is it not primarily the private sphere of women that is propped up economically and in parallel with these economic hierarchies? And is it not true that the primary beneficiaries of male economic sacrifice are the women and mothers who spend that wealth? Of what good is *care* in the private sphere of the home, if there is no home—one that was paid for and built by those men operating in the public sphere and suffering from the *psychological trauma* described by Gilligan?

Without a house in the first place, there is nothing to be made into a home of the private sphere in which the important *care* of mothering can take place.

If Held is correct regarding the importance of mothering and mothering persons, then the private sphere in which mothering takes place likely cannot stand without the sacrifices made by men in the public sphere. As such, it is women, mothers, and mothering persons, as Held writes, who rely on this *psychological trauma* done to men. It is the private sphere that relies on the oppression of men. It is women, operating in this private sphere, who *prefer* the soulless, alienated, *disembedded*, and *disembodied self* of men who have acquired a relatively high status on various sorts of public sphere hierarchies as *psychologically traumatized* objects-of-utility.

If Held is correct, then it is these so-called *caring* women who, through their high regard for the well-being of their private spheres, prefer men of relatively high status, rather than men of low status. As such, there is no good way to untether these women from their share of culpability in the creation of these male status hierarchies, for these status hierarchies are simply the flipside of their hypergamy.

If Gilligan wants to liberate democracy from hierarchy, she needs to recognize that democracy would also need a simultaneous liberation from hypergamy. The two coincide with each other. In fact, hypergamy is rather unintelligible without hierarchy and neither would the hierarchical status of men make much sense without women's preference for relatively higher status men.

To believe that hierarchy precedes hypergamy, one would have to hold misandric beliefs such that men are nothing but the unchecked narcissism of their male egos working in combination with the mindlessness of their base biological functions as insect-like worker-drones—*labor machines*.

One would also need to minimize the choices and influence that women have in their mate selection processes and that means minimizing their reproductive choices. Before birth-control and abortion, one of the most powerful tools of reproductive choice was female mate selection. So, of course women would have a preference for higher status men and that preference is part of a reproductive choice and strategy.

As such, feminist-philosophers should not minimize the importance of female preference for and influence on the creation of these hierarchies via hypergamy. Gilligan and feminist-philosophers should not be averse to talking about the preferences of females in their mate selections, for these choices are forms of reproductive choice.

Specifically, they should discuss why the *psychologically traumatized* men—the Don Drapers of *Mad Men*, who occupy relatively high positions on status hierarchies have so much appeal to women.³² If the stereotypically male gender-role of provider and protector actually contributes to the *psychological trauma* of these men, as Gilligan suggests, then it's important to address how the stereotypical female gender-role of mothering benefits from this oppression of men.

This dynamic—the *psychological trauma* suffered by men, the female preference for these men based on their status within hierarchy, and the stereotypical female gender-role of mothering—all rolls together as a power dynamic that is marked by its great disparity.

As Held writes in *Feminism and Moral Theory*: “Furthermore, for one person to be in a position of caretaker means that that person has the power to withhold care, to leave the other without it. The person cared for is usually in a position of vulnerability.”³³

There is a power dynamic here. It puts the *caregiver* in the position of power over the person who receives the *care*. The *psychologically traumatized* men are in a vulnerable situation. Their identity within the public sphere of business and economic production alienates them from an identity as anything other than a faceless sort of *labor machine*. As such, these men are vulnerable to the *caregivers* who bestow upon them their *care*, restoring to them a meaningful existence that is entirely connected to and built upon a relationship with their *caregiver*—a relationship with an enormous power disparity.

In this way, the *caregiver* has the power to manipulate his vulnerability, threatening to withhold *care*, and by extension, threatening his identity as a unique person. In this way, there is always the looming shadow within his relation to her, the threat that he will be severed from connection with her private sphere of *care*—relegated back to the egalitarian status of the public sphere as another faceless other, distinguished only by his economic accomplishments. And if the *caregiver*, through divorce courts, takes all of his economic accomplishments, then he is returned to the public sphere as completely indistinguishable, faceless, alone, the same—equally nobody.

This perspective presents a plausible explanation of the much higher suicide rate for men going through divorce or major split in relationship. Whereas she benefits from the power of being a *caregiver* who withholds *care*, he suffers further alienation and suicide may seem like a much better alternative to him.

In this way, it is possible to see the power-to-care as also the power-to-exploit. In this way, it is possible to view the *psychologically traumatized* man as one who experiences the trauma of disconnectedness all over again and through the experience of divorce. Here we recognize that the power-to-care becomes the power-to-destroy.

Going back to Young's inverted question...*of what does female privilege consist?*

The answers seem clear. Their role as *caregiver* is their privilege. It is the power-to-care manifested as a power-to-exploit the *psychologically traumatized* man. As Held described, it is the power to withhold *care* and threaten these men with a repeated experience of the suffered trauma—the threat of again being severed from connection to the private sphere, the threat of again being thrown into an egalitarian nightmare of facelessness, aloneness, and isolation.

Female privilege, from this perspective, consists in their dominion over the private sphere and their exploitation of the *psychologically traumatized* men who are arbitrarily chosen to be included in or excluded from this private sphere based on their hierarchical status. As such, hierarchy and power-to-care are essential to female privilege.

Given that female privilege is tethered to hierarchy and the power disparity inherent in the power-to-care dynamic, it is not surprising to find a fascist face to feminism, as the genteel 3rd wave feminist, Naomi Wolf, describes in this fascinating article called *Fascism with a Feminist Face*.

Here is what she wrote: “Western feminism has made some memorable theoretical mistakes; a major one is the frequent assumption that, if women held the decision-making power in society, they would be ‘kinder and gentler’ (a phrase devised for George H.W. Bush in 1988 to appeal to the female vote). Indeed, so-called ‘second-wave’ feminist theory abounds in assertions that war, racism, love of hierarchy, and general repressiveness belong to ‘patriarchy’; women’s leadership, by contrast, would naturally create a more inclusive, collaborative world.”³⁴

Wolf goes on to speculate about the rise of extreme right-wing parties, their women leaders, and the appeal of fascistic hierarchical structures to women.

“And, for all of these women, as for any subordinate group anywhere, fascism appealed to what social scientists call “last-place aversion”: the desire to outrank other groups. Add, finally, the gendered appeal of the strong authority figure and rigid hierarchy, which attracts some women as much as some men, if in different psychodynamic ways. As Sylvia Plath, the daughter of a German father, put it in her poem “Daddy”: “Every woman adores a Fascist/The boot in the face, the brute/Brute heart of a brute like you.”³⁵

Wolf references Plath’s line in conjunction with a reference to the different “psychodynamic ways” in which hierarchy may appeal to women. Clearly, Wolf is trying to paint the picture here of these women being victims of bootlicking fascistic hierarchies...because a *brute* is like daddy. The implication here is that these women find fascistic hierarchy appealing because daddy was a *brute*.

Disregarding Wolf’s implication, we can see another possibility. Perhaps the *brute* appeals to these women because the *brute* suffers from *psychological trauma*, as described by Gilligan. If this is the case, then the fascistic *brute* is in a vulnerable position to the *caregiver*. As such, the *brute* may appeal to these women because his *psychological trauma* places her in a position of power over him. Again, the disparity of the power dynamic is at play. Again, the power-to-care becomes the power-to-exploit.

There’s also the possibility that Wolf, as well as many other feminists who have a soft spot for women driven mad by The Patriarchy™, interpreted Plath’s poem all wrong.³⁶ Perhaps “Daddy” was actually about Plath’s mother, a manipulative, abusive, and fascistic matriarch. If this latter interpretation is correct, then we could also apply it to understand possibly why *psychologically traumatized* men may be attracted to fascistic *brutes* like Plath’s mother.

If Plath’s mother was the real *brute*, and if this *brute’s care* is given out sparingly and only to particular men occupying relatively high status in hierarchy, then her *care*, however stingily doled out, becomes more valuable to him. Her *particular care*, bestowed upon him by a *brute* like Plath’s mother, is more meaningful to him. If *care* is given freely to all, then it is more akin to an egalitarian *care* of the public sphere. It lacks the particularity of a concrete context and is too impartial. The damage caused by the impartiality of the public sphere is something that the *psychologically traumatized* man is trying to escape. If he is searching for a *particular care* found in the private sphere, he may find it in the cold and stingy eyes of a *brute* like her. Again, this puts her in a position of power over him. Again, this is the power disparity arising from the power-to-care manifested as a power-to-exploit.

If one considers the above constituents of so-called female privilege, then the claim that “women are the victims of injustice loses considerable force,” as Young states. Instead, the word *op-*

pressor as a descriptor of women in-general becomes more fitting. Gilligan's claim that the gender binary oppresses us all becomes *suspect*. It seems that hierarchy and gender binary produces a power dynamic that overwhelmingly empowers women with the power-to-care, the power-to-exploit, and the power-to-destroy.

Indeed, Gilligan's claim that the hierarchy of gender binary hurts us all seems to act more like a cover that conceals us under a *veil of ignorance*, preventing us from seeing this lopsided power dynamic. Gilligan's claim functions as a form of egalitarianism in its appeal to the *rational male ethic*, essentially promoting the idea that suffering is spread relatively equally through gender binary roles. It isn't.

Even the claim that women may suffer from a lack of economic independence within the gender binary becomes *suspect*. If economic independence is tethered to the *psychological trauma* suffered in the public sphere, then again, we see that this lack of economic independence could be interpreted as beneficial to the stereotypical female gender-role because it allows her to escape the *psychological trauma* of the public sphere. She gains the possibility of remaining a special snowflake in her private sphere, something that would be contrary to her egalitarian status as a unit of labor production in the business world of the public sphere.

Though we may say that she is economically dependent, saying that she is necessarily oppressed by this dependence is a stretch. Would we say that a slave-master is oppressed by his exploitation of slaves because she is economically dependent upon them? No, but this is what Gilligan might have us believe when she promotes the idea that the gender-binary hierarchy hurts us all.

Gilligan fails to articulate this connection between hierarchy and the stereotypical gender role of women. She fails to describe the dynamics of this power disparity between men and women. She fails to mention how this power disparity empowers women. She does not talk about how the power-to-care has the potential to become a power-to-exploit and a power-to-destroy.

She fails to make clear how women in the private sphere are the primary beneficiaries of hierarchical structures of the public sphere. She fails, in her *different voice*, to clarify how the *psychological trauma* done to men in the public sphere primarily benefits women in the private sphere.

Instead, like Benhabib and Held, Gilligan falls back on her crutch—the tired narrative of The Patriarchy™. She blames The Patriarchy™ for the *psychological trauma* and fails to distribute a shared culpability to women in-general as an underlying factor in the creation of hierarchical structures that produce the *psychological traumas*. Rather than articulate the historical influence of women through their hypergamous reproductive choices and strategies, their power exercised within the private sphere, and their power-to-care as power-to-exploit, Gilligan simplistically names The Patriarchy™ for the *psychological trauma*.

In this way, *psychological trauma*, for Gilligan, props up The Patriarchy™ and, in turn, The Patriarchy™ props up the *psychological trauma* in a circular fashion. This circularity is much like Benhabib's misandric contention—the narcissistic male ego props up The Patriarchy™ and that, in turn, props up the narcissistic male ego. Both explanations are too simplistic and fail to articulate a more profound understanding of gender and power dynamics that overlap and interplay between the private and public spheres.

If Gilligan wants to liberate democracy from The Patriarchy™ by creating a larger area of overlap between the private and public spheres and in conjunction with an expansion of *care ethics*, she will have to develop a richer understanding of gender and power dynamics. She will have to name the hypergamous reproductive strategies and choices of women as an underlying factor in the cre-

ation of status hierarchies that she wants to dismantle. Gilligan will also have to identify and articulate clearly ways in which to prevent a power-to-care from being abused as a power-to-exploit.

Lastly, Gilligan will have to distance herself from the blatant misandry of feminist-philosophers like Benhabib and Held. It's not enough for Gilligan to simply express reluctance and hesitation about classifying men in-general as a class of oppressors. It's not enough for her to appear flabbergasted at the idea that feminism might be anti-male—labeling the idea as nothing but a *backlash*.

If Gilligan is serious about liberating democracy from hierarchy, then she needs to actively disassociate herself and *care ethics* from misandrists like Benhabib and Held. Rather than giving lectures with and in support of them, Gilligan will have to denounce and name them for their misappropriation of *care ethics* as a tool to spread the invective and misandric notions that men in-general are a privileged class of oppressors, owing their privilege to the unchecked narcissism of male ego and base biological functions as mindless drone-like *labor machines*.

Conclusion

As the old phrase goes, “love won't pay the bills.” Care is costly. So, in order for a woman to experience the interconnectedness-of-being and power-to-care that is derived from the private sphere, she must procure for herself a means of affording that sphere. Historically, she has needed a man, a husband, an alienated self to sacrifice for her—to pay for her private sphere, propping it up, affording her the privileged experiences of mothering and the interconnectedness-of-being got only from that private sphere.

All the while, he, as a *psychologically traumatized* object-of-utility, remains a sort of interloper on the periphery of her private sphere. There really isn't much connection to be had with a person who isn't really a person—a *disembedded* and *disembodied* self, a man alienated from the interconnectedness-of-being, faceless, individuated primarily by his status on some economic hierarchy in the public sphere. One that is supposedly egalitarian, *just*, and *fair*.

The feminist-philosopher, Annette Baier, describes these men in *The Need for More than Justice*: “They may well be lonely, driven to suicide, apathetic about their work and about participation in political processes, find their lives meaningless and have no wish to leave offspring to face the same meaningless existence. Their rights and respect for rights, are quite compatible with very great misery, and misery whose causes are not just individual misfortunes and psychic sickness, but social and moral impoverishment...”³⁷

As so well described by Baier, these men suffer the misery of alienation. However, in just a few lines down, she describes these men as a privileged class of oppressors who, through their development of and adherence to rationalist *masculine ethics*, exploit women and mothers. Baier goes on to juxtapose women and mothers with slaves and the private sphere with slavery.³⁸

As another old phrase goes, “this is why we can't have nice things.” This is why *care ethics* needs detangled from the misandry of those who have misappropriated it. Baier goes on to write about how the best ethics need to be a *cooperative product* between men and women and about how there is need for a harmony between *justice* and *care*, but completely fails to articulate how she would propose to make harmony out of the discord with a supposedly privileged oppressor class of men.

Surely, there needs to be an expanded moral domain that incorporates *justice* and *care*. If

you approach the idea of ethics from a pro-male perspective, then there is little doubt about the need for a harmony between them. Indeed, there is need for men to embrace an ethics that restores context and totality to the personhood of men.

Clearly, the abstract notions of self, derived from rationalist *masculine ethics*, are not sufficient representations and descriptions of men. A voice of men must also be grounded within a concrete body that puts us in touch with the context of our lived-experiences. A man, detached from relational experiences grounded in the body and also disconnected from relational experiences grounded in the private sphere, is a mutilated person who also experiences a deficit of *care*.

It is not women who experience deficits of *care* like men, for women are not the ones overwhelmingly experiencing life as the *disembedded* and *disembodied* self. It is not women who are maligned as being a privileged class of oppressors who operate simultaneously as mindless insect-like worker drones and as the unchecked narcissism of male ego.

Indeed, rationalist *masculine ethics* can create abstract principles that decontextualize the self and, as Gilligan brilliantly pointed out, are sometimes a form of violence to the possibility of *justice*. These rationalist *masculine ethics* are also a form of violence against the possibility of male personhood, for they are a violence against the lived-experiences of men as an embedded and embodied self.

As the philosopher Richard Rorty stated in *Philosophy and Social Hope*: “Everything that can serve as a term of relation can be dissolved into another set of relations, and so on forever. There are, so to speak, relations all the way down, all the way up, and all the way out in every direction; you never reach something which is not just one more nexus of relations.”³⁹

If rationalist *masculine ethics* focus primarily on the relation of men to abstract and decontextualized selves, if men are viewed only as *disembedded* and *disembodied*, then we have severed connection and relation to our lived-experiences as an embodied person. That is a great violence against the personhood of men.

It is time to change. Expand our moral domain to include full personhood to men through a harmonious coexistence with an embodied and abstract self. It is time for men to awaken from the nightmarish discord of an egalitarian *masculine ethics*. We are more than an egalitarian self—a *disembedded* and *disembodied* self—nameless, indistinguishable, faceless.

We have a responsibility to actively *care*. And that means that we *care* about the totality of men as embodied persons, rather than only as some abstract self who agrees to principles of non-interference that have a logical end of callous indifference to the real suffering and misery of men—both as an embodied person and as an alienated thing of abstraction.

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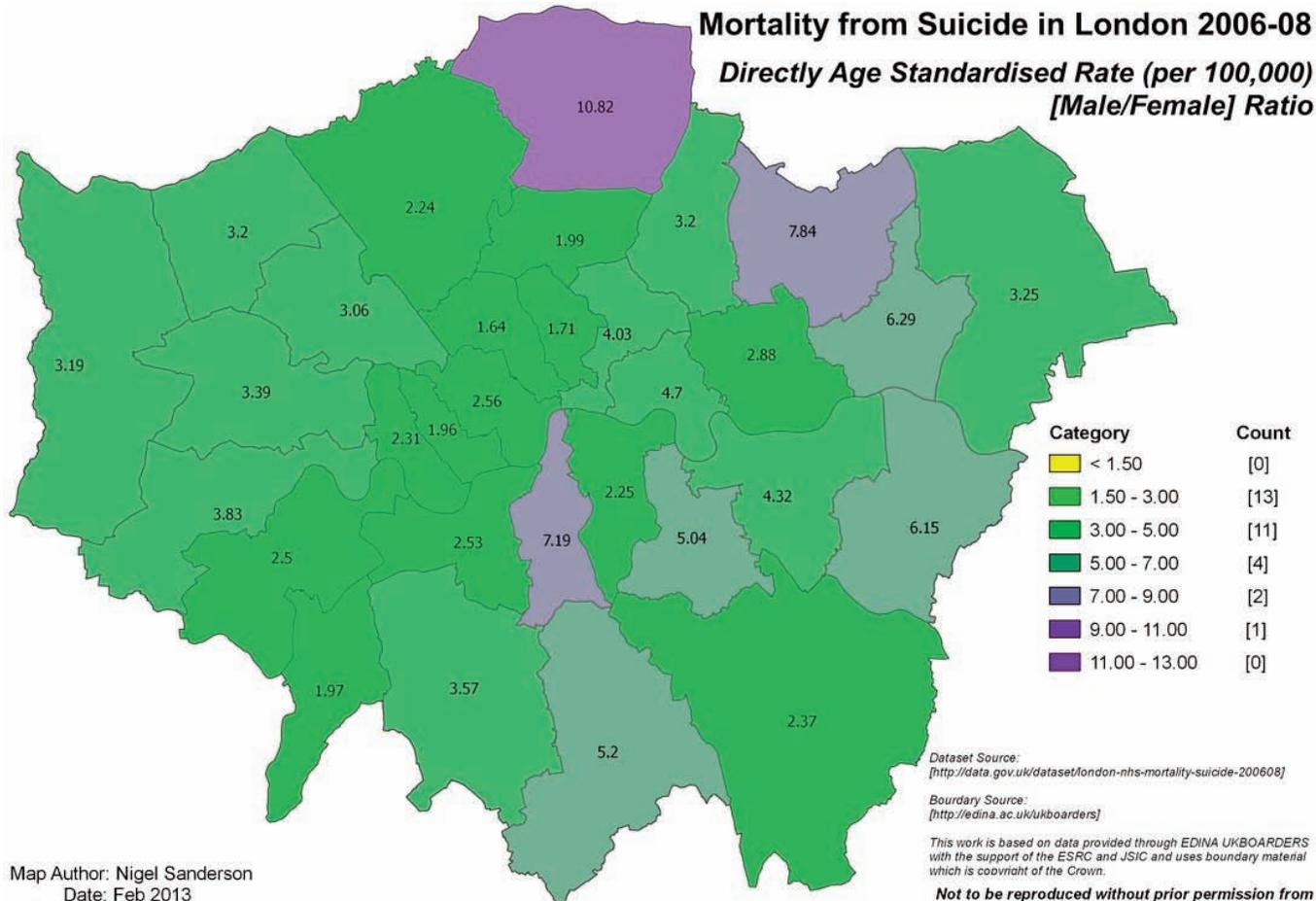
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Mortality from Suicide in London 2006-08

Directly Age Standardised Rate (per 100,000)
[Male/Female] Ratio



The Male Psychology Conference, University College London, June 2014

MARTIN SEAGER
LUKE SULLIVAN
JOHN BARRY



The Male Psychology conference is taking place at University College, London, on June 20th 2014. This article describes the context of the conference, for example, the reasons why it is necessary and the types of challenges facing men and boys today. Conference presentations will span the topics of: suicide and male help-seeking behaviour, improving therapy for men, steroid use, empathy, emotional intelligence, and the perennial topic of masculinity. Abstracts of the presentations are in the appendix of this article. The conference will have keynote speeches from highly respected speakers on the subjects of government policy on men's psychological needs (David Wilkins), sexual misconduct (Professor Andrew Samuels), and getting beyond notions like 'manning up' (Glen Poole). There will also be poetry readings straight from the heart of Rob Mackerill, and posters on subjects ranging from male asylum seekers to The Sopranos. It is hoped that this conference – the first Male Psychology conference – will improve awareness of the importance of this area to psychologists and others. Full details of the conference can be found here <http://www.malepsychology.org.uk/index.html>

Keywords: gender; male studies; men's studies; suicide; help-seeking; sex difference; conference

Introduction

Male Gender Blindness

The male psychology conference taking place at University College London (UCL) on June 20th 2014 was planned as part of a professional response to male gender blindness, both in society as a whole and within the British Psychological Society (BPS). The conference is founded in the belief that professional psychologists - both researchers and applied practitioners - should be taking a lead in drawing attention to the full gender spectrum of the human condition, which includes men and boys. This means moving beyond the still-prevalent idea that gender studies means primarily the study of women's issues, equally important though these obviously are. Our belief is that without studying men too, and male psychology in relation to work, family life, relationships, health, welfare and masculine identity, we cannot hope to understand and promote true health and well-being for everyone in society.

As psychologists whose vocation is to promote the health and welfare of everyone, we wanted to raise awareness of the fact that being male is not just a story of power and privilege, but can also bring with it many gender-specific issues, pressures, problems and disadvantages. Most powerful people might still be men, but most men are not powerful people. For example, it is clear from the available statistics that men make up the vast majority of suicides, drug addicts, prisoners and homeless people. There are also many physical health problems affecting the male gender that do not get highlighted, for example, male breast cancer. Even life expectancy itself is lower for men. Within the education system, boys are doing less well than girls. Male role models are often absent from within the primary education system and within society as a whole. Within the child care system, it is still often assumed that a man is less fit to be a caregiver than a woman.

In the science of psychology there has been relatively little enquiry into gender differences and problems from the male point of view. In politics there are no major strategies or policies specifically for the health and social welfare of the male gender. Gender inequality is seen as only affecting women, and little attention is paid to gender as a diversity issue where genuine differences between men and women should also be respected and honoured. This is short-sighted for the simple reason that for society to be healthy we need to understand and support the specific needs of all members of it. In a healthy society we do not exist apart from one another, so in understanding men better we will also help women and children.

Behind this inattention to the male gender is the idea that men somehow are doing fine, don't have needs and shouldn't need help. There is a deep-rooted assumption that men should be invulnerable and that invulnerability is somehow part of masculinity. A man in need is not considered a proper man, or is in some way is seen as the cause of his own distress. Looking across time and across cultures, it could be that some of these assumptions are universal in our species. Across cultures men are much more reluctant than women to seek help of any kind. It is possible that there is, in our species, an embedded ancient and universal script or set of rules relating to masculinity that would explain such clear gender differences in behaviour, especially in suicide behaviour. (Evidence for this hypothesis is explored in one of the conference presentations (Seager et al, Appendix 3), and the full text of this paper will be published in the next edition of *New Male Studies*, Vol 3, no.3).

Keynote speechGlen Poole, of *Helping Men*.**Does masculinity need reclaiming?**

Is masculinity in crisis? Does the male need saving? Do modern men need to reclaim their masculinity and if so, from whom do they need to reclaim it? There are many conflicting views about what masculinity is, ranging from biologically determined beliefs that “men should be men and women should women”, to post-modern critiques that pathologize masculinity as the culturally determined root of all social evils. In my keynote I will provide an integral view of masculinity which outlines some of the key biological, psychological, social and cultural factors that combine to shape the experience of being a man in the 21st Century. By exploring the evolution of men’s roles throughout history from a developmental perspective, I will propose that masculinity is not so much in crisis as in a state of constant transition. In particular I will highlight how men’s experiences of masculinity evolve in parallel with both their individual worldviews and the dominant worldviews they encounter in the cultures and communities that shape their daily lives. Through this process I will argue that there is a strong case to be made for reclaiming masculinity from those who to seek to impose a fundamentalist worldview of gender on the world. What men and boys of all backgrounds need, I will conclude, is the opportunity to define their masculinity on their own terms, free from the narrow constraints of gender politics.

The role of the British Psychological Society (BPS)

The British Psychological Society exists to “...develop, promote and apply psychology for the public good” (British Psychological Society, 2014). It might be hoped that if there was one place in UK society where such blindness to the male half of the gender spectrum might not be found, it would be here. However, it is perhaps inevitable that even scientific and professional institutions are subject to the same embedded assumptions, myths, prejudices and blind-spots as the rest of society.

The process of trying to establish a male psychology section of the BPS began in early 2008. Despite the fact that there has been a *Psychology of Women* section of the Society since 1988, and a *Sexualities* section (previously *Lesbian and Gay*) since 1998, the idea of a male psychology section was formally rejected by the BPS twice, and has still not yet been approved. However we believe this is changing, and the proposal to have a *Male Psychology* section is now being put before members of the BPS for expressions of interest. (BPS members can vote here

<http://response.questback.com/britishpsychologicalsociety/malepsychsection/>).

Part of the purpose of the Male Psychology conference has been to stimulate an active debate amongst psychologists about male gender issues and to raise awareness about male gender psychology. The conference has been organised in conjunction with a special issue of *The Psychologist*, a national journal/magazine for all UK psychologists published by the BPS. The special issue contains five different papers focusing on different aspects of male psychology. Some of the authors of the special issue will be presenting at the conference. It is hoped that the combined impact of the special issue and the conference will help to increase awareness amongst members of the BPS of the need for attention to male psychology, and will generate the required amount of support from the membership to finally establish the *Male Psychology* section of the BPS. It is also hoped that publicity relating to the special issue and the conference may have a wider impact on public awareness.

Another aspect of masculinity in relation to the BPS is the fact that many more women than men are choosing psychology (or psychotherapy, counseling etc.) as a career, and this raises two important and related issues. Firstly, the BPS is itself an increasingly gender-imbalanced organisation despite modest attempts at positive discrimination. It could be argued that this imbalance emphasises the need for psychological research to understand these differences between men and women, and to explore the degree to which it is beneficial to encourage more men to take an interest in careers in psychology. Secondly, this gender imbalance also implies that the world of psychology may unwittingly be offering a relatively feminised environment for potential service users, and this might mean that men are being deterred even more from seeking help than might be the case if services could be designed more with the male gender in mind. Creative thinking needs to be applied to researching the need to develop services in a more gender-sensitive way. These issues are addressed both in the special issue and in the conference.

So where have we got to in the UK with thinking about the specific needs of men and boys? Firstly, let's take a look at the origins of enquiry into gendered experience.

The origins of gender sensitivity

Understanding how gender influences experience and contributes to inequalities stems from feminist thinking, in which women were identified as victims of specific inequalities, particularly vocational and educational. These issues have been the subject of discourse, debate, campaigns and social change for nearly 100 years. One of the assumptions during this time was that men exerted control and power over women, which perpetuated male privilege over others. This concept of patriarchy has some relevance to the experiences of women, but did little to stimulate meaningful translation of feminism to thinking around men's issues.

The women's movement emerged in response to observed inequalities. The rise of thinking around men's issues has also emerged from thinking, observing and responding to specific inequalities which men experience. For example, the average life expectancy is four years less for men than it is for women, and across the lifespan men are at greater risk from nearly all major illnesses and injury (O'Brien & White, 2003; Courtenay, 2009; Coalition on Men & Boys, 2009). In the UK, men die younger across all age groups and experience cancer, heart disease and human-immunodeficiency

virus (HIV) at higher rates than women (Department of Health, 2002). Men engage in many more behaviours that are a risk to their health (Courtenay, 2000), make up the vast majority of the prison population (Prison Reform Trust, 2005) and those who are homeless (Gill, Meltzer, Hinds & Pettcrew, 1996). Men suffer more substance abuse and dependence (Kessler et al. 2005) and are three times more likely to take their own lives through suicide (NIMHE, 2008).

Keynote speech

Professor Andrew Samuels, Jungian analyst, academic, author and political consultant



Hot Bodies: Fathering; Promiscuity; Sexual Misconduct by Therapists, Academics and Other Professionals

The male body is split in our culture. There are the idealised, sanitised, and non-threatening (whether cuddly or boyish) versions used in advertising. But there are a whole series of moral panics in which all men (not just some) get seen as rapists, abusers and physically inexpressive. I have chosen to explore three bodily cultural themes which are of general interest because of the heat they generate. (1) The father's body is still seen as malevolent rather than benevolent and many fathers don't know how to develop the physical aspects of their parenting. (2) Promiscuity still remains relatively un-theorised, yet is hardly unknown and is the site of a huge amount of hypocrisy. (3) Sexual misconduct is a hot topic in the professions of psychology, psychotherapy and counselling – and also in academia and elsewhere.

The beginnings of enquiry

Poorer health outcomes in men have been linked to a reluctance in men to seek help early on in the course of illness, due in part to masculine norms and values. Masculine norms and values possibly also impact men's psychological wellbeing, for example, in restrictive emotionality; health care problems; obsession with achievement and success; restrictive sexual and affectionate behaviour; socialized control, power and competition issues; and homophobia. Men may face interpersonal and relational difficulties. Evidence suggests that men's social networks decline after the age of 30. The reasons why people lose their social networks may be linked to specific difficulties in forming and being comfortable with close relationships, and the outcome is that men can find themselves quite isolated.

Barriers to an accurate perception of the male gender

Men are commonly portrayed as historically being privileged, powerful and the perpetrators of wrongdoing. In general, those in less privileged positions are considered to be most in need, and perpetrators of wrongdoing are considered least in need and most deserving of punishment. The perception of men as privileged has made it difficult for us to understand and empathise with the reality of the experience of men in general.

But how well does this sense of the privileged male generalize? Not very well. Take for example our homeless population, of which 90 per cent is male. The prison population is also almost entirely male. We know that the rates of mental health problems are very high amongst prisoners and that there are often past adverse histories. The focus on problematic behaviour can detract attention from the origins of male distress, and a cycle of anger and punishment may emerge. In contrast, women prisoners may be seen with some sympathy, and indeed some have argued that women's prisons should be shut down. In general there is no such sympathy for the male prisoner, and even the issue of the rape of men in prison is all but ignored, even though 7.5% of the 1,600,000 prisoners in the US report rape (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011, 2012).

Within the psychological sciences historically, psychological research has often focused on a homogenous norm of heterosexual, middle class, employed and able-bodied men. Anything that differed from this was often seen as a priority need for investigation and correction. This has probably contributed to clouding our perceptions when asked to consider problems associated with being a 'normal' man.

When we think about gender, the push for equality seems to have contributed to a stifled approach to considering the specific needs of men and women. Exploring difference between men and women evokes in some people the assumption that difference perpetuates inequality. Talking about inequalities for men and boys can evoke strong feelings against even having such a discussion. We're interested in why people react in these ways, and how we can get beyond these reactions and towards more open and reasoned conversations.

Keynote speech

David Wilkins, Policy Officer, *Men's Health Forum*.



Diagnosis rates suggest that men are significantly less likely to suffer from mental health problems than women. That sounds like good news for men - but at the same time, men make up the great majority of those who abuse drugs and alcohol, the great majority of those who take their own lives, the great majority of those who are homeless and almost all of those who are in prison. And it's not just adult men where all is not well. Boys are much more likely than girls to be excluded from school with behavioural difficulties and have poorer academic outcomes at all levels. The question is, do these population-level indicators suggest that there higher levels of emotional and psychological distress among the male populations than we realise? If so, what is to be done about that? Is it feasible to change men's attitudes to seeking help? It is arguable that mental health services are currently much less effective with men than they should be. If that is the case, then that is a serious matter that commissioners of services need to address. As the NHS changes of the past two or three years settle down into new ways of doing things and new mental health strategies begin to take effect, it is important to examine whether we are getting closer to offering men the kind of psychological services that properly meet their needs.

Gender policy in the UK

Until the recent inclusion of gender within the Equality Act, gender policy in the UK has almost exclusively focused on the needs of women. It wasn't until 2003 that the male gender was recognised in mental health policy. Although the document *Mainstreaming Gender and Women's Mental Health* primarily focused on women, the guidance did recognise that

gender differences in women and men need to be equally recognised and addressed across policy development, research, planning, commissioning, service organisation and delivery (Department of Health, 2003; p5).

It is not surprising that the specific needs of men have often been excluded in policy in the UK because there has been no social movement or interest in exploring and addressing inequalities men face – ironically least of all from men themselves. Until recently, the health inequalities men face were not thought about or recognised as such. The equal opportunities commission published the report *Promoting Gender and Health* which made a strong case for the gender mainstreaming of health services. In 2006 the Equality Act created the 'Gender Duty' which required organisations,

including the National Health Service (NHS), to actively promote equality between men and women, understand the impact of work on men and women as distinct groups, and take into account evidence that men and women have different needs, experiences, concerns and priorities when developing services. In 2010, the Equality Duty replaced the existing race, disability and gender equality duties. Non-statutory organisations in the UK have been central in bringing health inequalities into awareness of the specific psychological needs of men in the UK (MHF, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2011; COMAB, 2009; MIND, 2009; Samaritans, 2010).

Conclusions

Turning towards the male gender as a subject of enquiry will present many challenges. Firstly, such discussion and debate will almost inevitably be interpreted by some as a way for men to protect the perceived traditional advantage over other groups. However many others will see that the true aim is to address inequalities, not to further them. Some of this work will inevitably challenge power structures which perpetuate inequality. Such power structures are likely to have been built on the very masculine norms and values which contribute to the problems men experience. Addressing the inequalities faced by men and boys may take some time, but anybody who is interested in equality will see the worth in doing so.

Clearly there is a need for a greater focus on the psychological issues affecting men and boys. This conference represents a step in the right direction.

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Appendix 1

Title: Masculinity and Mental Health: The Long View

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Background

Images and statistics of psychological and psychosomatic disorder are dominated by women. However, historically there has been little interest in the experience and treatment of these disorders among men. This study aims to provide an analysis of the historical context behind post-war statistics on male mental disorders. The talk hopes to illustrate the utility of taking a historical approach to understanding psychological phenomena.

Methods

Historical analysis was used to establish a context for post-war statistical data on neurosis and depression. Specifically, detailed archival material was examined between 1950 and 1980, including: personal papers of physicians with an interest in psychological medicine; clinical studies published in professional journals for general and psychological medicine and for occupational health; and data on psycho-pharmaceutical prescribing from general practice. In addition, fifteen retired general practitioners active in that time period were interviewed to provide further insight into official records. These different sources were examined for dominant themes and compared.

Results

Triangulation of these sources provides a basis for conclusions about the broader context of male mental health in the time period. The material suggested that help-seeking for psychological disorders presented distinct challenges to 'masculinity'. When men did seek help from medical practitioners they often presented with somatic or psychosomatic symptoms that may have had an emotional cause. Alcohol abuse also featured regularly as a means of self-medication but was rarely formally detected. The evidence from personal papers and recollections of physicians contrasted with the incidence of disorder and prescription during the same time period, suggesting that male cases of anxiety and depressive disorders were under-diagnosed.

Conclusions

This research raises important questions about statistics from the 1950s that show women to be approximately twice as likely than men to suffer from mood disorders. By exposing male mental illness where it seemed previously hidden but was in fact prevalent (either existing undiagnosed in the community, or presenting in complex psychological and psychosomatic forms in primary care), a historical perspective provides a broader context and unique opportunities to inform current knowledge and practice.

Appendix 2

Gender differences in first time calls to The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) helpline

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Background

Despite this large gender difference in suicide, we know surprisingly little about the extent to which issues related to gender may cause suicide. The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) offers free anonymous and confidential support, signposting and information through its helpline, and takes around 3,000 calls each month.

Methods

This study was a cross-sectional exploration of an anonymised database of 1114 first-time callers, analysed using logistic regression. The outcome variable was sex (i.e. whether the caller was male or female). All other variables in the database (demographics, presenting issues, and outcomes) were entered as predictors of gender, using the backward likelihood ratio method.

Results

16 (14.8%) of the 108 variables were significant predictors of gender. This is roughly three times the number that would be expected by chance if there were no differences in calls from men and women. As well as some ethnic and regional differences, women were significantly more likely than men to use text than phone, and were significantly more likely than men to present with problems at work, Eating Disorders, Children's Issues, Domestic Violence, Looked After Situations, and Housing. Men were significantly more likely than women to present with University Issues, OCD, and debt problems.

Conclusions

These findings emphasise the point that because suicide risk is higher in men, the typical needs of male callers should be considered when providing support. The findings also emphasise the need for helpline staff to be trained to deal with issues which appear to be more gender specific i.e. around OCD, college problems, and financial debt.

Appendix 3

Gender scripts and suicidality: an initial validation of the theory

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Background

The issue of whether gender-related attitudes underlie the sex difference in suicide has been relatively unexplored. There may be taboos around acknowledging male vulnerability⁸ which impede a gendered exploration of suicide. Such taboos may be enculturated through unwritten rules and social scripts about what it means to be masculine, and how 'real men' are supposed to behave. This study sought to validate questionnaires measuring traditional male and female gender scripts in order to test the hypothesis that scores on these questionnaires predict suicidality.

Methods

Participants were recruited to an internet survey between Oct 2012 and June 2013 from several websites, including the *Men's Health Forum*, *Psychology on The Net*, and *Men's Minds Matter*.

The responses of the participating 348 women and 170 men were analysed using factor analysis and hierarchical multiple regression.

Results

As hypothesized, men scored significantly higher on the overall male script than women, but there was almost no difference between men and women's scores on the overall female script. After controlling for other variables, two male gender subscales predicted risk of suicidality (*Fight & Win*, $P<.001$; *Mastery & Control*, $P<.042$), and one female gender subscale predicted reduced risk of suicidality (*Happy Family*, $P<.003$).

Conclusions

These novel findings have implications for understanding and predicting suicidality in men and women, and may be valuable in the clinical context. For example, this study found that the *Mastery & Control* aspect of thinking is connected with increased suicidal thought. This means that clinical interventions could potentially be targeted towards helping men by either challenging this rule or applying it differently in their lives.

Appendix 4

Masculinity, alexithymia, and fear of intimacy as predictors of UK men's attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help

Dr Luke Sullivan. Dept of Psychology. Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust, United Kingdom.

Objectives

Men's reluctance to access health care services has been under researched even though it has been identified as a potentially important predictor of poorer health outcomes amongst men. Male gender role socialization and male development may be important in accounting for men's underutilization of mental health services in the United Kingdom.

Method

A cross-sectional online survey was used to administer standardized self-report measures that were subject to regression analysis. Five hundred and eighty-one men from the UK general population completed the survey, and 536 participants formed the final regression analysis.

Results

Men who score higher on measures of traditional masculine ideology, normative alexithymia, and fear of intimacy reported more negative attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. Normative alexithymia fully mediated the effect of fear of intimacy on attitudes towards professional help seeking. In the final regression model, education significantly accounted for a proportion of unique variance in men's help-seeking attitudes.

Conclusions

Hypothesized consequences of male emotional and interpersonal development and male gender role socialization were associated with men's attitudes towards seeking psychological help. These are important factors which could help to improve help seeking and mental health outcomes for men. Limitations of this study and implications for future research are discussed.

Appendix 5

The Influence of Conformity to Masculine Norms and Emotional Intelligence on Men's Intentions to Seek Help for Psychological Distress

Presenting author: Dr Richard Scott (University of Surrey, United Kingdom)

Additional authors: Ms Linda Morison (University of Surrey, United Kingdom), Ms Mary John (University of Surrey, United Kingdom), Prof Kyle Killian (York University, Toronto, Canada).

Background

High suicide rates, a rising prison population and increases in substance misuse are all problems that men are disproportionately affected by. However, men are less likely to intend to seek help for psychological distress than women. Understanding men's reluctance to seek help is therefore of great importance. This study investigated the associations between conformity to masculine norms, emotional intelligence (EI) and men's help seeking intentions for psychological distress at two different levels of severity and examined which elements of masculinity and IE predicted help seeking intentions.

Method

This study used a cross-sectional survey design. 1,021 participants were recruited from the UK general population of men aged 18-74. Recruitment was via social media.

Results

EI, conformity to masculine norms and help seeking vary by age, education and employment. Men who have higher EI are less likely to conform to masculine norms and are more likely to seek help and are more likely to be graduates and in full or part-time work. Men with lower EI conform more to masculine norms and are less likely to seek help, and are more likely to be unemployed and aged 18-24. Controlling emotions is a significant predictor of help seeking intentions.

Conclusions

Findings demonstrate that EI, conformity to masculine norms and help seeking intentions are associated with each other, and furthermore that help seeking intentions are predicted significantly by aspects of both. Significant associations between the variables in this study revealed a worrying picture for men's mental health, and in particular young men aged 18-24 and men who are unemployed. However, optimism that this study and future research can enhance men's well-being and improve outcomes for men of all ages is necessary.

Appendix 6

“I don’t want to generalise, but...”: The views of coaching psychologists and life coaches on differences in treatment style for male and female clients.

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Background

Men are less likely than women to seek therapy, perhaps because doing so is seen as an admission of weakness, and therapy involves an uncomfortable degree of emotional self-disclosure. It is possible that men may be more amenable to life coaching because it is less emotion-focused than a traditional psychological therapy. This study aimed to discover the degree to which life coaches find that male and female clients differ in respect to treatment preferences and outcomes.

Methods

This qualitative study involved interviews with 20 life coaches, mostly based in the UK. Interviews lasted roughly 20 on average, and were conducted by phone or in person between Oct 2013 and Feb 2014. Transcripts of the interviews were analysed using the grounded theory method. The study was approved by UCL’s Senate Research Ethics Committee.

Results

The resulting core category which emerged from grounded theory analysis was *Ambivalence Towards Generalisations* regarding gender differences. Thus although many coaches described gender differences in approaches to therapy (e.g. women find it easier to discuss painful emotional issues) ambivalence was demonstrated in the way that these generalisations were framed in terms of various caveats e.g. that personality is more important than gender. Findings are discussed in terms of Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance.

Conclusions

These findings have implications for how coaching psychologists – and therapists in general - are trained in respect to maximising their efficacy in treating male clients.

Appendix 7

How do adolescent males with depression talk about ‘talking’? A qualitative analysis of pre-therapy narratives.

Jacob Clark (Presenter) and Dr. Nick Midgley (both affiliated with UCL/Anna Freud Centre, United Kingdom).

Background

Male adolescents with depression are hard to identify and at high risk of suicide, yet their voice in the literature is relatively silent. This study aims to contribute to our understanding of adolescent males’ experience of depression and expectations of therapy. It intends to develop narrative analysis techniques for examining young male identities.

Methods

This study examines pre-therapy interviews of eleven 15-17 year old boys with depression. It addresses the question, *how do depressed adolescent males talk about ‘talking’?* Subsequent to a thematic investigation of the interviews, Bamberg’s (2004) positioning analysis was implemented to examine ‘small stories’ on three levels: how the boy depicts the characters within the story; how the speaker positions himself in the *here-and-now* of the telling; sense of self in relation to cultural discourses.

Results

The analysis found three core ways in which the boys talked about ‘talking’: ‘not talking’, ‘explaining emotions’, and ‘talking therapy’. They explained ‘not talking’ as a way of protecting others, but also as a way of maintaining their sense of identity. They questioned the assumption that ‘talking’ helps, and found emotional talk could impact on their relationships. The boys anticipated that ‘talking’ would be a barrier to therapy but also a goal of therapy.

Conclusions

Talk about emotions in the context of others could be an important point of inquiry in examining young masculine identities. Findings were discussed in light of the current knowledge base in three overlapping domains, recognising adolescent depression, hearing and ‘holding’ the emotional needs of young depressed males, and expectations of therapy. Limitations of the study are described, and a case is made for clients’ “relationship to ‘talking’” to be considered in engaging this population.

Appendix 8

What is the role of shame for male anabolic androgenic steroid users?

H Eli Joubert, Postgraduate student at University of Leicester and Senior Clinical Psychologist, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom.

Background

Men's concerns about body image are increasingly paralleled by a growth in the use of anabolic androgenic steroids (AAS) (Wright & Grogan, 2000) with motivations for such use including enhanced confidence. AAS users are likely to self-objectify their bodies, which might manifest as persistent body surveillance involving constant monitoring and comparison against "internalised standard(s) of attractiveness with a focus on how one's body looks rather than how it feels or functions" and may result in feelings of body shame (Parent & Moradi, 2011). Experiences of rank and status judgement following self-other comparisons may affect mood states (Gilbert, 2000). Masculinity fundamentally includes perceptions of rank and status and may result in gender role strain, i.e. the experience of distress men experience when feeling that they do not meet constructs about masculinity they value (Kilmartin, 2007). Psychoanalytic approaches suggest that a perceived failure to '*measure up*' to one's ego ideal (i.e. the internalisation of admired aspects of one's parents) produces tension (Piers & Singer, 1953). This may result in shame which is usually related to visible and concrete deficiencies rather than moral deficits (Jacobson, 1964). Kohut (1971) describes how negative comments from one's caregivers might ultimately result in low self-esteem.

Method

The present IPA qualitative study, involving six male AAS users, produced six themes.

Results

The participants identified traumatic experiences leading to feelings of weakness, interpreted by participants as being of lower rank and status. These feelings are defended against by wanting to gain size, which results in an increase of perceived strength and, thereby, self-esteem. This, however, remains fragile due to a somewhat dysmorphic misinterpretation of actual size versus internal experiences of weakness, and ultimately shame.

Conclusion

Anabolic Androgenic Steroid use appears to be both motivated and maintained by shame.

Appendix 9

Sex differences in adolescents' attentional biases towards empathic stimuli: Oral presentation

R. Kingerlee (Presenting author, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom), C. Seger (University of East Anglia, United Kingdom), & E. Baxter (University of East Anglia, United Kingdom).

Background

It is well-documented that, on average, males tend to find accessing, and engaging in, physical and psychological healthcare more challenging than females. The reasons for this remain unclear. In one key domain, empathy research, very little work has been conducted that investigates whether there are sex differences underlying the cognitive mechanisms involved in producing empathic responses, such as perspective-taking, attention to and interpretation of empathic cues. Such phenomena may be implicated in health care behaviours.

Method

This study's aim was to replicate an original unpublished study by Hoppitt and Kingerlee (2012) to investigate whether there are sex differences in adolescents in attention to empathic and neutral word pairs, using a visual-probe task. The effect of priming with either negative or neutral face stimuli was also investigated.

Results

This study did not find any sex differences in attention in relation to empathic and neutral word pairs, nor were there any effects of priming on attention. The study did however find a clear sex difference in empathy using a self-report empathy questionnaire; and that the more individuals' scored on this test the slower the reaction times to empathic stimuli.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that no sex differences were found, this work has implications for the direction of future research into explaining male help-seeking behaviours, and for the possible development of empathy training that could improve males' access to and engagement in psychological and physical health care.

Appendix 10

Are masculinity and femininity a result of nature or nurture? Evidence from a meta-analysis of childrens' toy preferences.

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Background

Studies of girls with congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) suggest that prenatal exposure to testosterone causes girls to show atypical preferences for gendered toys i.e. they prefer 'boy toys' to 'girl toys'. However, in healthy children there is controversy about the degree to which toy preferences are biological in origin or shaped by the environment (e.g. family, peer group societal norms etc). Studies of toy choice generally control for few or no environmental factors.

Methods

Studies that compared toy choice in healthy boys and girls were eligible for inclusion. Databases (EMBASE, MEDLINE, Web of Knowledge, Maternity and Infant Care, and PsycINFO) were searched up to October 2013.

Results

From 1607 references, 14 studies of 25 groups of children (585 boys and 632 girls) met the inclusion criteria. The studies were carried out in various Western countries between the years 1980 and 2014, with children in age groups from on average 13 months old to on average 93 months old. Using the Inverse variance method, it was found that boys chose 'boy toys' significantly more than girls (SMD=0.91; 95% CI 0.79 to 1.03) and girls chose 'girl toys' significantly more than boys (SMD=-0.73; 95% CI -0.85 to -0.62). Meta-regression found that the gender difference in play was greater when a study took place in the home rather than at a nursery ($p < .05$). There was no significant effect on toy preference of the child's age, presence of an adult, the year the study was conducted, nor the country the study was conducted in.

Conclusions

Although the context in which the study took place was a predictor of the size of the sex difference in gendered toy preference, the gender differences still remained after taking this into account. These findings suggest a role for both nature and nurture in gendered toy preference. The use of toy preference as a marker of prenatal androgen exposure in conditions such as CAH is discussed.

Appendix 11

Does *The Sopranos* create realistic expectations of what men can expect from therapy?

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Background

The obstacles and incentives to men seeking therapy have received little research attention. TV and the media may provide a way of reaching men and changing their attitudes. *The Sopranos* was a popular television drama about a Mafia boss who seeks psychotherapy for panic attacks, and it is claimed that *The Sopranos* increased the numbers of male psychotherapy clients. However, little attention has been paid to the question of the expectations of therapy that the show may have created.

Methods

This poster explores the themes from Tony Soprano's life and therapy and examines their impact, from the perspective of male gender script theory, on men considering therapy. Eight themes are considered: Fatherhood, Justice, Masculinity, Rape, Domestic Violence, Women, the Portrayal of Therapy, and the Violent Gangster as Sympathetic Role Model.

Results

Whilst *The Sopranos* misses several opportunities to challenge the traditional gender script of masculinity, it powerfully tackles the gender script head on by showing an archetypal macho male trying to confront his vulnerabilities. It is interesting to consider whether an alternative form of therapy – something more male-centred – may have suited Soprano better.

Conclusions

The Sopranos offers food for thought on the subject of male help-seeking behaviour, but it would be optimistic to suggest that mental health promotion campaigns aimed at men should consider using Tony Soprano as the 'poster boy'.

[The full version of this paper will be published on the Men's Health Forum website in June 2014
<http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/>]

Appendix 12

A Membership Categorisation Analysis of 'What makes a man 'a man'?'

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Background

Masculinity is often researched using quantitative methodologies; questionnaires determine characteristics for participants to be placed upon a continuum of how masculine or feminine they are. However, characteristics do not take into account categorisation and construction of gendered behaviour or allow participants to elaborate on their choice. Qualitative methodologies therefore would be more appropriate to study this socially created gender. Membership Categorisation Analysis (Sacks, 1992) is deemed suitable as Baker (2000) and Lepper (2000) suggested that as an ethnomethodology, it provides a powerful analytic approach due its persistence in analysing the doing of descriptions, the organisation of social life, and their social and moral order; gendered behaviour is all of these.

Methods

Participants were asked to complete an online survey on Qualtrics, consisting of one 'essay-style-question' asking them to describe their thoughts of 'What makes a man 'a man'?. Both males and females were encouraged to take part. Participants were recruited online using social networking sites. 31 individuals responded, and most were from the UK, with an exception of one from Serbia and one from Denmark. They varied in being students and having full-time occupations. MCA was used on the answers provided to determine their social categorisations and organisation of doing gender.

Results

This study found that the participants frequently categorised masculinity as an opposition to femininity; virtually all answers provided mentioned women, more often as part of a Positional Category placing men above women. Collections of appearance, society, characteristics and traditional masculinity were categorised and elaborated upon as part of 'doing' gender, unlike quantitative studies.

Conclusion

For gender research to progress, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies should be utilised to allow a detailed and well-rounded understanding of this gendered behaviour. Allowing participants to provide their own ideas and understandings of masculinity means psychological research can include this, rather than just academic findings.

Appendix 13

The experiences of male victims of female perpetrated intimate partner violence: A qualitative exploration

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Background

Female perpetrated violence against intimate male partners is a controversial issue, with heated debates about the rates and severity of the violence experienced by male victims. The aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of male victims of female perpetrated intimate partner violence (IPV) including help seeking and barriers to leaving an abusive relationship.

Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seventeen men who self-identified as victims of female perpetrated IPV. Participants were recruited via a range of techniques including snowballing, through domestic abuse services throughout the UK, and via advertisements placed on online support forums and blogs. Data analysis is guided by thematic analysis.

Results

The data show that – contrary to the view that female perpetrated violence is fundamentally different from male perpetrated violence – the men experienced often quite extreme physical violence and psychological abuse, as well as long term trauma. However, for most men, the experience of IPV was complicated by dominant discourses of masculinity and a cultural equation of victimhood with femininity. In some of the interviews, it was clear that the men felt almost ‘trapped’ by conflicting beliefs that a ‘man should defend himself’ and a ‘good man does not hit a woman’. The men’s reluctance to accept the status of ‘victim’ impacted negatively on their help-seeking behaviours. Furthermore, the men’s strong belief that their experiences of female-perpetrated violence would not be accepted or viewed sympathetically, lead them to conceal their experiences from others. For many of the men, participating in the interview was the first time they had disclosed their experiences to another person.

Conclusions

Findings offer understanding of the experiences of male victims of female perpetrated IPV. Such research may lead to the development of more effective strategies for working with male victims.

Appendix 14

A visualization of suicide statistics the UK and why thinking about gender could be the key to tackling male suicide. (In Prep)

Dr. Luke Sullivan – Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Men’s Minds Matter, United Kingdom.

Nigel Sanderson – Geographical Information Systems Analyst, United Kingdom.

Background

It is known that men kill themselves at a much greater rate than women do. Beyond this there has been little investigation of gender in relation to suicide statistics. We have taken national suicide statistics and presented them in visual format.

Method

National suicide statistics were taken from two datasets and presented graphically. London statistics borough/PCT (2006 to 2008) and national suicide statistics (1981 to 2011) to compare male and female suicide frequencies.

Results

The results show that in no London borough were the rates of suicide higher at any point for women than they were for men. This was the same nationally where the rates of suicide between men and women have grown larger over the past 30 years. During this time male suicides have remained static. Between 1981 and 1992 there was a dramatic decrease in female suicide.

Conclusions

We hypothesise possible reasons why female suicide statistics decreased between 1981 and 1992, for example, the beneficial effect of social and institutional effort in addressing issues faced by women and girls. We propose that the absence of thinking around issues facing men and boys is one reason why male suicide rates have not improved.

Appendix 15

Experiences of Male Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Minors Arriving to Sweden from Afghanistan: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

S. A. O. Thommessen*, P. Corcoran, and B. K. Todd, City University London, United Kingdom.

Background

The number of individuals seeking refuge and safety in European and western host-societies has increased in recent years and there is no evidence to suggest that this trend will stop. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and youth are particularly vulnerable as they experience increased risks of human rights violations due to the lack of adult protection and have frequently been cited as the most vulnerable of all refugee groups. The detrimental effect of political conflict, war and forced migration on asylum-seeking individuals' mental health is well documented; however, the stressors encountered after arrival to host-countries have been explored less frequently.

Methods

This study explored how a group of six male unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan experienced arriving to the Swedish host-society when they were aged 15-16 years, and additionally, how they perceived the support available to them. The semi-structured interviews were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis and focused on the present and future, rather than the past.

Findings

The findings draw attention to the crucial importance of providing information and guidance to help clarify the complex asylum-seeking process and to support unaccompanied minors during this highly uncertain period. Additionally, the male youth emphasised the importance of social support, educational guidance and a strong desire to fit in and move forward.

Conclusions

Overall, the findings led to knowledge which can inform both theory and practice when seeking to support asylum-seeking youths' adaptation in host societies and when developing assessment measures and interventions for these groups.



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Luke Sullivan is a chartered clinical psychologist and creator and director of Men's Minds Matter. His specialist interest in men's mental health began in 2004 when he discovered how little there was in terms of services for men or information and research that considered the specific psychological needs and experiences of men and boys. He can be reached at luke@mensmindsmatter.com.



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The Influence of Academia on Men And Our Understanding of Them

TODD L. BOTTOM
DENNIS GOUWS
MILES GROTH



A lack of attention to men's experiences and outcomes by scholarly professionals has resulted in a lack of male therapists, possible misrepresentation of men in popular press books, and few opportunities for college men to have their voices heard on campus and in the classroom. This article presents the proceedings of a three-part symposium presented at the 2014 Eastern Psychological Association annual conference in Boston, Massachusetts. Specifically, we address the questions, "What impact does a reduction of males in psychology professions implicate? How can we improve academic book reviews on boys and men? What is it like to be a young man studying at university?"

Keywords: men, university, students, education, curriculum, male studies

Panel Introduction

While a century ago psychology and research were dominated by European and North American men, in recent years the field has witnessed a substantial change in gender dynamics. In the first section of this report, Todd Bottom, a psychology instructor and researcher at DePaul University presents evidence of the impact of the growing disparity of men in psychology professions and in the classroom. This shift is likely a major factor in explaining the lack of research which reports on men's outcomes and why little of what we learn about them makes its way into the media or the classroom. A continued lack of male presence in counseling psychology professions may greatly impact the mental health services that men receive, as fewer men may seek professional help with an opposite sex service provider.

In the second section of this report, Dr. Dennis Gouws, an English Professor at Springfield College and proponent of male-positive curriculum, reports on an examination of several book reviews published in PsycINFO-indexed journals during 2012-2013. Gouws reports that reviews of academic books on male psychology are de facto arbiters of research on males and that commentaries on published findings attempt a convincing display of the reviewers' male-specific knowledge and conventionally represent the last word on the works they examine. Unlike the scholarship they assess, these book reviewers' assessments may, however, rely on both tacit assumptions and personal observations concerning males rather than methodical arguments—the brevity of the book-review genre usually ensures some degree of reader compliance with the critical framework being used to appraise the given work—resulting in a questionable use of the reviewers' assumed critical authority. He describes the most prominent assumptions and assesses whether they treat males reasonably and justly.

To conclude, Dr. Miles Groth, Psychology Professor at Wagner College, reports on the lack of male students in higher education and the student gender gap in higher education which continues to widen each year. At a time in which few academic institutions provide resources such as student groups or support services for male students, the number of men's studies programs and courses is a fraction of such resources to understand women. Dr. Groth addresses the need for centers on college and university campuses where study groups are supported that discuss issues facing boys and young men especially, but also the majority of males in contemporary culture. Also addressed is the lack of campus support of young men, the lack of courses offered which address the issues of boys and men, and difficulties faced by faculty who would like to see changes in campus life and curriculum which would foreground the experience of men at college and in life after college.

Part 1: What impact does a reduction of males in psychology professions implicate?

Psychologists and academic professionals have studied some of men's chronically poor outcomes and occasionally a few of the topics may be discussed in classrooms in higher education. However, many of men's negative outcomes, including suffering 79% of suicide completions (CDC, 2010) and 50% of domestic abuse (Hall, 2012), unjustifiably low child 'visitation' time and custody rates (Guzzo, 2009; Kruk, 2010), and unwarranted rates of false abuse allegations (Dutton, 2009) are rarely or never addressed in our college and university classrooms. Even less likely to be introduced by college pro-

fessors are findings such that for men who do seek help to improve their outcomes or their physical safety, many report being turned away or that services are not available to help them (Hoff, 2012). The lack of discussions and learning of men's outcomes in today's classrooms can be attributed to society's increasing attention to the perceived sole victimization of women, which has been presented as a higher priority than the understanding of men's equally negative experiences. This fallout has come at considerable expense for our male population, including fewer male therapists and a lack of male-positive training for mental health professionals. For example, nearly 20 years ago Holmes and Offen (1996) reported that the low number of male sexual abuse victims who seek help may be the result of clinicians' unawareness that men were abused at all. Additionally, it is likely that such ignorance is not limited to issues of sexual abuse, which leads one to wonder why these professional help providers – many of whom completed up to 10 years of formal higher education and satisfied clinical licensure requirements – are not aware of men's experiences.

One answer as to why today's mental health providers are unaware of men's experiences and are ill prepared to help men was addressed in a recent publication of the National Science Foundation. Specifically, 75% of today's developmental, family, clinical, and counseling doctoral students are women. With so few men receiving degrees in psychology doctoral programs, it may be of little wonder that men are reluctant to seek help, for fear of not having a safe place to have their stories heard or of not having their concerns addressed appropriately. A second reason for which our clinical and helping professionals are not prepared to help men is evident in the lack of classes and training opportunities afforded during their educational endeavors. For example, at DePaul University, no men's psychology course is currently offered, while a women's psychology course is offered at both the undergraduate and graduate level. For many psychology students the women's course is offered as a requirement to fulfill a 'diversity' requirement for degree completion. In my own program of Community Psychology, no male students were selected for admission from 2011 – 2014, and in 2012 no men among the approximately 60 applicants were invited to interview for a position. Furthermore, the Women and Gender Studies program at DePaul offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, concentrations, and certificates which include approximately 45 courses dedicated to women and feminism, 15 courses on gender in general, seven courses related to LGBT studies, and no courses dedicated to learning about men specifically. This example is certainly not unique to any one academic setting, but is pervasive in U.S. higher education.

Even when some men do seek assistance from or have contact with helping professionals, many report that the service providers are not helpful. Data from my own dissertation show that when asked how encouraging 13 sources have been of their efforts to be a good parent, divorced fathers reported mental health providers (i.e. therapists, social workers) as the third and fifth least encouraging sources. These men reported mean scores of encouragement for these helping professionals the bottom half of the possible range. Perhaps because there are so few qualified mental health professionals that are helpful for men, many are seeking support from more contemporary and easily accessible resources.

One such source is a Facebook group named The Fathers' Rights' Movement that was started by a divorced non-custodial father in Alaska in 2012 as a way to bring together other men and supporters who shared his experiences. Twelve months after conception the group had less than 200 members, but its growth has since reached 20,000 members with about 1,000 new members currently

joining the group each week with no signs of slowing down. Many other similar groups also exist on Facebook, and several comparable initiatives have been started on Twitter by individuals as well as established organizations. Most notably, with few exceptions these online sources of encouragement and information are maintained by non-professional supporters of men and fathers.

How effective these easily accessible online support systems are, or what their long-term impact on men's outcomes will be is difficult to determine. However, it is clear that they cannot stand alone, and much more work needs to be done in higher education to help the millions of men and fathers who are suffering from injustices simply because they are perceived to not have problems. It is imperative that we begin to establish male positive courses and programs in our colleges and universities. Making such changes will ensure that abuse shelters are staffed with properly skilled crisis counselors, that post-divorce service providers are able to effectively help fathers, and that mental health providers are adequately trained and empathetic to men's issues.

Writing for the American Psychological Association's magazine *Monitor*, Cynkar (2007) wrote that some academics believe the field of psychology has reached a point of extreme imbalance several years ago regarding men and women in the field, and that more should be done to bring men into the field. Until this goal begins to receive more attention and support from our academic institutions by way of increased admissions of male students and the establishment of male positive curriculum, little change is likely to occur.

Part 2: What assumptions about boys and men are evident in contemporary academic book reviews on male psychology?

Academic reviewers of books on male psychology are *de facto* arbiters of research on males: their commentaries on published findings seek to assure the reader of the reviewer's male-specific knowledge and conventionally represent the last word on the works they examine. Unlike the scholarship they evaluate, these book reviewers' assessments may, however, depend on both tacit assumptions and personal observations concerning males rather than methodical arguments—the brevity of the book-review genre usually ensures some degree of reader compliance with the critical framework being used to appraise the given work—resulting in a questionable use of the reviewers' assumed critical authority. In other words, the reviewers' authority and expertise are crucial for assessing the merit of the work being reviewed; however, the assumptions informing them are often unexplained.

In order to investigate the nature of the gendered assumptions informing such reviews, and authority, I examined twenty-one book reviews published in PsycINFO-indexed journals during 2012 and 2013. My brief overview in this paper of the qualitative textual analysis I undertook will describe the most prominent assumptions made and assess both whether they treat males reasonably and justly and whether they are authorized by theoretical or empirical positions. Before discussing my analysis and findings, I offer an apology and an *apologia*. I conduct qualitative research in the arts and the humanities; my academic interests are male positive, which means they not only celebrate men who embody different expressions of masculinity, but also critique—and suggests strategies for overcoming—systemic inhibitors of masculine affirmation. I am mindful that I approach these reviews as an outsider, so my apologies to those who share Poul Rohleder's preference for papers “from within the psychoanalytic profession, using the discourse of psychoanalysis, rather than a critique

from outside the discipline” (Rohleder, 2012). With all due respect to Rohleder’s discernment, however, I feel my outsider’s perspective, which attends more to the form the arguments take than to their content, offers an intriguing point of departure for further substantive research on gendered assumptions about males in conversations about males and psychology.

My method involved simply asking the following research questions: What assumptions, or unproved points of departure, are made about males? Are these assumptions declared or tacitly assumed? On what authority do these assumptions depend? Are these assumptions gynocentric? Are these assumptions misandric? Do they rely on empirical or theoretical arguments? What can be done to improve the integrity of academic book reviews on boys and men? The following discussion will distill the essence of the findings into a brief commentary and offer an illustrative quotation to exemplify five salient sets of assumptions evident in these reviews.

Seven of the twenty-one book reviews assumed that males are dignified and deserve appropriate accommodation.¹ Alt and Liu’s review of Brooks, *Beyond the crisis of masculinity* (2012) observes that, “therapists should be thoroughly knowledgeable about the male experience and facile with therapeutic skills consonant with male help-seeking styles....an integrative model of male-friendly psychology [should] emerge.” This review is typical in its respect and its concern for men’s needs and how to negotiate them effectively. In contrast to these male-positive reviews, five others assumed that males should defer to a gynocentric interpretation of gendered experience.² A good example of this strident, often condescending, approach is Britton’s review of Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender*, (2012) that asserts, “Feminists are fighting battles we thought we had won decades ago....Because men have greater control over power and resources than women do, both men and women accept a gender hierarchy in which men are perceived as better than women....Men must take on more of the carework in households and hence loosen the association between caring and femininity (and agency and masculinity)....There is much to like about this book....Ridgeway presents a powerful and convincing account of how gender inequality works and is reproduced in everyday actions.” Similarly gynocentric but also misandric were the assumptions, shared by four reviews, that masculinity is culturally constructed and essentially unhealthy.³ Diamond’s review of Moss, *Thirteen ways of looking at a man*, (2013) approvingly notes, “This scholarly yet incisive book addresses the unstable notion of masculinity and the ways in which both hetero-and homosexual men seek to shape themselves in relation to the precarious nature of being a man...As Moss implies, the impossible sense of manliness is bound up with an inherent *gap* or *lacking* that has ramifications in the realm of self-esteem, sexuality, and competition....” I find it troubling that no affirmative possibility for masculinity is considered here; just predictable postmodernism and pathology—both unfortunately still the main discourses for understanding males in the arts and the humanities.

Most disconcerting among the assumptions about men were those concerning gay male issues. In three of the reviews gay male identity was not assumed to be an embodied male identity.⁴ More postmodernism is evident here in the guise of a Butlerian performativity that subsumes the somatic. For example, Wheeler says of Goldberg’s *Gay dads*, (2013), “She frames the data in terms of the effects that becoming parents had on the participants’ evolving understanding of family and their sexuality and... wider contexts....guided by social constructionist and queer theories...the role of masculinity scripts....the men’s experiences of being a family in community spaces and its influence on their visibility and ‘outness’ as gay men...an important early step in the development of an

understanding of psychology of adoptive fatherhood for gay men.” One of the deficits for males whose concerns are associated with the LGBTQ coalition is its gynocentric tendency to view maleness as troubling in its potential for experiences independent of those already expressed, and approved of, by feminists. Gay males experience a somatic reality completely alien to those others in the LGBTQ panoply; this area is always possibly beyond the gynocentric pale and consequently potentially subversive of gynocentrism and its agendas. Much productive work could be done by reframing gay male experience as somatically male experience, exploring the greater commonality shared among men than among gay men in the LGBTQ gynocentric coalition.

Along a similar train of thought, one that wishes to reframe dominant discourses on maleness to account for individual specificity rather than pansexual collectivity, were the assumptions shared in two of the reviews: these suggested that current ways of understanding sex and gender were insufficiently complex to account for individual contingency within masculinity.⁵ Guha exemplifies this argument in a review of Blazina & Miller, *An International Psychology of Men*, (2012): “Whether the causes are cultural or innate however, it is not seriously disputed that gender differences exist... I hope [this work] represents an interim stage on the road towards an individual-based rather than gender-based mental health provision.” This inductive approach seems refreshing in the context of so many deductions stemming from cultural-relativist, and mostly gynocentric, assumptions.

The extent to which these assumptions are gynocentric and misandric correlates interestingly to whether the criticism based on them depend on empirical studies or theory. The five sets of assumptions corresponded to empirical or theoretical arguments in the following ways: first, male-positive assumptions about men tended to favor research based more on empirical rather than purely theoretical studies; second, gynocentric assumptions about maleness were just the opposite, favoring theoretical rather than empirical research—as were those works that were both gynocentric and misandric. The examinations of gay men based on gynocentric assumptions predictably also valued the theoretical over the empirical, in keeping with the denial of male somatic experience. Finally, and similarly predictably but with different consequences, those studies that valued the individual experience over collective sex and gender identity favored the empirical over the theoretical.

Given what has been gleaned from this brief examination of the research project, what might be done to improve the integrity of academic book reviews on boys and men? I offer the following three suggestions: first, clearly state male-positive assumptions and the empirical and theoretical benefits to examining male identity and experience; second, critique gynocentric and misandric assumptions and motivations for understanding male identity and experience; and third, explore embodied gay male identity as male identity. Examining the tacit assumptions made about males in the kind of book reviews discussed in this paper might unsettle some long-held gendered assumptions but will productively improve critical awareness of males and the issues they face.

Notes

1 See M. Alt & W. M. Liu, C. Bailey, D. Buchanan, R. C. Intrieri, G. C. Jackson, P. Rohleder, and C. Wrottesley.

2 See D. Britton, D. Brown, S. S. Rostosky, C. Smith & I. H. Frieze, and E. Weiss.

3 See J. Chang & W. M. Liu, M. J. Diamond, J. Gast, and E. Riska.

4 See J. Cooke & S. S. Rostosky, J. Saltzman, and E. E. Wheeler.

5 See M. Bigras and M. Guha.

Part 3: What are academic institutions doing to prepare students and the public for a better understanding of men's issues?

A lack of attention to boys' and men's experience by psychology professionals has led to fewer male therapists, misrepresentations of men in the media, and fewer opportunities for college men to have their voices heard.

The symposium of which this contribution is a part raises the general questions: "What is the impact on the discipline of psychology of the reduction of males in the psychology-based professions? How can we expand and enhance the academic literature on boys and men? What is it like currently to be a young man studying at university, especially as a psychology major?"

My contribution originated with the more specific question: What are academic institutions doing to prepare students and the public for a better understanding of young men's issues, especially those who are majoring in psychology and aspire to a career in psychology? I will also discuss the need for centers on college and university campuses where issues facing boys and young men especially, but also the majority of males in contemporary culture, can be discussed. I will question the dearth of courses currently offered to study issues of relevance and importance to boys and men, and note the difficulties facing faculty who would like to see changes in campus life and curriculum that would foreground as needed the experience of men at college and in life after graduation. Finally, I will present a synopsis of my course, Psychology of Boys and Men, which I have offered at Wagner College for nearly a decade, as an example of male-positive curriculum in psychology.

The question I was asked to address is, What are academic institutions doing to prepare students and the public for a better understanding of men's issues?

I will take up a slightly different question; namely, What are academic institutions doing to prepare students for a better understanding of men's issues? As you have heard, I omitted "the public" from the question. I did this because I firmly believe it is not part of the mandate of institutions of higher learning to attempt to directly affect society at large. That is for the professions, government, the media and activists. The merging of academic preparation—education—and activism on campuses since the 1970s has vitiated the effectiveness of our work as teachers.

Some faculty came to see their "job" as purveying an ideology, putting forward a cause, or presenting a worldview, rather than helping students learn how to read closely, think critically, and speak and write clearly—and, above all, to learn how to learn. As someone who places more value on demonstrating these practices to students than merely communicating information to them, I approach today's question with our students in mind—especially our male students.

The short answer to the question posed might be: Very little. In truth, currently academic institutions are doing nothing to prepare students, male and female, to better understand the experience of being male in contemporary society. This is the sort of topic psychologists are best prepared to discuss. It is important to repeat and emphasize that this has an impact not only on the boys, but also the girls. All students now need to have an understanding of how boys and men—especially young men, but also fathers, middle-age and elderly men—experience their bodies, their selves. It is a topic all but missing in our curricula.

Lack of attention to this, I would argue, is one reason for the recent decreasing enrollments of males at university. The national average is now less than 40%. Statistical models predict that, at the present rate of decline, in fifty years there will be no boys on campus. I doubt that will happen, because awareness of the need for increased commitment to understanding the male experience—which only a psychological perspective can provide—is now being felt. The Eastern Psychological Association's interest in today's panel is evidence of that awareness, although there are few such discussions taking place at regional and national conferences of this kind. I expect that will soon change.

Fewer applications, more frequent interruptions or withdrawals, and the resulting fewer graduates at the bachelor's level means fewer males going on to graduate study and careers in the learned professions, including psychology, in both its research, teaching, and applied clinical fields. My evidence is nearly all anecdotal. As of yet, few studies have been undertaken of the attitudes of young men and the attitudes towards young men on campus, but they are needed. Three years ago I published some preliminary material on the topic which was gathered from ten colleges and universities from across the nation. It appeared as *Engaging College Men: Understanding What Works and Why*.

Courses and programs on the experience of being female—women's studies and gender studies—are ubiquitous, although in recent years the number of programs has been decreasing because of fewer enrollments.

There is at this time, however, only one undergraduate men's studies program—at Hobart Williams Smith College—and one new graduate program due to begin in a year or two at SUNY Stony Brook, both in New York State. Both of these programs have acknowledged connections with existing women's studies (on gender studies) programs on campus. We need a fresh start, I think, with courses that leave open at the outset just what the phenomenon—male experience—is.

In the States, on college campuses there are a few men's centers for research and discussion of men's issues. There is one in the UK. One proposed for a university in Canada is being strongly opposed. Perhaps more telling is the fact that where they exist they are not welcome. Much the same can be said about males themselves—other than athletes. I have written and spoken at length here in the States, in Canada and in Australia about this increasing sense of not feeling welcome experienced by many young men at university. Today I will look specifically at what is being done and what can be done to rectify this by expanding and enriching the psychology curriculum.

Changes in the general curriculum, but also in the co-curriculum and the extra-curriculum are a large part of answer to the question, How can we make young men feel welcome once again on

campus? Doing so in part depends upon increasing awareness on campus of most men's experience. As an example of curricular change in our discipline, I will give you a brief tour of a course I have taught for ten years on "The Psychology of Boys and Men."

First, a note or two on course offerings in psychology in general that are already on the books. The developmental psychology of boys and girls has long been a staple of psychology offerings. Child psychology and adolescent psychology courses should be adequate as they stand, providing they include a unit on the alarming increase in diagnosis of so-called ADHD and other conduct disorders, a diagnosis that is made almost entirely in boys. Related to this are the consequences on boys' development of ingesting an unprecedented number of doses of amphetamines (Ritalin, Adderal)—sometimes administered by school nurses as a condition of a boy's attendance at elementary and high school—must be explored. Social psychology courses on attitude formation, prejudice, and intimate partner behavior—especially among college-age adolescents—are quite common, but they often fail to include consideration of female-on-male and male-on-male aggressive behavior in heterosexual partnerships (dating) and homosocial settings, such as violent sports (football games and ice hockey matches). Attitudes about boys and men of the "snips and snails and puppy-dog tails" variety and as potential campus rapists must be contextualized and examined critically. In particular, the recent moral panic about a so-called rape culture on university campuses must be tempered with attention to the data.

Outside of psychology, related course offerings in sociology consider only the observed behavior of boys and men. This is its limitation, especially when it is the motivation of the individual that is crucial, and not primarily or solely his "emitted behavior" (as a former president of the EPA, Fred Skinner, would say), even when some guesses about possible underlying "reasons" for the behavior are added into the mix. Courses in psychology need are needed precisely to remind us to consider that all behavior is embodied and motivated, and that there are essential differences between male and female comportment and expression that are not exclusively the result of social conditioning. All of this becomes obvious when psychology once again becomes in the first place the study of human experience and not (only) behavior.

The development more widely of courses on the psychology of boys and men is a matter of urgent concern. They may even have the effect of drawing men back into our field, which is now dominated by women.

Let me now describe my course, "Psychology of Boys and Men." It is a 200-level (intermediate) elective in psychology I have taught for ten years at Wagner College. It is also one of the Gender Studies minor courses, the only one that focuses on the experience of boys and men in all its uniqueness.

This is a course about the experience of being male as a boy and as a man. Six books are required reading: Louann Brizendine, *The Male Brain*; David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making*; Luigi Zoja, *The Father*; Eugene Monick, *Phallos*; Leonard Sax, *Boys Adrift*; and Roy Baumeister, *Is there Anything Good about Men?*. In addition, a two-part reading by Warren Farrell based on his book *The Myth of Male Power* is available online as publications of *New Male Studies: An International Journal* (which I edit): <http://newmalestudies.com/OJS/index.php/nms/issue/view/9> and

<http://newmalestudies.com/OJS/index.php/nms>.

We first discuss the male body and how it affects the presence of boys and men in nature and the social world. We then turn to theories of male psychological and psychosocial development. Next, using anthropological research we examine the notion of manhood in a variety of cultures in order to see whether there are any universal features of what it means to be a man and whether there is anything like essential masculinity. We question the myth of innate male aggressiveness and examine the relation between men and power. We turn next to male sexuality, including homoeroticism, men's relationships with their mothers and other women, and their fathers, fathering, male spirituality, and psychopathology in boys and men, including learning disabilities, hyperactivity, impulsiveness, antisocial personality disorder, depression and suicide. We conclude the course by considering some of the special issues surrounding boys' experiences and look at the broad social perspective on being male in contemporary Western culture.

Students are asked to write two thematic reflections on topics negotiated between student and instructor and two reflections on films. The thematic reflections require consulting three sources from the bibliographies provided. A list of suitable films is also provided.

MASTER ONLINE BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND OTHER RESEARCH SOURCES

<http://www.xyonline.net/mensbiblio/>

<http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net/> This is currently one of the most comprehensive resources on the internet for literature on boys and men. It is the work of Michael Flood, an Australian scholar, who regularly updates it.

http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/GUS/GUS_AFS.HTM This is a huge resource of literature on growing up as a male (and female) in all cultures throughout the world. For men's studies see <http://www.menstuff.org/frameindex.html> and the journal *New Male Studies*: <http://newmalestudies.com/OJS/index.php/nms>.

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FILMS ABOUT BOYS AND MEN

Billy Elliot [Stephen Daldry; 2000]

The life of 11-year old Billy Elliot, a coal miner's son in Northern England, is forever changed one day when he stumbles upon a ballet class during his weekly boxing lesson. Before long he finds himself in a dance class, demonstrating the kind of raw talent seldom seen by the class's exacting instructor. Billy must keep his participation in the class a secret from his widowed father and overbearing brother, who are on strike from their jobs at amine and are struggling just to keep food on the table. Billy is torn between his responsibility to his family and to the gift with which he has been blessed, for his overwhelming desire to dance is more than a means of self-expression. It is his passion, and it is his destiny.

Brokeback Mountain (Ang Lee: 2005)

A love story set against the sweeping vistas of Wyoming and Texas, Brokeback Mountain tells the story of two young men, a ranch-hand and a rodeo cowboy, who meet in the summer of 1963 to work as shepherds in the American West. Unexpectedly, they forge a lifelong connection. Its complications, joys and tragedy are a testament to the endurance and power of love. This is a movie about the underlying meaning of love that happens between men, whether or not that love ever is sexual. It has been called friendship and male adhesiveness.

Gerry [Gus van Sant; 2003]

Only two characters, both named Gerry, played by Matt Damon and Casey Affleck, are driving through a desert populated by imposing rock formations and bordered by miles of sky. The two Gerrys want to see an unspecified "thing" which they are unable to find. They attempt to return to their car, but cannot find the pathway back. As they wander through the increasingly challenging desert terrain, their journey strains their friendship and becomes an exploration that is about more than just finding the car.

Joe the King (Frank Whaley: 1999)

A destitute 14-year-old struggles to keep his life together despite harsh abuse at his mother's hands and even harsher abuse from his alcoholic father. Petty thefts lead on to stealing a cash box from the diner where he works. Although Joe uses the money to pay off some of his father's debts and to replace his mother's records that his father smashed in a fit of temper, Joe gets no thanks. Joe is still capable of compassion and looks after a friend who is enduring even worse conditions than he is. This is a tribute to the strength and resilience of neglected boys in America.

The Keys to the House [Gianni Amerlio; 2004]

A compassionate and rigorous exploration of fatherhood and the often surprising response to disability. This is the touching story of a young father forging a relationship with his handicapped son, whom he meets for the first time as a teenager. Having suffered a traumatic birth, Paolo is challenged

both physically and psychologically and must travel to a special hospital in Berlin for rehabilitation. His father, Gianni, who accompanies the boy to the hospital in hopes of getting to know his estranged son, meets a strong woman dedicating herself entirely to the care of her handicapped daughter. Through their conversations, Gianni come to terms with the guilt of having abandoned Paolo. This revelation results in an unexpected and fragile happiness between a father and a son discovering each other and themselves in a place far from home.

The Last Kiss [Gabriele Muccino; 2002]

This film centers on four buddies about 30 years old who are starting to think about settling into a more serious phase of their lives. It communicates the breathless anxiety of striving to hold on to the fleeting feeling of carefree youth. Particularly poignant are the repeated scenes of the four friends standing side by side in a waterfall where they gather for nighttime meetings. They pop open champagne bottles, spraying the bubbly liquid, and scream their wildest dreams into the black night sky above. These five men want nothing more than to settle down and live peacefully. They have all begun to lay down the roots of their future lives, but they hesitate to nourish them.

L.I.E. [Michael Cuesta; 2001]

The Long Island Expressway (LIE) traverses suburban Long Island. Howie Blitzer is a sensitive fifteen-year-old who runs with a rough crowd. The recent death of his mother in a car accident on exit 52 of the L.I.E. and his father's indifference to it have left him floating in a world bubbling over with sex, violence, and danger. Howie's best friend, Gary, convinces Howie to burglarize the house of their neighbor, 60-year-old Big John. Howie's father is arrested over a bad business deal and he is left dangling. Only Big John seems to care. A harrowing mixture of tenderness and sexual tension electrifies the father-son relationship that forms between Howie and Big John.

Shooting Fish [Stephan Schwartz; 1998]

Jez, a goofy British tech genius, and Dylan, a smarmy fast-talking Yank, are orphans. They're also con artists out to "shoot some big fish," that is, (trick some people out of their money. Things get complicated when a typist they hire for a "job" turns out to be sweeter than any scam. It turns out that she needs the money more than they do. When Jez and Dylan land in jail during a financial crisis, what's a woman to do with \$2,000,000?

Y tu Mama Tambien [Alfonso Cuaron; 2002]

The lives of Julio and Tenoch, like those of seventeen-year old boys everywhere, are ruled by raging hormones, intense friendship, and a headlong rush into adulthood. Over the course of a summer, the two best friends make new connection with each other, themselves and the world around them. Just days after the boys trade heartfelt good-byes with their sexy, young girlfriends who are headed to Italy for summer vacation, their attention is diverted by Luisa, a stunning twenty-eight year old Spaniard. At a family wedding in Mexico City, the boys awkwardly flirt with Luisa, who is married to a distant cousin of Tenoch's. Fueled by alcohol and her beauty, the boys invite Luisa to accompany them on a road trip to a remote beach with the romantic name of Boca del Cielo -- Heaven's Mouth

-- neglecting to mention that they wouldn't know where to find it, even if it actually did exist. Luisa humors the boys, but not without first fueling their vivid imaginations. A few days later, Luisa, receives some heartbreaking news and, needing a change of scenery, tracks down the boys and accepts their offer. The unlikely trio hits the road, their destination not so much Boca del Cielo as that seductive and mysterious place where innocence, sexuality, and friendship collide. As the saying goes, you never really know someone until you travel with him. With the car closing in upon them, Julio and Tenoch are forced to reveal to each other sides of their personalities they had never before even dared to explore. Though best friends for years, the boys realize they had often taken each other for granted, not seeing the person in front of them. Luisa is the catalyst of their self-discovery. Her presence brings out the best – and the worst – in the two friends. At times a sexy seductress, at other times the maternal figure each of the friends is lacking, Luisa, too, finds out what is important to her. As the road leading to the elusive Boca del Cielo becomes more desolate and inhospitable, the protagonists find there is no escape from a confrontation with their innermost demons and desires.

Yossi & Jagger [Eytan Fox; 2003]

Based on a true story, Yossi & Jagger portrays the relationship between two Israeli officers in an IDF position on the Israeli-Lebanese border. They are commanders, they are in love, and they try to find a place of their own in an oppressing and rigid system, which sends them to defend a cause they do not necessarily believe in. The film portrays in a courageous, genuine, amusing and sometimes painful fashion the complicated and sensitive topic of "gays in the military". It also see portrays the tragic structure of life of young Israelis today. In Yossi & Jagger you can also two young women who try to survive in a men's world. The film's creators emphasize the distorted situation in which these men and women are forced to live and die.

OTHER FILMS FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE

Adventures of Sebastian Cole, The (Williams 1998)
Another Day in Paradise (Clark 1998)
Basketball Diaries, The (Kalvert 1995)
Beautiful Thing (MacDonald 1995)
Borstal Boy (Sheridan 2000)
Breaking Away (Yates 1979)
Bully (Clark 2001)
Butcher Boy, The (Jordan 1997)
Choristes, Les (Barratier 2004)
Cider House Rules, The (Hallström 1999)
Cinema Paradiso (Tornatore 1989)
Crazy in Alabama (Banderas 1999)
Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys, The (Care 2002)
Dead Poets Society (Weir 1989)
Donnie Darko (Kelly 2001)
Dream Catcher, The (Radtke 1999)
Elephant (Van Sant 2003)
Emperor's Club (Hoffman 2002)

Equus (Lumet 1977)
Europa Europa (Holland 1990)
Garçon Stupide (Baier 2004)
Great Santini, The (Carlino 1979)
Gummo (Korine 1997)
Harold and Maude (Ashby 1971)
Heathers (Lehman 1989)
Home at the End of the World, A (Mayer 2004)
King of the Hill (Soderbergh 1993)
Last Picture Show, The (Bogdanovich 1971)
Le Clan [aka Three Dancing Slaves] (Morel 2004)
Lord of the Flies (Hook 1990)
Lords of Dogtown (Hardwicke 2005)
Ma Vie en Rose (Berliner 1997)
Mickybo and Me (Loane 2005)
Mudge Boy, The (Burke 2003)
My Life as a Dog (Hallström 1985)
My Own Private Idaho (Van Sant 1999)
October Sky (Johnston 1999)
Our Lady of the Assassins (Schroeder 2000)
Outsiders, The (Coppola 1983)
Saint Ralph (McGowan 2004)
Separate Peace, A (Peerce 1972)
Shooting Fish (Schwartz 1998)
Sleepers (Levinson 1996)
Small Faces (MacKinnon 1996)
Stand by Me (Reiner 1986)
Sum of Us, The (Burton/Dowling 1994)
Tadpole (Winick 2002)
Thumbsucker (Mills 2005)
What's Eating Gilbert Grape? (Hallström 1993)

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There and not from There - A Quest For That Which Aren't

JAN H. ANDERSEN





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#27



Jan H. Andersen is a Danish photographer, software developer, and author specializing in topics surrounding children and teenagers. With a degree in child care and with many years of experience working with troubled kids and families, he writes with passion about child psychology, boy issues and parenting. You can read more at his website www.jhandersen.com and reach him at jha@jhandersen.com.

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An Angry Non-white Man? Research and Rhetoric in Michael's Kimmel's *Angry White Men*

MILES GROTH



A leading spokesman for men's studies, sociologist Michael Kimmel, published a widely read and referenced book in 2013, Angry White Men. American Masculinity at the End of an Era (New York; Nation Books). This review article examines the research methodology employed to arrive at the author's conclusions. Serious limitations are detailed.

Keywords: men's studies, male studies, current events, males, masculinity, manhood, whiteness

The Purpose of This Review

Given the extraordinary claims made by Michael Kimmel in *Angry White Men. American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Nation Books, 2013) (= AWM), I was concerned to examine the nature of the research on which they are based. I leave it to the reader to acquire a library copy of the book, as I have, and read it carefully against the background of the information the author has given us about his methodology and sources, which I summarize here. Whether it is a work of scholarship or journalism, the credibility of a writer's assertions or reporting must rest on the quality of the information or data on which they are based and the integrity of the methodology by means of which the data or information were gathered. Professor Kimmel's book purports to be a work of scholarship.

Background of the Publication

The SUNY Stony Brook webpage (March 2014) for Michael Kimmel tells us that his "current research is 'Angry White Men,' a comparative study of the extreme right, White Supremacists, and neo-Nazis in the United States, Germany, and Scandinavia" (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/sociology/people/faculty/kimmel.html>). Clearly, Kimmel's book is, in part, the fruit of that research. The discussion in its pages is only about the United States, however, and no mention is made of Germany or Scandinavia. Its BISAC headings are, accordingly: 1. Men – United States – Attitudes. 2. Whites – United States – Attitudes. 3. Masculinity – United States. 4. Equality – United States. 5. Civil rights – United States.

The publisher, Nation Books, is a "co-publishing venture" of Perseus Books Group and the Nation Institute (AWM, copyright page), a "nonprofit media center" "dedicated to continuing this country's long tradition of progressive thought" (<http://www.nationinstitute.org/about/>) (p. 315). The Institute is affiliated with *The Nation* magazine.

Some general information about the marketing of book is in order. It is offered by its publishers as "Current Events / Sociology." It is provided with endorsements ("advance praise" [front dust jacket]) by "Gloria Steinem, feminist activist and author," "Katha Pollitt, columnist for *The Nation*," "Martin Duberman, professor of history emeritus at the Graduate School of the City University of New York," "Madeline Kunin, former [1985-1991] governor of Vermont, author of *Pearls, Politics, and Power: How Women Can Win and Lead* [2008] and *The New Feminist Agenda: Defining the Next Revolution for Women, Work, and Family* [2012]," and sociologist "Pedro Noguero, Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education at New York University" (back dust jacket).

Duberman, Kunin and Steinem are members of the advisory board of the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities at SUNY Stony Brook that Kimmel opened in the fall of 2013 and directs (http://commcgi.cc.stonybrook.edu/am2/publish/General_University_News_2/Stony_Brook_University_to_Create_Center_for_the_Study_of_Men_and_Masculinities.shtml). Other advisors include the actor and fitness expert, Jane Fonda, Carol Gilligan (a psychologist who published *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* [1982]), James Gilligan (a psychiatrist who has written on violence), and Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues*. Duberman founded the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York and is the author of *In White America* (1963).

Since Fall 2013, Kimmel's Center has to date (March, 2014) offered six two-hour seminars (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/csmm/>) given by Lauren Josph (on male clients of prostitutes), Anna Klonkowska (on transgender men and women in Poland), Niobe Way (on boys' friendships), Byron Hurt (on "manhood, music and soul"), Darrell Moore (on Black masculinities), and Ozgend Felek (on circumcision and masculinity among Turkish soldiers). Four additional seminars are planned for 2014: Svend Aage Madsen (on men's mental health), Anna Sofie Bach (on "Henpecked Husbands and Power Women? Negotiating Masculinity, Power and Status Relations within the Heterosexual Couple"), Tal Peretz (on "Engaging Diverse Men: An Intersectional Analysis Of Men's Pathways To Antiviolence Activism"), and Brett Stoudt (on "Brooks Brothers' Blazers & Ivy League: The Use of Participatory Action Research to Examine and Interrupt Masculine Privilege in an Elite Private School").

Scholarly Context

Kimmel notes that his data are derived primarily from interviews, but he has also consulted print and online sources, and radio and television programs (p. 11). Unlike most scholarly works, the book lacks a bibliography. Its 13 pages of 300 notes for 293 pages of text refer to (roughly) 105 books, 85 articles in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in books, and 115 newspaper articles, internet sites, and radio and television programs.

A review of the Index (pp. 301-314) reveals several patterns of emphasis:

Angry American white boys, transform aggrieved entitlement into mass murders; Aggrieved entitlement, Al-Qaeda as allies to white supremacists; Anti-Communist paranoid movements; Anti-Semitic extreme Right; Anti-Semitism, as exclusion strategy to protect white race, masculinity; Capitalism, creative destruction of; Christianity, white supremacists preach racial purity; Entitlement of men, as key to understanding violence against women—with sense of proprietorship of America; Fathers' rights movement (FRM), reassert[s] traditional patriarchal arrangements; Feminists, blamed by rampage shooters—blamed for fatherlessness—blamed for white boys' problems; Gay men, blamed for white men's problems—promote fathers' responsibility—visibility blamed on feminists; Gender discrimination, white men perceived as victims of feminists; Government, as feminist; Jock culture, with administrators complicit with rape; Language of aggrieved entitlement, compared to Nazis, Hutus, promoting genocide—of fathers' rights groups; Masculinity, needs decoupling from entitlement; Masculinity ideology, key to understanding anger; Media, perceived by white supremacists as controlled by Jews; Men's rights activists (MRAs), as movement of angry white men; Mental Illness, resulting from bullying, gay bashing; Neo-Nazis, committed to race and family—interviewing process; Obama, Barack, and Limbaugh's racism; Rape, of father's rights movement leaders [?]-fueled by aggrieved entitlement—turned inward as depression; Rampage shooters, compared to Middle East suicide bombers; Religion, feminization of; School shooting, with bullying, madness, ignored by administrators; Suicide among men, as inwardly exploding anger; Violence, applauded against women, as sense of entitlement—as form of conflict resolution for boys; White supremacists, emasculation politics—portrayals of Jewish men; Women, feminizing clutches of—as masculinized; Working-class white men, as right-wing extremists. I leave it to the reader to conclude what he or she will about what, apart from "angry white men," preoccupies the author in his discussion of them. Kimmel notes in his "Preface": ". . . I've been angry too." He has been "impatient," "easily ired," and

“incensed.” He tells us he has felt “anguish,” “heart sick,” “torn apart” and “horrified” about certain things (pp. x-xi). He self-identifies as an activist and an academic (p. xi) among “we straight white men” (p. xii).

Nearly 200 pages into the book, Kimmel explains the “intention in this book” “to document the various ways that America’s angry white men are expressing their aggrieved entitlement” (p. 195). To determine whether he has accomplished this using viable and credible data is the purpose of the present review.

Concerning Methodology, Sources, and Data

The hallmark of scholarly research in the social sciences is careful sampling. In qualitative research (of which *Angry White Men* is an example), while preserving the anonymity of one’s sources, an author is expected to explain how and why he has chosen the subjects represented. Readers must know whether the author’s conclusions are based on the reports of a few people or many thousands. The demographics (geographic location, age, ethnicity, occupation, level of education) of subjects must be summarized. Interviewing protocols must be explained.

A look at the methods and materials of Kimmel’s research, chapter by chapter, section by section, will show how well he has met his commitment to solid research as a sociologist.

The Text

“Preface”

Item: Writing from “Brooklyn, May 2013” (p. xv), in the “Preface” to AWM, the author cites “people,” “my friends,” and “my friend, Dan, a doctor” as sources of reports of ubiquitous unpleasant, angry behavior in everyday American life. This is the broader context of the anger of “white men” that concerns Kimmel. Understandably, names cannot be given, but one must ask about the details of his sources here. Who are these “people” and “friends”? What is their distribution by sex, age, level of education, occupation and the like—all standard headings for classifying research subjects.

Item: “Data are plentiful” that a society’s “level of gender equality” correlates with “lower rates of depression” and higher rates “happiness” in its members “whether in a relationship or marriage” (pp. xii, xiv, 283). This would appear to be a relevant observation, but no references are provided to support it.

Item: This book about “a sense of . . . ‘aggrieved entitlement’” attributed to “all white men” (p. xiv). The notion itself is referred to as “a gendered emotion” (p. 75). No data are given to support Kimmel’s assertion about universality. As one continues through AMW, it only later becomes somewhat clear to whom the term “angry white men” refers—all men other than “[g]ay men, black men, Asian men, Latino men, and other racial and ethnic minority men” (p. 125).

Item: “The data are persuasive” that most men in this country have “accommodated themselves to greater gender equality” (p. xiv) and are happier as a result. To what data is Kimmel referring? We

are not told.

The “Preface” ends with a quotation from the Greenwich Village “bohemian writer” (p. xix), Floyd Dell (1887-1969), an American “progressive” (cf. the Mission Statement of the Nation Institute, which co-published AWM) journalist, author and playwright. It is taken from a journal called *The Masses* (1916): “Feminism will, for the first time, allow men to be free” (p. xv). The details of the reference, “Feminism for Men,” are not given. It is standard practice, of course, for scholars to provide just such information so that readers can understand the context of a quotation. A closer look repays the effort. Given Kimmel’s being “heartsick for gays and lesbians still targeted for violence by hateful neighbors for loving whom they love” (p. x), it is of some interest that Dell, who was the first male lover of the “bisexual” American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay, is credited with having said in his autobiography that he assumed that role with the poet since he “he felt it was his duty to rescue her from her homosexuality” (*Homecoming*, 1933; reprinted in 1969—referenced and paraphrased, http://www.sappho.com/poetry/e_millay.html). Does Kimmel know this about his source? Dell was the author of *Feminism for Men* (1914) and *Enter the Woman* (1915). Kimmel himself is the author of books entitled *Against the Tide: Pro-feminist Men in the U.S., 1776-1990* (1992) and *The Guy’s Guide to Feminism* (with Michael Kaufman) (2011).

“Introduction”

The “Introduction” to AWM, which begins with a quotation by Glenn Beck (p. 1), presents the scenario of a breakfast meeting with “Rick,” a man Kimmel meets at a high school in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, where he has gone to attend a gun show. Kimmel recalls asking himself, “What’s a nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn doing in a place like this?” (p. 1). He had introduced himself to “Rick” as “a writer . . . on a research trip” (p. 2).

Item: We are not told why Kimmel has singled out this man as a source, other than that he is with other men at the first table inside the venue. Kimmel writes: “They eye me suspiciously. I am not very tall, obviously ‘ethnic’ . . .” (p. 2). One of the men asks: “What are you writing about? . . . You Jewish?” (p. 2). Kimmel replies to one or all of the men: “I’ll answer your questions. Yes, I’m Jewish. I’m a sociology professor from New York. I am writing a book about what is happening to guys like you in our country” (p. 2). Kimmel does not tell them who to his mind “guys like you” are. “I’m not here to convince you of some blue-state liberal agenda. My job is to understand how you see all this” (p. 3). “Rick” agrees to talk with Kimmel. This is how he comes to be one of Kimmel’s sources. What were the criteria of selection operating here? Social science requires that there be such criteria to ensure integrity of sampling. One of the other men comments: “Yeah, Rick, you go talk to this guy. Yeah, I sure as shit don’t want to talk to no Jew” (p. 3).

At breakfast the next day (for which the author “arrived a half hour early and parked my car a few blocks away” (p. 3), Kimmel produces a tape recorder to preserve the material of the conversation in order to authenticate it for scholarly purposes. Doing so ensures a verbatim account of the data to which other researchers may refer, especially when direct quotations are given. “Rick” responds: “Are you a fed? I can’t talk to you” (p. 3). Kimmel shows “Rick” his university ID (which functions as a sort of press card), puts away the tape recorder, and the conversation begins. There is, then, no protocol of what transpired between Kimmel and “Rick.” Lacking a transcript, the content

of the conversation remains entirely a matter of what Kimmel recollects. We are not told whether he took notes while having breakfast with “Rick.” It is important to maintain the anonymity of people interviewed, but it is just as important to detail why a given person was interviewed and not someone else.

Item: Kimmel writes: “I’ve spent the past several years talking to these guys” (p. 11). Here we expect to be told how many years, how many men interviewed, where, under what circumstances, using what protocol for interviewing. Usually, an author provides this information in a table. We are not told any of this. Instead, Kimmel goes on: “As I have crisscrossed the country, first interviewing younger men on college campuses for my book *Guyland*, and late while crisscrossing it again being interviewed about the book, I’ve also been interviewing these angry white men” (p. 11).¹ Kimmel then mentions “reading their blogs, lurking in their chat rooms . . . and listening to the collection of radio ragers” (p. 11). Which blogs? Which chat rooms? Which radio shows? Several blogs and radio shows are mentioned later, but here, at the outset, the reader expects to be given the details of the author’s sources.

Item: “Many of the men I interviewed for this book are not bad men” (p. 11). How many? What are the criteria for determining what a “good man” is? These are “the American men with whom I most disagree politically” (p. 11), writes Kimmel. But what has agreement with one’s “politics” got to do with a work of research?

Kimmel provides some clues about who comprise the group of the aggrieved entitled he is studying. “They’ve blamed women, minorities, gays and lesbians, and immigrants. Some blame the Jews” (p. 12). The group make use of scapegoating: “Scapegoating—whether of Jews, minorities, immigrants, women, whomever . . .” (p. 24). See also pp. 51, 52

Item: We are introduced to “Al, a fifty-two-year-old divorced father of three” (p. 27). We are not told how “Al” was chosen to be interviewed or under what circumstance or to what extent.

1 – “Manufacturing Rage. The Cultural Construction of Aggrieved Entitlement”

Item: “Tom” is a caller to the Rush Limbaugh radio show (p. 31). How many episodes of the radio show did Kimmel audit? When was the show aired? What is the context of “Tom’s” remarks on the economy. The visitors to Limbaugh’s website are profiled (p. 33). The source of the numbers is not given. Numbers of listeners to “outrage media” are referenced (p. 33, n. 6).

Item: Angry white women are considered, including “Debbie,” “whom I met at a Tea Party rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania” (p. 65). “Debbie’s sentiments were echoed by pretty much every one of the Tea Party women with whom I spoke” (p. 65). Why was the venue chosen? How many women did Kimmel speak to? In what way is “Debbie” representative of them?

2 – Angry White Boys

Item: This chapter reprises a theme to which Kimmel returns often: school shootings by boys and young men. In this chapter, Kimmel explains: “With my colleague Matt Mahler, I have investigated all the rampage school shootings that took place in the United States since 1987” (p. 77). We are not given a summary of the study. Dr. Mahler’s credits are not given, but an internet search reveals that he completed his PhD where Kimmel teaches (SUNY/Stony Brook) in 2011. Kimmel was on his dissertation committee.

3 – White Men as Victims. The Men’s Rights Movement

Item: Kimmel interviewed Roy Den Hollander, Esq., an attorney who practices in New York. The conditions of the interview are not described (where? how long?).

Item: After referring to a character in a television series, Kimmel mentions Robert Bly, Michael Meade, and Same Keen, all associated with the earliest men’s mythopoetic consciousness-raising efforts in the United States. He writes parenthetically (p. 106): “In my research, many mythopoets had far better second marriages than their first . . .” No publication is cited and the nature of the research is not described. Several sources are quoted (p. 112): “One writer fumed . . . Another one wrote that . . .,” but they are not identified.

Item: “Jeff” is quoted. “Jeff is a men’s rights fellow traveler I met at one of my campus lectures—after he followed me back to my hotel, peppering me all the way with questions and challenges” (p. 114; cf. p. 95). We are not provided with a description of “Jeff” (student? faculty? local community member?). Another individual interviewed for *Guyland* is referenced just following the presentation of “Jeff’s” comments (tape recorded? reconstructed from notes?) (pp. 114-115). “While researching my previous book *Guyland*, I happened on a Brooklyn bar that has been home to generations of fire-fighters and their pals” (p. 115). Here Kimmel interviewed “Patrick.” Why was “Patrick” chosen for interviewing? What were the conditions of the interview? What sorts of controls were in place? Was informed consent acquired?

Item: Kimmel then reports: “Some years ago, I was doing some research with a graduate student on the levels of violence in various pornographic media” (p. 115). The record of their findings is not given.

Item: Discussing the “disinhibiting effect” of the internet on individuals who communicate there, Kimmel refers to “researchers” (p. 116) who have studied. Only one citation is given (Ch. 3, n. 20, p. 291, where the citation is incorrectly given as *Cyberpsychological Behavior*; the journal is *CyberPsychology and Behavior*).

Item: A sampling of contributors to one site is given (p. 117). “Here’s one guy: . . . And here’s another: . . . And a third: . . .” What was the basis of Kimmel’s choices? From how many contributions did he make his selection?

Item: In a note to this chapter (Ch. 3, n. 27, p. 291), Kimmel refers to a 2002 article in *Violence Against*

Women: “I have reviewed all the empirical studies that claim to show the ‘gender symmetry’ [of domestic violence] . . .” Later, in Chapter 5, “Targeting Women,” Kimmel refers to a study by “a California psychologist, Martin Fiebert” (p. 191). The articles covered by Professor Fiebert cover the years 1978–2001. In a conversation with Fiebert, I learned that in the 12-year period following the article cited by Kimmel, Fiebert has since presented findings that confirm the gender symmetry of domestic violence (Martin Fiebert, personal communication, March 2014). The data are readily available on Fiebert’s website. At p. 193, Kimmel claims that Fiebert’s “annotated bibliography *turns out to be far more of an ideological polemic than a serious scholarly undertaking* [emphasis added].” No comment.

Item: The chapter is devoted to attempting to discredit research on misandry. Reading of the extensive work published by Paul Nathanson and Katherine Young seems to be limited to only their first book, *Spreading Misandry* (2001). Kimmel notes that his critique of their work in the present volume (“my analysis of their books,” Ch. 3, n. 38, p. 291) is based on his article in *Common Review* (2002; the journal ceased publication in 2011). But only one of their books had been published then, the next two in 2006 and 2011, respectively. Clearly, the authors’ books (plural) have not been fully taken into consideration.²

Item: A “men’s rights blogger” wrote to Kimmel about the “manosphere”? What are the features (age, level of education, other demographics) of this blogger, whose significance is signaled by having been chosen for quotation? From how many writers did Kimmel have similar responses? Considering the anecdotal nature of Kimmel’s evidence, the following observation about men’s rights activism is ironic: “Most of what constitutes men’s rights activism is this sort of recitation [the blogger’s comment], supported by a few anecdotes, and the occasional series of empirical inversions that usually leave the rational mind reeling” (p. 118).

Item: Kimmel reports that he “often” asks men’s rights activists about domestic violence as perpetrated by both women and men (p. 120). How many men so identified has he asked this sort of question? What precisely was the question? How was it formulated? In social science research, it is well known that crafting the questions asked is half the work of carrying out qualitative research or for that matter quantitative research involving questionnaires. Casual conversations, informally arranged, do not count as solid, robust data.

Item: Concluding his discussion of male studies (by contrast with men’s studies, as a branch of gender studies/women’s studies), Kimmel writes: “Male studies reminds me of the right wing of the Republican Party . . . Male studies has about as much chance of catching on in academia as would ruling-class studies” (p. 133). A background of stereotypic party politics (liberal/conservative) seems evident. But what might any of that have to do with research on men as carried out by an academic sociologist?

4 - Angry White Dads

Item: The section on “Angry Dads” includes quotations from “Mickey,” someone interviewed by “Jocelyn Crowley for her book *Defiant Dads*” and “Jeff,” whom Kimmel “met at a Long Island fathers’ rights group meeting” (p. 138). Why was the group chosen? Apart from “Jeff, a forty-four-year-old

computer salesman,” with whom did Kimmel speak? Quoting “Jeff,” Kimmel adds in an important footnote (Chapter 4, Note 5, p. 291): “For this chapter, I interviewed several leaders of the movement by e-mail and telephone and attended meetings of two different father’s rights groups, one in Long Island and one in the Los Angeles area. I’ve changed the attendees’ names to preserve anonymity, but I’ve identified the leaders by name.” Leaders are identified, but do two meetings with (how many?) men constitute a valid sample of the fathers studied by the author?³

Item: The author does not give us the real name a “suburban support group for recently divorced guys” (p. 147), which he calls “Fathers United.” Just why the identity of the group (“some meeting” of which he attended) should be masked is not clear, since Kimmel promised to reveal the names of leaders of such groups. We are not told how many meetings and over what period of time the meetings occurred. One meeting hosted a half-dozen men at the leader’s apartment (which Kimmel refers to as “Arnie”’s “man cave”). He reports on what he has heard from “Arnie,” “Tom,” “Greg” and “Hal” (pp. 148-150). Did Kimmel record the conversations? Did he take notes? The details of the conversations are quite precise. Kimmel notes that attendance at the meeting(s) had been difficult to secure. The group leader was “hesitant” to permit Kimmel to attend a session (or sessions). “Arnie” is reported to have said that “he didn’t trust me personally, since I’m known to be on the other side of this debate.” Kimmel wanted to attend “because I wanted to get it right, didn’t want to be too dismissive, and because I thought there was some value to what was happening among fathers” (p. 148). The objectivity required of a researcher and the importance of not being dismissive at all are breached here.

Item: Statistics about the consequences for boys of being raised by a single parent are provided (p. 151). No source is given. In the next paragraph, a report by the National Academy of Sciences the causes of violent crime is referenced, but no citation is given.

Item: Kimmel writes that “all available evidence” concludes that “alleviating poverty would actually lead to an increase in marriages” (p. 152). The reference (Chapter 4, Note 22, p. 292), is a *New York Times* article from 1994.

Item: “I’m sure I don’t need to tell you that there is no empirical evidence whatsoever that suggests that overdominant or single mothers ‘produce’ more gay sons than less dominant moms in husband-wife homes . . .,” write Kimmel (p. 153). But he does tell us this, without providing data that show this is not true. Moreover, there is a psychoanalytic literature from more than a century that has provided strong evidence that this is the case. The comment follows the presentation of an anecdote by “Roger” from Washington, DC. The “activist” is not further profiled. The conclusion is then presumably justified by asserting that “Roger” and other such fathers “just want to promote intact marriages and restrict the options for terminating a bad marriage” (p. 153).

Item: On fathers’ “overstating their involvement in family life,” Kimmel’s authority is “a colleague” who was at one time a “custody evaluator in the Massachusetts family court system (p. 154). (The “colleague” and source of data are identified as “ Bancroft, personal communication, August 12, 2012,” Chapter 4, Note 26, p. 292. On Bancroft, see <http://lundybancroft.blogspot.com/>). But also note: “Lundy Bancroft is reported to have boasted that he was fired by the Massachusetts family courts as a domestic violence educator because of his extreme views” (<http://www.breakingthe->

science.org/: <http://www.breakingthescience.org/BTSResearchCritiqueWithComments.pdf>).

Item: A parenthetical remark—“(Only 30 percent of all black college students in America are male.”—is not referenced (p. 155).

Item: Kimmel quotes “one [fathers’ rights] activist” (p. 158) on fathers’ attitudes towards the support of two households—one left behind by the father and the other maintained by the father after divorce—but does not provide the reader with information about the group membership of source (age, income, conditions of the marriage and divorce, number of children) that would provide the assertion with context (p. 158).

Item: Kimmel cites a statistic on the proportion of “Americans who have ever spanked toddlers” (“more than 90%”) and the proportion of “mothers who spanked their three- to five-year-olds” (“three-fifths”) (p. 159), but does not provide his source.

Item: Kimmel refers to “many of the fathers’ rights websites, magazine, and blogs” (p. 159), concluding that if one is to believe their content, one would erroneously conclude that “courts routinely side with the mother” in custody cases. On how many sources and on which ones is Kimmel basing his conclusion? We are not told.

Item: “Virtually no studies actually find any particularly compelling outcomes for children in joint custody arrangements,” writes Kimmel (p. 168). Which studies has he consulted? We are not told, but only referred to an article in *Marriage and Family Review* (Chapter 4, Note 17, p. 292), “Organizational Responses to the Fatherhood Crisis. The Case of Fathers’ Rights Groups in the United States.” No other reviews of literature are provided to complement Professor Crowley’s. (See <http://www.jocelyncrowley.com/>.) What are Kimmel’s criteria for accepting the author’s data? What studies are there that suggest a different conclusion? (Crowley is the author of *Defiant Dads: Fathers’ Rights Activists in America* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).)

Chapter 5 – Targeting Women

Item: On the number of men murdered by their female partners, Kimmel writes: “Data vary . . .” (p. 174). What are the data he is comparing? We are not told. In the same paragraph, several studies are cited on the numbers, but they are from the years 1988-1994, 1993-2001 and 1981-1992 (Chapter 5, Notes 9-11, p.294). How are these data comparable since the nine covered different periods of time? Could this be why the widely varying figures are “disparate” (p. 175)?

Item: US Department of Justice figures are given on rates of intimate partner homicide (p. 176). The direct references are not given.

Item: Kimmel again refers (p. 176) to Lundy Bancroft in explaining his thesis about a reaction of “aggrieved entitlement” as the source of white men’s anger and quotes him as an authority on domestic violence (p. 176; see Chapter 5, Note 13, p. 294). (See **Item**, re p. 154, above.)

Item: Making reference to Freud (p. 177), Kimmel writes: “This association between violence in love

is so intimate, so central for men, that it practically screams out for answers. Freud wasn't the first to notice the association between love and anger, between sex and aggression." The unattested reference may be to the Greek tragedians. If it is, however, the association is just as often made by the Greeks of women, sex and violence, as it is of men. Kimmel does not cite Freud, but perhaps only because Freud speaks of sex and violence only in the context of the perversions (paraphilias) or as one element of foreplay. Freud does postulate two primary drives: desire and aggression.

Item: Invoking the testosterone hypothesis as having a "permissive effect' on aggression [in men], he refers to "scientists" who have proposed this. Just which scientists, however, we are not told. "Kimmel writes (p. 181): "This sense of entitlement is the key to understanding men's violence against women. Mountains of research suggest that men hit women not when everything is running smoothly, but when it breaks down, when things aren't going so well." Two examples are given, "a young guy, only sixteen years old" and "a twenty-three-year-old guy named Jay." The first is referenced to Mark Totten, *Guys, Gangs, and Girlfriend Abuse* (2002). The second is attributed to a "researcher," Tim Beneke. No citation is given. Beneke is the author of two books, from 1982 (*Men on Rape*) and 1997 (*Proving Manhood: Reflections on Manhood and Sexism*, respectively (<http://www.amazon.com/Timothy-Beneke/e/Boo1KDW7DO>). Kirkus Review describes Beneke as a "free-lance writer and anti-rape activist" (<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/timothy-beneke/proving-manhood/>).

Item: "Again and again, what the research on rape and domestic violence finds is that men initiate violence when they feel a loss of power to which they feel entitled," writes Kimmel (p. 186). No references are given. The paragraph ends with a quotation from "Emile" in Bancroft's *Why Did He Do That?* (2002, p. 61; cited Chapter 5, Note 23, p. 295).

Item: Kimmel provides an example from his own experience of "men's violence against women" (p. 186). "Having been a somewhat sheltered suburban boy, I had no idea, really, about the extent of violence against women." We are not told where he grew up. "My girlfriend was working at a shelter at the time . . . I wanted to do my part, so I offered to do my part, so I offered to volunteer at the shelter where she worked." Since only women were permitted at the shelter, Kimmel was advised by his girlfriend (we are not told where he was a graduate student) to "go talk to the men who beat women up." He was "eventually trained in one of the first batterers' intervention programs" (p. 187). This was the beginning of his "research," which is related by the author to contemporary hook-up culture. All this to say that, "even the most cursory review of the data will tell you that domestic violence has a certain pattern" (p. 187). The data are not provided, however. A batterers' group member, "Al," is recalled. Kimmel's CV is not available at his page on the SUNY Stony Brook site (<http://www.stony-brook.edu/commcms/sociology/people/faculty/kimmel.html>) but according to the wiki entry, he completed his PhD in 1981 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Kimmel) so that presumably his interview with "Al" dates from the late 1970s. His memory for detail is remarkable for the counseling work he did (pp. 188-189). He compares his approach to working with the men to what "therapists" recommend. There are more than 300 varieties of counseling and psychotherapy offered in this country, so it is difficult to know which modality or modalities are being referenced here.

Item: Kimmel's data from sources from 1991-1997 on violence committed by men and women are taken from the *New York Times*, an article in the *Yale Law Journal*, Deborah Rhode's *Speaking of Sex*

(1997), June Stephenson's *Men Are Not Cost Effective* (1991), and *Masculinities and Violence* (no date given, cited as "edited by Bowker"). The volume is from 1998, edited by Lee H. Bowker.

Item: In considering "gender symmetry" in the commitment of intimate partner violence, Kimmel cites provides that support it but does not give the sources. He concludes: "Such assertions are not at all supported by empirical research" (p. 190). His sources to the contrary are from 1978-1995 (Chapter 5, Note 26, p. 295).

Item: "Dan" and "Steve" (an "affable fifty-four-year-old college professor") (pp. 195-196) appear without context other than a reference to "Steven Botkin, a founder of the Men's Resource Center of Western Massachusetts." Who is quoted (p. 196). Kimmel's colleague in publishing, Michael Kaufman, is quoted on the White Ribbon Campaign. So is Joe Torre, "former manager of the New York Yankees and Los Angeles Dodgers," who is "among our most revered celebrities—athletes" and "one of the most visible and galvanizing voices in the choir" (p. 197) voicing themselves against violence against women. Although Mr. Torre is quoted, no reference is given for the source.

Chapter 6 - Mad Men

The epigraph to the chapter (p. 199) is taken from Bruce Springsteen (from "The Promised Land," 1979), who is mentioned a number of times in *Angry White Men* (pp. 11, 18, 204, 216, 218, 277-278).

Item: Kimmel states that "a higher percentage of white people now believe that they are the victims of discrimination than do black people" (p. 203). The percentages are not given; nor is the source.

Item: Interviewed by Kimmel on the changing economic situation of "white men" is "Bill, a patron at a local coffee shop" (p. 208). How the interview was arranged is not explained. Nor is the protocol used given.

Item: As a sociologist, Kimmel is familiar with the work of Emile Durkheim, whose work on suicide (1897) is mentioned in passing (p. 212). A great deal has been written on the topic since then, however. This literature, which builds on and sometimes challenges Durkheim, is not discussed.

Item: Kimmel, a sociologist, discusses suicide and depression among men, claiming that "although depression has a physiological basis" (p. 217), it "is also socially distributed. There is no evidence whatsoever that depression has a physiological basis (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed., 2013). There are no tests for depression, as there are for physical diseases such as diabetes. Every sort of behavior is "socially distributed," that is, "different groups of people in different social circumstances" experience it to a greater or lesser extent. Continuing his psychological analysis, Kimmel next refers to alexithymia, which he introduces as a "socially conditioned" psychological disorder but corrects psychologists' understanding of it by suggesting that they should "bring that personal focus into a dialogue with the social context in which men struggle to prove themselves" (p. 218). The analysis ends with a quotation from a song by John Lennon of the Beatles, "Working Class Hero." It is well known among psychologists that alexithymia is a pseudo-disorder among the many that have been designed by psychiatrists since the 1950s to expand the range of diagnoses of mental illness, most often with a view to treating them with drugs.

That *Angry White Men* is in part a sequel to *Guyland* seems plausible, given what Kimmel says pp. 218-219 ff. Interviews with members of “fight clubs” are reprised in order to suggest that these young men become the eponymous angry white men of the book under review. One “Dustin,” a “senior at Vanderbilt [University]” is quoted. How he was selected and what the context of the interview was are not revealed.

Item: A comment (p. 224) on gender among nurses and doctors (“Doctors are rarely threatened by female nurses; it’s female doctors they resent”) is made without reference to any studies.

Chapter 7 - The White Wing

This chapter makes an equivalence between angry white men and the political right. (It is fair to say we may read the title as “the Right Wing.”) A connection is also made between the racist white right and “the more anti-Semitic Right” (p. 236).

Item: Kimmel quotes “Alex,” from Michigan (pp. 232-233). We are not told how Kimmel met him or what the conditions or protocol of the interview were. So, too, for “a thirty-eight-year-old farmer housing construction worker” from Ohio (pp. 234-235) and “Randall,” from Western Pennsylvania (p. 235).

Item: “Chatting up white supremacists and neo-Nazis was not exactly the travel itinerary that this nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn had originally planned” (p. 239). First in chat rooms then in person, Kimmel talked with his subjects. Just how many is not made clear. Nor do we learn his process of selection of material quoted. Asked where he had met his subjects in person, Kimmel replied to “colleagues and friends”: “I did the lion’s share of my interviews in areas like the soulless suburban sprawl north of San Diego, in towns like Temecula, of Fallbrook, or Poway, or around Long Beach, and San Pedro, a bit farther north, closer to Los Angeles. I ventured around Tennessee, close to Nashville and Murfreesboro. But mostly I stayed pretty close to home” (p. 240). He refers to another gun show he visited, this one in Northeastern Pennsylvania. “Eventually I talked with about forty guys, some just for a few minutes outside the school, others for full-scale interviews. I had ground rules. I never went to their homes, meetings, concerts, or festivals; I never met them after dark and never more than one on one. I met them at diners off highways near the towns with the gun shows; usually, I took them to lunch. I never tape-recorded them. . . . Afterward, waiting again [for the interviewed people to leave the diner], frantically scribbling notes from the interview and then walked to my car” (p. 241). How detailed can the notes be? How accurate can the quotations be? There is no archive to check against Kimmel’s notes.

Kimmel adds: “Of the guys I spoke with, about a dozen were active in specific organizations, and another dozen were occasional members.” No formal protocol of interview was used. We are not told how some of the “forty guys” were chosen from among those available to Kimmel at the gun shows. But are attendees at gun shows a methodologically sound sample of “white supremacists”? Kimmel admits that “there has been no formal survey [of white supremacists], for obvious reasons” (p. 241). But research in the social sciences depends on formal surveys. Kimmel nevertheless infers “noticeable patterns” (p. 241). He concludes, for example: “They’re certainly Christian, but not just any Christian—they’re evangelical Protestant, Pentacostalist, and members of radical sects that

preach racial purity as the Word of Jesus” (p. 243). “A large proportion of the extreme right wing are military veterans” (p. 243). But without formal surveys, how can he know this? Kimmel reduces the group to sharing the same “class”: “downwardly mobile, lower-middle-class white men” (p. 244): “All of the men I interviewed—all—fitted this class profile.” But without detailed histories, how can Kimmel know this? “(The average age of the guys I talked with was thirty-six.)” (p. 245). Are there then records of the demographics of the men Kimmel interviewed?

Item: Reviewing “white-wing websites, blogs, magazine, and newsletters” (p. 256) Kimmel surveyed, he summarizes: “Article after article decry how white men have surrendered to the plot [to harm the men]” (p. 256). But how many articles are being considered? Two sources are sited (Chapter 7, Notes 36-37, p. 298).

Item: On white supremacist men’s attitudes toward gay men, Kimmel quotes “Tom” (“a thirty-two-year-old welder from Riverside, California”) and “Jeff” (“a twenty-seven-year old auto mechanic in Buffalo, New York”) (p. 260). We are not told from which sample these examples are chosen.

Item: In a section on “Women of the Right,” Kimmel refers to Lori Linzer, “a researcher at the Anti-Defamation League” to the effect that “there are small numbers of women involved in the movement” (p. 267). But how many we are not told. There is no citation for Linzer’s data. Two pages later, however, we read: “Women compose about a quarter of the white supremacist movement” (p. 269). Here Kimmel cites “sociologist Kathleen Blee” who “interviewed nearly three dozen women on the extreme Right” (*Inside Organized Racism. Women in the Hate Movement*, 2006; Chapter 7, Note 57, p. 299, for full citation). He reports that Blee found “that virtually all were of the same class background as the men I interviewed, indeed, as the men profiled in virtually every study of the extreme Right” (p. 269). Without a clear methodology of establishing the profile of the men, however, no comparison can be made with Blee’s findings. On the next page, citing Robert Putnam, Kimmel makes the surprising statement that “only a handful of the women [studied by Putnam] followed a man into the racist world” (p. 270). How is the reader to put in balance the 25% of women in the white supremacist movement (Blee’s data) with Putnam’s data?

Item: Kimmel interviewed “Al,” a Ku Klux Klan member and reported what he heard in conversation is not described in detail (age and other demographics). Nor is why he was chosen to be quoted from among others interviewed (p. 271).

Item: A selection of websites is referenced. We are not given a list of them. What was the basis for his choice of websites to visit?

The chapter ends with a reference to a song by Bruce Springsteen.

“Epilogue”

The concluding section (pp. 279-285) consists of several generalizations about changes in patterns of relationships Kimmel has observed in society (friendships, families). No studies are cited.

* * *

Conclusion

This was a tedious job. It is up to the reader to confirm the items offered as examples of Kimmel's flawed research methods and the data they have yielded. The reader should also see whether acceptable data have not been mentioned here. Casual references to newspaper articles and blogs are not sufficient when offering broad claims about gender and race of the kind Kimmel makes. There are many other items that could have been adduced, but those given here should be enough of a sample to raise questions about the nature and quality of the "research." Whether the conclusions offered and the claims made can be taken seriously as scientific research or whether the appearance of a scholarly study hides other agenda, I leave to the reader to decide.

Appendix

Some of the difficulties in the research methodology of *Angry White Men* were characteristic of Kimmel's earlier book, *Guyland. The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: Harper, 2008). What follows are two reviews of that book from amazon.com that point to similar flaws. Although *Publishers Weekly* asserts that the book is "based on more than 400 interviews, over a four-year span, with young men ages 16–26," the nature of the sample and the interview protocol are not made known to the prospective reader. The following reviews reveal just what these were.

Both reviews may be accessed at: (http://www.amazon.com/Guyland-Perilous-World-Where-Become/dp/0060831340/ref=sr_1_1_title_2_har?ie=UTF8&qid=1397584147&sr=8-1&keywords=kimmel+guyland).

The first review addresses methodology:

1. Anonymous ((Hu)Man)

If as an undergraduate I had turned in a term paper of the quality of *Guyland*, it would have been returned to me. Statistics are cited without sources. (Some are, some aren't.) Works cited posing as current are sometimes twenty-five years old, presented alongside current research. The assumption is evidently that the reader will not go to the line notes at the back, caught up in the snazzy, cool rhetoric of the writing. Most sources are popular press articles. Masquerading as research and scholarly work, it is hard to know what readership Professor Kimmel has in mind with this book. This is a work of misandry (man-hating). (The word misandry does appear in the Oxford English Dictionary.) Its methodology is not clearly defined. His several hundred interviews with "guys" (defined as males between age 16 and 26), which are apparently the sources of his "data," were gathered while on invited college campus visits throughout the country. Yes, there are references to other, non-college students interviewed, but the book is essentially based on chats with undergraduates. But under what conditions? What are the research controls? Quoted directly, did the sources give consent? Professor Kimmel claims that males who have been subjected to the "boy code" (a term from a successful popular work on boyhood) are here heirs to the "guy code," a catch phrase Professor Kimmel must hope will make him as famous as the "boy code" author. A profeminist who is the editor of a widely used anthology for "gender studies" courses and a journal on men and masculinity, he has

written a book for fans of the view that harsh, destructive males are still everywhere at large, but are now complaining about their loss of status since the second wave of feminism in the United States. Young college men are, on the basis of what they said have to Professor Kimmel, dim-witted witnesses to their own depravity, especially in the area of continuing bad behavior toward women. Given the interview material, which is provided at great length, Professor Kimmel must have transcribed his interlocutor's comments at great speed. Were the conversations recorded? This we do not know. This is mediocre journalism. There is nothing in the author's disparaging portrait of young men about their experience. Only behavior is recounted. Here and there is a bit of speculation at the level of daytime television talk shows about the psychological motivations for the behavior described. The account of "guys" is acidic generalization, determined to envision all young males in this newly "discovered" age period (Professor Kimmel's "finding") as just reincarnations of countless generations of white males who have, according to Professor Kimmel, made life miserable for women by demeaning them. There is a great deal of mileage to be had from exploiting this new theme. But why this misogyny by one of the world's authorities on men and masculinity? Another, R.W. Connell, so hated masculinity that after 60 years undertook transformation to being a woman. Professor Kimmel writes about his love of sports but repeatedly makes young men who play sports into goons, rum-soaked, woman-exploiting ruffians. The solution? A return to white middle class marriage and family life. This is the result of decades of study by a prominent sociologist. And the readers? Parents? The "guys" themselves, perhaps to see if they were quoted? To laugh at the caricature of them? School administrators? This is not clear. It's an odd tirade. Better to tune in to online chat rooms and read the same sort of "conversation" as this work of "social science" (terms Kimmel favors) offers up to the daytime TV reading public.

The second review is more general:

2. Peter Allemano:

Michael Kimmel's GUYLAND is a masterpiece — of manipulation and deceit.

Ostensibly a concerned but kindly portrait of young American males, the book is actually a scathing, unforgiving indictment. Indeed, an in-depth analysis of how adroitly Kimmel has crafted his monumental insult of young American males and impugned their dignity — while patting himself on the back for being simultaneously insightful and avuncular — is the stuff of a doctor's thesis with potential to run for more pages than the book itself. This review constitutes but a brief glance at a few of the salient points that such a thesis would highlight.

It is through a combination of neatly interwoven tacks that Kimmel navigates the tricky process of passing off a brutal — and very shallow — portrait of young males as a thoughtful assessment.

The overall structure of the book, in and of itself, constitutes Kimmel's primary tack. Focusing, in sequence, upon various unseemly aspects of Guyland — the term Kimmel has coined to demarcate the social and psychological world of males approximately 16 to 26 years in age — he carefully cushions his words with polite disclaimers.

The basic gist of what Kimmel initially tell us is this: The wonderful young man you care about probably is not like what you'll be reading here. But you should know about the “disturbing undercurrent” (p. 9) of the realm in which he spends much of his time.

Then, as the book progresses, Kimmel's disclaimers become less cautious. Eventually they are mere passing mentions and finally they all but completely disappear. In this manner, slowly over dozens of pages, Kimmel stealthily escalates his unwary readers' ire as he heats up his criticism.

At last — without our consciously realizing that the concerned analysis has turned into an excoriating diatribe — we have come to understand that our beloved young man, at heart, is actually a scoundrel.

Kimmel saves his best for last, launching into a fevered discussion of the harassment and rape of women. At this point, unless we have been paying attention to the tack and putting up psychological defenses, we find ourselves maneuvered into the passive position of uncomplaining (and perhaps by now even supportive) witness to Kimmel's most impassioned passages — collectively, an orgasmic thrashing of his subjects' now-unconscious bodies. Indeed, our blood may boil so indignantly that it may escape our notice that Kimmel does not even mention how young men, too, get victimized by the opposite sex — with far-reaching consequences and, unlike victimized women, with no sympathy from the media or the criminal justice system (for one thought-provoking depiction of the phenomenon, I recommend [It's Not About the Truth: The Untold Story of the Duke Lacrosse Case and the Lives It Shattered](#), by Don Yaeger with Mike Pressler).

Embedded within the structure of this screed of intellectual terrorism lie several additional tacks for seducing readers to agree with Kimmel's woeful conclusions.

One insidious tack for imbuing his writing with an apocryphal aura of credibility — and thereby deflecting potential criticism that he is nothing but a pompous, finger-wagging scold — is to state, every now and then, positive things about young males. But Kimmel artfully makes these concessions about their good qualities with extreme care — backhandedly placing his upbeat statements within the chapter, paragraph or sentence structure to ensure that they are tinged with doubt, or, offset by some assessment or other of ignominy. Either way, Kimmel essentially wants us to understand that if we wish to praise young males for any reason, then doing so ought to leave a bad taste in our mouths.

Another tack — that imparts to Kimmel's writing a simulacrum of broad-mindedness and simultaneously helps to protect him against accusations that his views are rigid or ideological — is to acknowledge that, yes, alternative perspectives about young men do exist. Impliedly, Kimmel has been willing to give these other views his serious consideration while arriving at his own conclusions.

Indeed, the casual reader might think, what more broad-mindedness could Kimmel possibly reveal about himself than to include some of these alternative perspectives — as expressed by the very young males that Kimmel interviewed and about whom he draws such scornful judgments? According to Kimmel, many of them feel browbeaten and violated in ways that makes it very difficult

to live in comity with society at large — a society that seems out to get them at every turn. “[A]ngry right-wing radio personalities,” according to Kimmel, constitute a key source of “permission” for young men’s “aggrieved entitlement.” (pp. 161-63) Therefore, we are to understand, most of them are rash, selfish and unreasonable.

However, the careful reader will note, if a young man successfully expresses his angst in a cogent way about “substantive issues” (p. 162), Kimmel pays him no heed.

One such fellow, a 22-year-old named Matt, does exactly that and is quoted at length. (p. 161) Kimmel’s response is to ignore the issues completely and to carry on about “unacceptable” rhetoric instead. Kimmel apparently assumes that his smooth side-stepping of some meaty topics of discussion will go unnoticed. And, indeed, perhaps the casual reader, caught up in Kimmel’s drama-by-distortion, will regard Matt’s words simply as transitory, distracting static midst Kimmel’s titillatingly hair-raising narrative.

But the issues that young Matt raises, along with many more, deserve very much to be pondered — and there are some noteworthy writers doing so.

To be sure, Kimmel does not pretend to be the sole published author who writes about gender issues, and he makes approving reference to several writers, ranging from the famous (e.g., Susan Faludi and Carol Gilligan) to the obscure (Norah Vincent). Therefore, it is inconceivable that Kimmel is unfamiliar with writers whose perspectives differ markedly from his and, at their core, have sympathetic understanding for young males’ feelings. But he will discuss only one such author — Christina Hoff Sommers — and it is for the sole purpose of trying to discredit her widely-praised book *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men*. Kimmel poo-poos Sommers’s concerns, maintains silence about the successful programs she describes for improving boys’ academic performance, and dismisses her out of hand with a jaw-droppingly ludicrous mischaracterization of her conclusion.

Here is how Kimmel does it. The old chestnut, “boys will be boys,” according to Kimmel, gets invoked mindlessly by society at large to excuse young males’ wrongdoing. Sommers invokes the phrase too. Therefore, Kimmel tells us through innuendo, this means she believes that bad behavior is acceptable and normal. Obviously, then, with this bit of perversity as Sommers’s salient point, the woman must be a nutjob.

But Sommers makes no such barbaric claim, and she means something totally different by writing “boys will be boys”: young males’ unique personal energy and joie de vivre deserve to be acknowledged and honored — so these qualities can be channeled productively.

With his below-the-belt strike at Sommers, Kimmel takes an audacious gamble with his credibility — because some readers may actually have read *THE WAR AGAINST BOYS* too. Whether or not they agree with the thesis of Sommers’s book, Kimmel’s willfully duplicitous re-framing of Sommers’s writing will be instantly recognizable — and they would have to be nutjobs to believe that Kimmel is being forthright.

But Kimmel dares not risk even passing mention of certain other writers with perspectives different from his own — and it is for good reason. Inadvertently prodding unfamiliar readers' curiosity about them could not only make him look dishonest and foolish but could prove catastrophic for him. Specifically, Warren Farrell's seven books present a wealth of data and statistics that would prove the majority of Kimmel's specious contentions to be embarrassingly inaccurate — especially his repetitious carping about male "entitlement." Additionally, two books by McGill University professors Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young (part of an ongoing development of a series about misandry) not only express views very different from Kimmel's but embody the highest standards of probity and intellectual rigor. *GUYLAND*, in contrast, would seem as nothing but a bundle of sanctimonious rodomontade and flapdoodle suited, at best, as source material (especially its catchy title) for a sensationalistic miniseries on Lifetime TV.

Kimmel is far too smart to tell very many outright lies in *GUYLAND*. Instead, he cherry-picks facts in support of his contentions while ignoring, trivializing, or mischaracterizing facts that militate against the book's disheartening conclusions. Kimmel follows this tack with such wild abandon that, for any reader who possesses a full-spectrum education on gender issues, it is blatantly obvious. But for the less-informed reader, Kimmel's writing may seem very convincing. And, in these readers' minds, why should Kimmel be perceived as proffering anything besides clear-minded truth? After all, Kimmel is the father of a young son himself (a fact repeatedly affirmed throughout the book). Would such an author not have his own scion's best interests at heart?

But, as explained above, Kimmel does not content himself with arousing readers' concern. For Kimmel, concern is merely the launching platform from which he seeks to propel us into stratospheric realms of outrage. Alas for Kimmel, sometimes he ham-handedly contradicts himself in the process.

To cite one example, Kimmel bashes males first by invoking a stereotypical view of masculinity that he calls "The Guy Code," lamenting its notion that men should "show no emotions at all." (pp. 49-50) The fact that suppression of emotions is necessary for the self-sacrificing role that society expects males to fulfill — as providers and protectors — does not warrant mention in Kimmel's analysis.

Next Kimmel tells a personal story in which he ridicules young men who do show emotion (specifically, anger) — by describing them as "angry white males." (p. 60) Kimmel even puts the phrasal epithet in quotation marks, ensuring that readers will recognize the derisive insult for what it is and enhancing his chances of provoking readers' deepest contempt too.

But why should we feel appalled by young men's anger, and why are they wrong for feeling the way they do?

According to Kimmel, the emotion is unjustified — and utterly inexplicable — except to the degree that it arrogantly arises out of frustrated "entitlement." Kimmel uses a fascinating rhetorical sleight of hand to try to prove his point.

In this specific instance, Kimmel was a featured panelist on a TV talk show with the inflam-

matory title, “A Black Woman Stole My Job.” On the air, Kimmel mocked and taunted the men by asking: “Where did they get the idea it was ‘their’ job? Why wasn’t the show called ‘A Black Woman Got a Job,’ . . . ?” (p. 60)

But a far more honest — and compassionate — line of questioning would have been: Where did they get the idea that, by putting loaded language in their mouths, the show’s producer had any intention of hosting a rational debate on affirmative action? Why couldn’t the guests have foreseen that the show might as well have been called ‘Let’s Have Fun Tricking and Skewering Naive Young Men?’”

Apparently oblivious to the irony, Kimmel begins the section of his book wherein he relates his smug, self-satisfied anecdote with the statement, “Many young men today have a shockingly strong sense of male superiority and a diminished capacity for empathy.” (p. 59)

So who is Kimmel and why does he present such an outrageously slanted, calculatedly awful portrait of young males?

Kimmel answers the first part of this question himself: he is “a sociologist” specializing in “the study of men and masculinity,” which is “a relatively new subfield of the study of ‘gender.’” (p. 22)

There is a long explanation behind what Kimmel is telling his readers about his place in the academic world, and it is provided in detail by Professors Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge in Professing Feminism: Education and Indoctrination in Women’s Studies. According to these authors, gender studies — a.k.a. feminist studies — is not so much a field of serious scholarship and learning as a highly politicized “academic arm” for the women’s movement. Like Kimmel, these authors consider gender to be a legitimate basis for research into numerous aspects of the human experience. But in the postmodern academe, these authors regretfully report, research and analysis in gender issues seldom get undertaken with any regard for scholarly integrity. Even the most basic standards of objective writing — like substantiating conclusions with concrete evidence — all too often get set aside in favor of more subjective “ways of knowing,” which are supposedly superior. But, again, the primary purpose of feminist studies is not so much education as persuasion — for the espousing of a specific worldview as well as for unquestioning acceptance of feminism’s pre-determined prescriptions for correcting human flaws. GUYLAND is a book very much in this vein and is remarkable for its excellence in disguising its monumental deficits so readers will think that it is something it is not.

Indeed, it is more than passing interest to note, near the end of GUYLAND, that Kimmel openly acknowledges he is a feminist. And he affirms how sweet life would be for the recalcitrant young males of Guyland if only they would become feminists too: “Feminism loves men enough to expect them to act more honorably and actually believes them capable of doing so.” (p. 264)

But what kind of richness in life does Kimmel believe men will experience when they embrace the “love” that feminism extends so generously to them?

Strangely enough — judging from the tone of Kimmel’s writing — it apparently means that males’ greatest fulfillment and self-actualization is to be found in a state of shame and embarrassment that arises out of stoop-shouldered self-abnegation and hand-wringing obeisance to their betters, i.e., to females.

Writing of feminism’s “love” for men in a book about 16-to-26-year-old males seems downright bizarre when we consider that one of the most vicious feminism-inspired slogans of the last decade — a multi-million-dollar blockbuster for the company that coined it — was directed at the subjects of GUYLAND when they were children: “BOYS ARE STUPID, THROW ROCKS AT THEM!”

At its outset, GUYLAND purports to try to “enable guys” to “steer a course with greater integrity and honesty, so they can be true not to some artificial code, but to themselves.” (p. 8) But feminism itself — at least Kimmel’s version of it — constitutes an “artificial code.” In one of his most blatant misstatements of reality, Kimmel claims feminism is about “equality.” (p. 263) Ironically, one of the most dramatic aspects of inequality that exists between the sexes — with which feminism refuses to grapple and Kimmel does not even acknowledge — manifests itself during the very period of males’ lives that is the specific focus of GUYLAND: males’ obligation to register for Selective Service and to live thenceforward knowing that, if called upon, they must subject themselves to the draft. No woman in American history has ever experienced the phenomenon, nor would any sane one want to, whether in the idealistic spirit of fostering “equality” or for any other reason. Would it not make sense, in at least a few of the hundreds of interviews Kimmel claims he conducted, to ask how “the guys” face and then carry through on fulfilling their extraordinary burden? If feminism really wanted gender equity — and not just privileges for women unaccompanied by obligations — then Kimmel would not have done his subjects this highhanded disservice.

Another area of inequality that feminism fails to address is in the realm of male/female personal relationships. Despite females’ supposedly “liberated” status, the male is expected, as in the days of yore, to handle all the difficult work of initiating relationships as well as to finance their progression into something long-lasting. Maybe the enormous amount of casual “hooking up” on college campuses — which Kimmel disparages — arises not so much out of males’ sexism as males’ brass-tacks level inability to afford dating. Especially because unprecedented numbers of women earn substantial paychecks nowadays, why shouldn’t equality — in the form of shared responsibility — be promoted in this realm?

But feminism does not teach women that they should even think that new — and sometimes very considerable — burdens might exist as inherent accompaniments to women’s expanding lifestyle options. Instead, feminism teaches women that their lives should in every respect be enjoyable and personally fulfilling, and it is not part of the deal to perform any of the onerous duties traditionally belonging to males.

So if it is true, as Kimmel claims, that many young male denizens of Guyland do not respect young females, perhaps to some degree it is because “the guys,” like any normal person, find it very hard to feel respect for someone who relates to them in ways that are hypocritical. Maybe, despite all the “minuses” that Kimmel describes about Guyland, young men tend to bond with their male peers instead of their female peers because their relationships among themselves tend to be inher-

ently more honest.

But even if males accept the fact that they must do all the initiating and paying in relationships with females — because females simply will not do it — males' chariness in the face of potential long-term commitment is perfectly understandable in light of the recent track record of females' behavior. In divorces where both husband and wife have college degrees — the vast majority of potential marriages among the population under Kimmel's discussion — 90% are initiated by the woman. With an overall divorce rate of 50%, this basically means that, for the males of GUYLAND, investing one's life in a marriage is akin to investing all one's savings in a speculative "flyer" on the stock market. Maybe young males' reluctance to marry is not a sign of "aversion to adulthood" (p. 205), as Kimmel claims, but, instead, a sign of intelligence.

Selective Service registration and responsibility for initiating and financing male/female personal relationships are but two of many important issues for young males that Kimmel will not touch with a ten-foot pole. So it is utterly preposterous to state that he advocates on behalf of "equality" and wishes to "steer guys" in a helpful way.

So, returning to the second part of the question above and rephrasing it: Why, then, is Kimmel — to put it bluntly — so mean?

I have no idea and can only speculate that Kimmel's motives may have something to do with the glory that he experiences as one of America's foremost voices in public discourse on gender issues. For better or for worse, the discourse is presently dominated — with uncompromising ferociousness — by dogmatic feminist perspectives.

The words of author/philosopher Francis Baumli come to mind:

"These feminist men — the squalling hysterical type — for all their protests against male power actually garner a great deal of power for themselves by thus setting themselves up as the archetypal protectors of women and feminism. They are, in their own minds at least, and in the ranks of their (relatively few, we hope) cohorts, the alpha males. It is a parasitic status, of course, and a pathetic power. But it is real, nonetheless, and they pride and preen themselves with it, although they would be the first to deny that they are feeling power, even as they glory in it."

If Baumli is correct, then perhaps another way to characterize GUYLAND is to say it constitutes a pseudosensitive man's personal form of chest-pounding.

The power that Kimmel experiences as a thoroughgoing feminist evidently feels so rapturously intoxicating that he is even willing, in GUYLAND, to sacrifice his own son at feminism's altar. "Nine years ago," Kimmel reports, "at Zachary's naming ceremony, we each offered a wish for our newborn son. When it was my turn, I quoted the poet Adrienne Rich, who wrote 'If I could have one wish for my own sons, it is that they should have the courage of women.'" (p. xvii)

Although the story, by early 21st century standards, might seem like a sweet-little-nothing, in the context of a book about gender issues, it deserves to be examined carefully and objectively.

Although human nature is universal, we nevertheless traditionally associate certain qualities more with one sex than the other. Sometimes it is because of stereotyping, and sometimes it is because our culture tends to provide one sex with more dramatic ways to manifest certain virtues than it provides to the other sex. Kimmel himself acknowledges these differences in *GUYLAND*. (p. 270)

In our culture, for a variety of reasons, courage is a virtue we traditionally associate with the male sex. Zachary is male. But by quoting Adrienne Rich, Kimmel is cruelly denying for his son a strength that society affirms for Zachary, and Kimmel is claiming that to develop courage, the boy should look to the opposite sex for inspiration.

If this somehow feels “all right” for us, then it is worthwhile to pause and apply the gold standard for determining the presence or absence of gender bias: reversal. Let us imagine that, instead of naming a baby boy, Kimmel and those close to him were naming a baby girl. Imagine the reaction had Kimmel found some corresponding quotation from a male poet and invoked it on the baby’s behalf: “If I could have one wish for my own daughters, it is that they should have the nurturing ability of men.”

If Kimmel dared repeat the story in writing, indignant cries of “bigotry!” and “sexism!” would be heard far and wide across the land.

Indeed, in American culture today, especially in academia and among those entrusted with the formation of public policy, feminism occupies an unassailable position — supreme and inviolate — akin to an officially-sanctioned religion. Dissidents and would-be reformers are either coerced into silence or shown the way to society’s periphery. There, any criticism they may publish about feminism — regardless of how constructive — more often than not gets ignored. And if some of the heretical blasphemy does wind up getting widespread attention (like Sommers’s *THE WAR AGAINST BOYS*) and feminists must acknowledge its existence, they could hardly be more scoffing than if they were commenting on Unabomber rants.

Kimmel — by toeing feminism’s ideological line with a zeal that exceeds even that of many female acolytes — guarantees his continuing occupancy of an exalted position in the pantheon of the feminist establishment. So, for the foreseeable future, Kimmel can safely write whatever atrocious folderol he wants with impunity — no matter how much hurt he perpetrates against males or how much animosity and mistrust he fosters between the sexes. Indeed, the higher the barriers that Kimmel and his fellow mainstream “gender experts” construct to forefend genuine understanding in the realm of discussion that they control, the more in demand these venal rogues can assuredly find themselves in the future. Whether as status-building talking heads on TV talk shows, fee-generating members of blue-ribbon assessment panels, or authors of additional misleading books and articles — as long as we remain in their thrall, there will be no end to their tsk-tsk-ing.

But the insanity of the present, of course, is unsustainable. To quote Martin Luther King, Jr., “Life cannot be fooled.”

Someday — maybe several generations hence — male-bashing will inevitably cease to be considered “enlightened” behavior and people will look back with aghast bewilderment at the taken-

for-granted anti-male Zeitgeist of our era, of which Kimmel is a guiding light. If, at that time, someone establishes a Museum of Misandry with which to document the phenomenon, then a copy of GUYLAND will deserve to sit in its own glass display case, at the center of one of the institution's exhibit halls.

Notes

¹ Kimmel describes the context of his research (p. 95): “. . . [i]n twenty years, lecturing at about twenty to twenty-five colleges and universities every year.” This would amount to 400-500 lectures, or about 1 per week, given that colleges and universities are in session only 30 weeks of the year (roughly 15 weeks per semester). Since *Guyland* was published, in 2008, that would amount to about four years worth of lectures (20%) or about 80-100 lectures. We are not told how much time was spent following or preceding each lecture interviewing subjects. Although most of his contacts would have been college and university students, there was presumably time for other interviews, especially as sources of data on white men in general.

² Kimmel suggests that the word ‘misandry’ is a neologism. It is that (1885), but its meaning as used by Nathanson and Young is not that presented as authoritative (“the hatred of men’s traditional male role,” quoted from David Gilmore, *Misogyny* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1999, p. 21). As given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘misandry means “The hatred of males; hatred of men as a sex.” Professors Kimmel and Gilmore are colleagues at SUNY Stony Brook. Interestingly enough, Kimmel seems not to have read anthropologist Gilmore’s important book *Manhood in the Making*, which challenges Kimmel’s basic premises about the meaning of masculinity. Kimmel’s citation of his review is error. It was published in *The Common Review* 1(3), 2002.

³ Kimmel introduces interesting autobiographical aside at this point in the text. He tells us that, at age seventeen, after his parents had divorced, he sat in on a group of divorced fathers having lunch. It was a “manly conversation” in which “each guy told his sad story” (pp. 140-141). The memory is remarkable for its detail, given that the incident occurred forty-five years before Kimmel write about it. One of the fathers, “Paul,” had no contacts with his children, something, Kimmel reports, he believed the other fathers envied. He also notes that his father “seemed somewhat at a loss about what, exactly, to do with his children for a whole weekend day” (p. 140). The autobiographical interpolation is odd, given the nature of the work as a sociological study. Usually, observations about one’s life is reserved for the “Acknowledgements” section. In a chapter on “deadbeat dads,” the note is especially interesting.

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Book Reviews



Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men, American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Nation Books, 2013).

Aggrieved, Armed, and Dangerous?

In *Angry White Men*, Michael Kimmel, a professor of sociology and gender studies, reports that there's a male minority out in the country (he meets them at gun shows, rural diners, or on right-wing extremist web sites where they inevitably remain anonymous) suffering a sense of "aggrieved entitlement." They tell Kimmel they feel that their country has gone wrong, that the power of the white male establishment is now held by immigrants, Blacks, Jews, women, homosexuals, and corporate interests. Ranging, in Kimmel's unnuanced perspective, from Tea Party Republicans to the leadership of the NRA to neo-Nazis, these men feel they've lost their primogeniture, their birthright as white Christian males. And angered by their loss they feel the need to assert their manhood.

They do this on web sites, blogs, and on talk radio. Some arm themselves, form militias, bond over gun or fight clubs. Their heroes range from Timothy McVeigh to Rush Limbaugh. Their political views can be paranoid. Many believe they will have to take up arms either against the government or to protect themselves from the government. Although not completely delusional—after all, the demographics of the country are changing, women and minorities are finally beginning to gain their place in the corporate and political power structure, and LGBT persons have come out of the closet. Still, every once in awhile one of these aggrieved Esaus becomes not only armed, but dangerous, threatens overt action, or actually fires.

None of this is news or new. Just ask the folks at the Southern Poverty Law Center. Even Kimmel admits that angry white men who feel that their rights are being trampled have existed since the beginning of the republic. And they have been just as angry and perhaps even more violent, from the Whiskey Rebellion that George Washington's government had to put down to the Know-Nothings and nativists of the 1850s, from the white mobs that lynched Blacks during reconstruction to Henry Ford's crazed rantings against immigrants, Blacks, and Jews in his Dearborn Independent. Rush Limbaugh? Mike Savage? Poor relations to Father Coughlin or Orval Faubus. So what is Kimmel's point?

Think of Columbine, he asks. Think of any of the school or campus rampage killing. What do they have in common? They were all, or nearly all, committed by young white men. Young white men who, as Kimmel sees it, feeling powerless armed themselves and, to assert their manhood, took action against their perceived oppressors.

Now think of divorced men looking for justice against the system that they feel favored their wives. Or men who feel the world now demands more of them as fathers. More aggrieved men. They, too, have to assert their manhood and sometimes act violently against, most particularly, against the women in their lives.

Kimmel believes that if we connect the dots we'll learn that the parlous state of masculinity among these angry white males represents a phenomenon we ought to recognize and deal with in order to prevent its growth and more violent expression. All in all it's perhaps a magazine-length hypothesis or a talk show talking point since the threads with which Kimmel ties together all these men and events begin to fray under any close scrutiny. In the end it's neither a very cogent nor very meaningful argument—even as an exercise in pop social psychology where anecdotes stand in for data and data can be mixed and mismatched.

To begin with, one has to accept Kimmel's assertion that because one can find correlations in the experience and expressions of an aggrieved white supremacist, an aggrieved white male student killer, and an aggrieved white divorced man, then the causes of their aggrievements are somehow related. One also has to conclude that because young white males commit most school rampage shootings that these shootings, if studied, will tell us something more general about young white males. And because the shooters were, at least as Kimmel tortures the data, for the most part more or less bullied or more or less outsiders or more or less loners, we can know more or less something about their individual psyches, their acts of violence, and the nature of masculinity in society that spawned them.

While it's human nature to want to make sense out of seemingly random senseless events, the fact is that sometimes you have to conclude that some events, no matter how awful, are, in fact, senseless. They're rare. In Kimmel's own words, they're "extremely rare. More than 99 percent of public high school have never had a homicide." They're outliers. And as such they may have no larger context or meaning. Kimmel himself, at one point in the book, rails against "alarmists" who "revel in a veritable orgy of correlations." Here's just a tasting from his own: A troubled young man in Colorado buys an automatic weapon and kills people in a movie theater. Troubled young men at Columbine High School in Colorado go on a rampage. A troubled young man kills 32 at Virginia Tech. In Kimmel's view all related. Not by actual facts, because Kimmel is fast, loose, and sometimes disconcertingly facile with his facts. But by what comedian Stephen Colbert liked to call "truthiness," a sense that things are true if they seem as if they ought to be true.

For instance, to make his point that somehow these angry white men, young and old, are related Kimmel maps out on a US map thirty-two “rampage shootings” from 1982 to 2008. He doesn’t actually define what a rampage shooting is: Is it 2 people? 4? 20? No matter. All are equally x’s on his map. And then he offers his x’s placed on another map, this one of the red and blue states from the election of 2006. Lo and behold the majority of his x’s are clustered in the red states which, Kimmel suggests, tells us something about the political culture and by extension the nature of the way the people in these states see the world. Their politics, therefore, might give us some insight into the frequency of rampage shootings in their states. This might be interesting if it were true. But Kimmel chooses to ignore the fact that there were a few national elections during this time period and a look at the election map from say 1996 shows those red state x’s clustered in blue states. Even if we accept the premise that these states have a greater number of aggrieved angry white men (although how angry is angry, how aggrieved is aggrieved Kimmel doesn’t say or attempt to define)—but if they do, then the percentage of those who actually act violently is statistically infinitesimal. And yet Kimmel draws conclusions from this and other cherry-picked data.

In fact, the things that we can say for certain about all these events seem to tell us some different but perhaps more provable and interesting things. One could, using the principle of Occam’s razor, hypothesize that the thing these states with clusters of x’s indicating rampage shootings have in common is that it’s far too easy in all these places for unstable aggrieved white men to acquire high powered weapons. Second, we can say for certain that the victims of these school rampage killings are almost all white. And though each of these incidents involves more than one person, the annual total of young non-white youth killed by non-white youth is greater than all the white victims of rampage shootings by Kimmel’s angry young white men put together.

Kimmel’s aggrieved white men are just louder and, whether they think so or not, more readily heard by the mass media (and Kimmel’s as well) than the angry men and young men of color with far more reasons to be angry about everything from poor schools to lower job prospects. Kimmel also neglects the young boys, white and non-white alike, who are frustrated by an education system that seems to ignore their needs and that may create a generation of young men who feel out of place in or resentful of higher education.

Yes, some of Kimmel’s angry white men may have some reasons to be aggrieved and some, like any other troubled souls, may be in need of help. But few go out and shoot people. Those few who do have their own reasons—lots of kids are bullied but not many commit mayhem. And to assert that all these troubled young killers are somehow related one to another is just sheer speculation. In fact, nothing that Kimmel posits here can be proved or disproved. Science, as Stephen Jay Gould wrote, “is not a list of enticing conclusions.” But this is pretty much all that Angry White Men gives us.

Bruce Stutz

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