



NEWMALE STUDIES JOURNAL

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1 2012

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Misandry and Emptiness

Masculine Identity in a Toxic Cultural Environment

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Masculine identity has become increasingly problematic due to technological and cultural changes over the past ten thousand years, beginning with the horticultural and agricultural revolutions but gaining momentum with the industrial, military and reproductive revolutions. Egalitarian feminists have unwittingly exacerbated the problem by equating sexual equality with sexual sameness, leaving men unable to make even one contribution to society, as men, which is distinctive, necessary and can therefore be publicly valued—that is, unable to establish a healthy collective identity specifically as men. The result of this emptiness is a growing tendency to give up either by dropping out of school and or by committing suicide. Ideological feminists have thrown down the gauntlet, on the other hand, by ascribing to men a highly negative collective identity. The result of this misandry is an increasing number of men who believe that even a negative collective identity is better than no collective identity at all. No solution will be possible without challenging pervasive assumptions about both boys and men.

The academic world is changing, albeit at a glacial pace, when it comes to the study of boys and men. The assumption of feminist academics since the 1980s has been that all received knowledge—that is, earlier research by male scholars—was actually about men, not women. Therefore, it made sense to focus attention instead on the latter. Those who have done so, with the aid not only of huge investments by both private and public funding agencies but also the establishment of new university departments and academic societies, have achieved a great deal. We have much more information on women than ever before. Interpreting that information is another matter, especially in a heavily politicized context, one that seldom acknowledges a clear distinction between women's studies and feminist activism. Moreover, the resulting theories about women almost invariably result in theories about men. Scholars must continue to examine all research for political and ideological biases, at any rate, because they cannot claim that any field is immune to empirical verification or at least to reasoned scrutiny without turning scholarship into the equivalent of orthodoxy or ideology—about which more in due course.



In any case, the initial premise about earlier research (that it was all about men) is inaccurate. It was often *de facto* about men, to be sure, but seldom *de jure* about men. In some cases, this was due to the fact that anthropologists had greater access to male subjects than to female ones. In still other cases, it was due to the fact that historians found more written records by men than by women. In still other cases, though, it was due to the noble but naïve assumption that men and women were very similar in most ways; this meant that it was unnecessary to dwell on the differences. The point here is that not much of this pre-feminist scholarship was the result of any specific interest in *men*, let alone bias in favor of them. And much of the scholarship that was specifically about men was actually about *elite* men, “alpha males,” not ordinary men. In short, we still need research on men. We need it now than ever before, in fact, because of the fallout from research that, despite continuing respectability in academic circles, is profoundly biased against boys and men.

This brings up an additional problem on the academic scene. Not all of this bias comes directly from women. Some of it comes indirectly from women. That is, it comes from male feminists (of a branch that we will discuss in a moment). Adopting the feminist notion of “engaged scholarship,” they established the field of “men's studies” at least partly in the hope of *changing* (other) men by converting them to feminism instead of merely studying them. And one problem with this approach, among many others, is that it requires scholars to see men *through the eyes of women*, just as earlier scholars, ironically, had seen women through the eyes of men. This is the immediate reason for efforts to establish a parallel, or new, men's studies or male studies.

Although the new male studies must foster modern academic standards, not post-modern political ones, it need not rely on the straw man of perfect objectivity (which, as everyone has always known, finite beings can never attain). The new male studies can rely on historically or scientifically verifiable evidence, in other words, but still take boys and men seriously on their own terms. Otherwise, the subjects become nothing more than tokens of some political theory that “we” know but “they” do not. The model here would be what phenomenologists and cultural anthropologists once called



epoché: trying sincerely and systematically to bracket out either personal attitudes toward the subjects or cultural assumptions about them and cultivating at least preliminary empathy for them.

Our purpose in this essay, though, is to discuss only a few closely related problems, out of many, that American boys and men face at the moment. We have selected these problems partly because of their centrality in the research that we have done over the past twenty-five years but also because of their marginality in the research that others have been doing. Many or possibly most academics in traditional men's studies work in the social sciences, at any rate, whereas we work in the humanities and arts. We see these problems primarily as *cultural* ones, albeit ones that entail both emotional and social problems.

With all this in mind, we will discuss masculinity in connection with (1) identity and (2) feminism.

IDENTITY

We began our research on men with the following hypothesis, which we invite social scientists to verify or falsify on empirical grounds: that *no person or group can have a healthy identity without being able to make at least one contribution to the larger society, one that is distinctive, necessary and publicly valued*. The underlying problem that men face in our time, especially young men, is how to create a healthy collective identity specifically as men—that is, a healthy form of masculine identity. This raises at least one obvious question: Why not be satisfied merely with a healthy *personal* identity? We can think of several reasons.

First, the obvious and undeniable fact is that humans are *social beings*. We require families, friends, allies and communities or nations. Although we are always different in some ways from other people, we are always like them in other ways. This means that we can always identify ourselves at least to some extent with them. How else could anyone expect support when in need or peril? There is no such thing as a personal identity, either healthy or unhealthy, without the larger context of a collective identity.

Second, personal identity for men can now emerge only at the *expense* of collective identity. Any man can feel good about himself as an individual even now, after all, by adopting one of two strategies that prevent him from feeling good about himself as a man. The first requires *dissociation from other men* as a male feminist and thus becoming an honorary woman. This amounts to self-hatred, a phenomenon with which Jews and other minority groups have long been familiar. And self-hatred is surely, by definition, profoundly neurotic. Worse, this strategy has a specifically moral consequence: abandoning or even targeting men who, misandry and emptiness notwithstanding, still feel a compelling need for some positive identification with their male bodies. The other strategy, as anyone who watches the news knows by now, requires *dissociation from society* and thus becoming an antisocial threat to it. We will return to that strategy.

Third, the fact that women have created a healthy collective identity for themselves—

and also, directly or indirectly and intentionally or unintentionally, an unhealthy one for men—means that men *must* choose between accepting what women think about manhood and thinking for themselves about manhood. In other words, they *must* establish a collective identity. But this presents a big problem. The legitimate sources of collective identity for women have expanded immeasurably over the past few decades. We refer not merely to new career possibilities but also to the more subtle and more general sense that all things are possible for women (or even, in some cases, that women are innately superior to men). During the same decades, however, the legitimate sources of collective identity for men have contracted or even disappeared.

FEMINISM

Feminism has emerged over the past few years. Masculine identity, on the other hand, has been a problem for the past few *thousand* years. Nonetheless, feminism has *exacerbated* that problem. Feminism can be defined in many ways. Some feminists focus their attention on the relation between gender and class, others on the relation between gender and sex, gender and religion, and so forth. This is one reason, among several, why feminists insist on their diversity, inclusiveness or multivocality.¹ From the specific perspective of *men*, however, there are only two kinds of feminism. They differ according to what each says about men and therefore what effects each has on men. In this section, we discuss (a) misandry, the intentional result of ideological feminism (which has exacerbated the problem by assigning men a profoundly negative identity) and (b) emptiness, the unintentional result of egalitarian feminism (which has exacerbated the problem inadvertently by denying men any positive identity).

MISANDRY

By now, the word “misandry” is in common use. It was not so in the early 1990s, when we began our research on misandry (although the word “misogyny,” of course, had long been in common use). Misandry is hatred toward men. We refer here not to anger but to *hatred*. Anger is an emotion and transient; hatred is neither. Hatred is a *culturally propagated way of thinking*. Although hatred entails psychological and other problems, it is truly a *cultural* problem and therefore a *moral* problem as well.

Many people now acknowledge that misandry is a characteristic feature of popular culture in our time.² But not all of these people, let alone those who refuse to acknowledge the existence of misandry, agree on where this phenomenon originated or whether it has any significance. Is the prevalence of misandry due to commercial opportunism, which, in the contexts of both entertainment and advertising, relies heavily on both positive and negative stereotypes? Or is it due to political correctness, which prohibits the negative stereotypes of some groups, but not others?

Either way, some people—both men and women, though for different reasons—openly condone the misandric status quo. Women have no power, they claim, and therefore require protection from misogynistic stereotypes. Men have such godlike power, on the other hand, that even the most hostile stereotypes cannot actually harm



them; these stereotypes are inconsequential, they say, and therefore (from one point of view) insignificant. At the very least, we suggest, public disapproval of misogyny but not of misandry reveals a deeply embedded double standard and therefore corrodes the very notion of equality, a fundamental feature of democracy.

But, we argue, misandry is due primarily to something much more sinister and much more destructive than even a double standard, whether in the context of commerce or etiquette. Underlying the attitude of those who condone misandry—they often hide behind the anonymity that pseudonyms confer on bloggers—is a perverted notion of justice, which makes it synonymous with *revenge*. Men have used misogynistic stereotypes to serve the economic and political interests of men, according to many people (once again, both men and women, though for different reasons), so that women may now use misandric ones to serve their own economic and political interests.

Obviously, this conclusion cannot rely on the Judeo-Christian “Golden Rule” (expressed either as “do not treat others as you would not have them treat you” or as “treat others as you would have them treat you”). But this moral principle, which underlies the prophetic worldview, did not go unchallenged even in late biblical times. Opposing it directly or indirectly was a very different worldview, one that encouraged a reinterpretation of scripture. This worldview emerged as a religion in ancient Persia but eventually spread, without the particular theological superstructure of Zoroastrianism, throughout the Mediterranean world. This requires us to pause here for an explanation.

In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar II conquered the Jewish Kingdom of Judah and later deported much of the population to his capital city of Babylon.³ The captives considered this exile an unprecedented calamity, because it seemed to refute their belief in God’s providence and even their belief in God’s existence. In other words, traditional explanations for innocent suffering were no longer convincing. Persia soon conquered Babylon and allowed the return of these captives to Jerusalem. By that time, however, they had begun to absorb some features of the Persian worldview. As monotheists, to be sure, most Jews rejected the Zoroastrian religion as such: two competing gods, one good and the other evil. Nonetheless, some Jews found in its underlying premise a satisfying explanation for innocent suffering: two competing but vaguely defined cosmic principles, one good and the other evil. God was inherently and eternally good, Jews continued to believe, and could therefore not be the source of evil. But neither, they believed, could any other god be the source of evil. One solution was a *quasi*-divine figure: an angel who, by rebelling against God, introduced evil and continued to foster evil among “his” followers. And Jews were by no means the only ones to find this metaphysical premise useful. By the Hellenistic period, what we now call “dualism” had become a generalized mentality. In other words, it had become part of many competing religious traditions and philosophical systems. St. Augustine found it not only among contemporary Christians, for instance, but also among the Manicheans, a group that he had joined before turning to Christianity.

Of importance here is that from this metaphysical premise, moral and political ones followed. These amounted, collectively, to a titanic and enduring struggle between those who were faithful to God (“us”) and those who were not (“them”), a struggle that

would end only at the end of history with the final victory of God and his faithful followers over their enemies—which is to say, any or all outsiders. This dualistic mentality co-existed uneasily with other biblical ones.⁴ Not surprisingly, both Jews and Christians have sometimes ignored the Golden Rule and its corollaries—love your neighbor as yourself or even, among Christians, love your enemies—and identified *specific groups of people* not merely with theological ignorance or competing political interests but with an *ontological evil* that matched the metaphysical evil of their gods.

Of even greater importance here, though, is the fact that this dualistic mentality, like other religious phenomena, has taken *secular forms* in *political ideologies* on both the right and the left. These ideologies, like some earlier religious ones, have not one but several characteristic features (most of which, though not necessarily all of which, they have in common).⁵ In addition to dualism (believing that “they” are inherently evil) are the following closely-linked characteristic features of ideology: essentialism (believing that “we” are inherently good); hierarchy (that “we” are inherently superior to “them”); collectivism (that the politically defined group is more important than either the individual or the larger society); utopianism (that a new and better world order will supersede the current one); selective cynicism (that the intentions of all people, except our own, are sinister); revolutionism (that merely tinkering with reforms of the current world order, instead of replacing it with a radically different one, will not do the trick); consequentialism (that the end, no matter how unpalatable in ordinary circumstances, can justify the means); and quasi-religiosity (that the political worldview, like older religious ones, confers ultimate meaning, purpose, community, identity and so forth).

Ideological feminists are not in the majority, but they are also not all on the lunatic fringe. On the contrary, they produce exceedingly sophisticated theories (such as the conspiracy theory of history)⁶ and adopt equally sophisticated strategies (such as working within the established law schools and government bureaucracies instead of rioting in the streets, to achieve a social revolution that most people still find hard even to imagine). They develop these theories at respectable universities, moreover, and disseminate them through respectable publishers.⁷ Eventually, these theories enter the popular culture of movies, sit-coms and talk shows. What was once truly radical, in other words, becomes conventional wisdom (until ideologues up the ante once more). In short, ideological feminists are at least as influential as egalitarian feminists in the journalistic, the academic and especially the legal circles that produce policies and laws. Although they often use the egalitarian rhetoric that is *de rigueur* in a liberal democracy—one that permits only gender-neutral language, for instance, in legislation—closer examination of both their statements and the results of their campaigns reveals a worldview that is anything but egalitarian and often relies on double standards.⁸ For ideological feminists, men are not merely deluded. They are the ultimate, eternal or even ontological enemies of women. Either they or their remote ancestors (or both) are responsible for all suffering and injustice. Most ideological feminists do acknowledge exceptions for men who convert to the new worldview, but these male feminists function as honorary women. They are acceptable not because of their maleness but *despite* it.



Some ideological feminists, moreover, refer to history in overtly theological—that is, to use the more precise word that these feminists prefer, “theological”—terms. From this point of view, primeval men instigated a titanic conspiracy not merely to usurp power from women but also to replace the female principle of a great goddess with the male principle of their own gods. Either way, men have oppressed women ever after and will do so until the advent of a feminist utopia. It does not take much imagination to see this ideological story as an upside-down version of earlier Western stories about human origin and destiny. The biblical story blames Adam and Eve equally for sin (what Christians eventually called Original Sin). Some post-biblical interpretations, however, assign most of the blame to Eve and her female descendants. The new, ideological version simply reverses that post-biblical interpretation by blaming primeval men and their male descendants.⁹

This *conspiracy theory of history*, we argue, is the ultimate premise of ideological feminism, though usually in secular form, and thus of misandry. Dualism itself originated long before feminism of any kind and long ago became deeply rooted in Western thought, to be sure, but ideological feminists have exploited it in modern times. The point here—the point that we make throughout our series on misandry—is that misandry must not remain some dirty little secret. It is pervasive, even prevalent, not only at the seemingly innocuous level of popular culture (in entertainment, say, and advertising) but also at the institutional level of elite culture (in research, teaching, legal codes and law enforcement). And it relies firmly on feminist ideology.

Misandry originates as a cultural problem, to be sure, and therefore entails moral problems. In addition, though, it entails emotional and other problems. Though not social scientists, we find it very hard to imagine how any boy can become a healthy young man in such a contaminated cultural environment, just as we find it hard to imagine the analogy for young girls, blacks, gays or those who belong to any other target group. It would be folly, therefore, to ignore feminist ideology, let alone misandry itself, in the interest of political expediency.

And yet, the problems that boys and men currently face did *not begin* with the emergence of misandry, let alone the rise of feminism. This brings us to another major problem.

EMPTINESS

We make a clear distinction between ideological feminism and egalitarian feminism.¹⁰ Unlike ideological feminists, egalitarian feminists have no general theory about the ultimate origin of conflict between men and women. From their point of view, only one thing matters: Women have found it harder than men to enter public life—that is, to build careers outside the home. Some attribute this problem to the greed or ignorance or prejudice of men. Others attribute it to the fact that motherhood places special demands on women. Still others attribute the problem to both factors. All, however, believe that sexual equality is the solution (although some define that as equality of opportunity and others as equality of *result*,¹¹ each of which entails specific legal consequences).¹² From the perspective of men, however, this approach is some-

what naïve. Equality is a noble ideal, to be sure, but egalitarian feminists have tended to overlook its *unintended consequences* for men (and therefore, indirectly, for women as well).

Our point here is that these unintended consequences are about to complete a disturbing process that began not a few years ago but a few *thousand* years ago. Human history is the history of successive cultural revolutions, most of which have been technological and all of which have led to the gradual obsolescence of men and by now left men *without a distinctive and necessary function as men, without the possibility of being publicly valued as men and therefore without the basis for any healthy identity specifically as men*. Here, now, is a summary of our “revolutionary” theory.¹³

It took one or two million years for primates to become humans. As Luigi Zoja¹⁴ says, this involved several developments. Humans used their hands to carry things, for instance, not to walk. They could have sex at any time, moreover, not merely during “estrus.” And their brains expanded not only in complexity but also in size. This meant that birth had to occur while human newborns were still smaller—and therefore less developed—than those of other primate species. And this, in turn, meant that human infants needed parental care for much longer than other primate infants did—a project that required the cooperation of fathers and was the context in which “pair bonding” evolved. All of these developments are natural, which means that they involve genetic factors, but some are cultural as well. Pair bonding,¹⁵ for instance, relies heavily on cultural support systems such as the social arrangements that reward men for being active and enduring participants in family life.

Early humans lived in wandering bands that probably relied at first on scavenging. During the long Paleolithic period, they continued to live in wandering bands but relied increasingly on hunting and gathering. We have no reason to believe that these early communities oppressed either women or men. People did whatever they had to do in the interest of communal survival. Features of both the female body and the male body made it advantageous to assign at least a few tasks either to women or to men. Whatever else they did, for instance, women perpetuated the community by giving birth to infants and nursing them. Whatever else they did, men protected the community from predators and usually provided it with food and other products from big animals. Both women and men faced mortal danger. Women often died in childbirth, and men often died from wounds. The point here is that maleness—innate features of the male body—conferred a healthy collective identity on men just as femaleness did on women. In other words, maleness was the foundation for various forms of masculinity that, by serving communities, commanded public respect.

The problem, for men, began not in the very remote past but in the relatively recent past. We refer to the Neolithic Revolution. Approximately twelve thousand years ago, humans began to rely at least partly on gardening (or, in some cases, on pastoralism). This required them to live in settled communities that provided fertile land and access to water. For the first time, it became practical to store food and other resources. Also for the first time, though, it became desirable to raid the stored food and resources of other communities. This state of affairs sometimes led to the emergence of militaristic societies and therefore to military leaders or chiefs, who accumulated excessive prop-



erty and power.

Closely following the Neolithic Revolution was the Agricultural Revolution, which introduced the iron plough and irrigation. Among the results were much more food and much higher populations. It was in this context that the early civilizations emerged. Characteristic of these were urbanization, occupational specialization, social and political hierarchies, often literacy and eventually “world religions.” These religions, apart from anything else, created moral and philosophical principles to curb the rampant injustices perpetrated by early chiefs and kings.

At this point, the male body’s distinctive characteristics—its size, strength and speed¹⁶—still conferred masculine identity on most men: elite warriors (who wielded weapons) and the masses of serfs or peasants (who used iron ploughs to till their fields). But an ever-increasing number of men—artisans, scribes, priests, merchants, traders, bakers, administrators and so on—no longer relied for their identity on their naturally endowed male bodies. They relied instead on culturally established attributes, such as literacy, that society ascribed more-or-less arbitrarily to men but not women.

Fast-forward now to the late eighteenth century. Most men by far were still peasants. A few, either aristocrats or those who worked for them, were soldiers. Men of both classes, therefore, still required brute strength. The Industrial Revolution, however, changed all that by greatly increasing the number of middle-class men—which is to say, those men who did not need brute strength for tilling fields or wielding weapons. A few of these men were entrepreneurs (the industrialists who established mills and mines) or financiers. Others acquired enough education to enter the formerly elite ranks of professional lawyers and physicians. Still others—most men, by far—became proletarians. They worked along with women and even children at the new mills and mines, until reform movements demanded protection for women and children (which meant keeping them at home). Men with the lowest status were those who relied on their muscles; men with the *highest* status, on the other hand, were precisely those who did *not*.

The Military Revolution marked another profound change in the history of men. In one sense, this was just another technological development. Military hardware became increasingly complex. At the same time, it became decreasingly reliant on brute strength. Instead, it became increasingly reliant on literacy and eventually on higher education. This trend became clear to everyone during World War I. Those who planned and organized campaigns had the highest status; those who followed their orders in the trenches had the lowest status, that of “cannon fodder.” But the Military Revolution refers primarily not to technological change but to cultural change. Historians usually discuss this as an offshoot of the French Revolution, but its impact spread far beyond the French Republic or even the West. We refer here to “universal” military conscription. Every citizen was now a soldier (or potential soldier) by virtue of merely being a citizen. This calls for an explanation.

According to the new social contract, military service was now the price of citizenship. Being “willing” to fight and possibly die for the State was the hallmark of every *citizen*. Because the State protected women from military service, however, it refrained

from granting them full citizenship. Being a full *citizen* (“willing” to fight and possibly die for the State) was therefore simultaneously the hallmark of being a *man* (as distinct from being a woman). Citizens demonstrated their masculinity primarily and ultimately in battle (or scenarios in everyday life that became metaphorical battles), and the State appropriated the bodies of citizens by virtue of their maleness alone (because the law made no distinction between men who *wanted* to risk their lives in battle and those who did *not*). Even though conscription laws confer masculine identity on those who have male bodies, thus reaffirming the ancient link between maleness and masculinity, it does so at a very high cost to men (and to any society that encourages men to believe that their ultimate value is as fighters). For one thing, conscripts have very low status within armies. Moreover, they often end up dead or mutilated on battlefields.

Women in some countries are now demanding the abrogation of this social contract by allowing (though not forcing) women into combat. However, after more than two hundred years and many social changes, men find it hard to establish a collective identity that relies on something else. Women can already provide for themselves and protect themselves (with help from the State, in both cases, if necessary).

The Reproductive Revolution has undermined the only remaining source of masculine identity for men: fatherhood. Many factors have contributed to this problem: new movements that trivialize fatherhood (single mothers by choice, for instance, and same-sex marriage); new movements that demonize fathers (ideological forms of feminism); new industries that reduce fatherhood to routine medical procedures (sperm banks and surrogacy); new technologies that would eliminate fatherhood or even maleness (avant-garde procedures such as cloning or parthenogenesis); new legislation that undermines even the remnants of fatherhood (joint custody, say, or abortion on demand as a private matter “between a woman and her doctor”)—and so on. Many social scientists now believe that fatherhood has no inherent links with either masculinity or maleness. Others believe that fatherhood has no distinctive or necessary function within family life. The implication is that fathers are assistant mothers at best and potential molesters at worst. Is it any wonder, then, that popular entertainment routinely presents fathers as buffoons or worse?

Back now to egalitarian feminism and the inability of men to establish a healthy form of identity, as men, in our time—that is, to the emptiness that men experience as a result. Herein is a great irony. When it comes to the historic (though culturally variable) relation between maleness and masculinity, it is egalitarian feminism, not ideological feminism, that undermines the most direct link between early and modern men. Even if we were to eliminate the toxic misogyny of ideological feminism, we would still be left with the paralyzing emptiness that comes (to men) from egalitarian feminists. Even journalists sometimes recognize what academics fail to see. In his review of *Warrior*, A.O. Scott discusses why boys and young men in some environments turn to extreme versions of masculinity, ones that focus on whatever remains of certain traditional symbols of masculinity—notably those that refer to combat. “They fight, he says, “*because every other way of being a man has been compromised, undermined or taken away*. Patriarchal authority, as represented by Paddy, is cruel and unbending

until it turns sentimental and pathetic. The roads to an honorable life promised by work and military service are mined and muddied by the greed and mendacity of the institutions—government, schools, banks—that are supposed to uphold integrity.”¹⁷

We use the word “emptiness” for lack of a better word. In a way, after all, the problem for men has been human history itself, a process that has gradually deprived men of any legitimate sense of fulfillment specifically as male humans. But “human history” fails to convey the experience of that lack in daily life. The word “emptiness” conveys precisely that. Emptiness is the residue of a life without identity and therefore without meaning or purpose—or without meaning and purpose and therefore without identity. To some extent, of course, modernity leaves almost everyone spiritually empty and therefore without a healthy identity. Despite its many advantages, after all, modernity often involves a profound rupture with tradition and meaning, with community and home, and especially with the sacred. This is precisely the void that political ideologies on both the left and the right have tried (with catastrophic results) to fill since the late nineteenth century. They have allowed people who lose one source of collective identity to replace it with another. Instead of establishing it in connection with family or religion, say, they do so in connection with class, race, language or sex. But because these ideologies rely so heavily on dualism, pitting “us” against “them,” the price is very high. They solve one problem by creating another. Or, to put it in a slightly different way, they solve problems for some people by creating problems for other people. At the moment, this applies to women and men.

CONCLUSION

Boys and young men now have, at least in theory, only two general ways of responding to the emptiness of their lives. Very few are intellectually and emotionally able to confront emptiness directly, of course, so many do so indirectly by (1) trying to ignore the misogyny that underlies and exacerbates emptiness or (2) internalizing it.

Some try deliberately to *ignore* misogyny along with all other potential sources of pain by resorting to unbridled hedonism and therefore succumbing to raw narcissism. But hiding from pain by seeking personal pleasure as an end in itself has become characteristic of our society in general—not only in the licentious fantasies of popular entertainment but also in the sordid facts of daily life—and therefore says little about any segment of society in particular.

Others, however, unwittingly *internalize* misogyny. And this is something that very few social scientists, if any, have acknowledged so far. The one social problem that they inexplicably fail to see should be self-evident to everyone: the toxic fallout—the pervasive ridicule, contempt, punitive attitude and even hatred—of a society that has no room for its male population per se. One way of internalizing all this misogyny is clearly destructive (but also, ultimately, self-destructive). In this category are those who *act up*, attacking a hostile society. Even a negative identity, after all, might be better than no identity at all. The other way of internalizing misogyny is clearly self-destructive (but also destructive in other ways). In this category are those who *give up*, succumbing to the apparent emptiness of manhood and thus abandoning an indif-

ferent society. This almost certainly provides at least a partial explanation for the high rates among male people of both dropping out of school and committing suicide.

Sociologists and psychologists have long noted these pathological patterns in young men—Michael Kimmel, for instance, has popularized the idea that American “guys” are pathological almost by definition¹⁸—but have generally refrained from attributing them to the direct or indirect fallout from feminism and the resulting collapse of masculine identity. By that, once again, we mean the impossibility of establishing a healthy collective identity specifically as men, one that relies on a healthy notion of masculinity. In short, for whatever reason, social scientists tend to ignore the proverbial elephant standing silently in its corner. Instead, they usually attribute pathological patterns to more familiar (and somewhat less politically risky) causes such as poverty, racism, testosterone, evolution, popular culture and the like. Some social scientists have indeed linked the social and psychological pathologies of these boys and young men with father absence, for instance, but few if any have followed the logic of this insight by linking father absence in turn with *identity absence*—that is, with emptiness.

Kimmel describes masculinity in our time as “guyland.” Whatever else critics say about Kimmel’s feminist theory—and we say a great deal about it¹⁹—no one can deny that he has described a noteworthy phenomenon. It amounts to notion of manhood that repudiates not only the innocence of boyhood but also the maturity of manhood, which is both *cross-culturally and historically unprecedented*. Kimmel argues that being a “guy” originates in the unearned sense of “entitlement” to masculine privilege (and hostility toward women for denying it). We argue that it originates in the natural sense of entitlement to a healthy masculine identity of any kind. It is easy to argue about the prevalence of “guys” or even about precisely what makes them tick, but it is surely not by chance that the appearance of this psychological twilight zone has coincided with two profoundly significant facts of life for boys and men in our time: the rise of feminism (which either unwittingly denies the possibility of a distinctive masculine identity or deliberately acknowledges only a sinister one) and the absence of anything even remotely like coming of age. Fewer and fewer boys want to become men because fewer and fewer men can convince them that doing so would mean demonstrating their ability to contribute something distinctive and necessary to society. No one has yet come up with a solution to the problem of toxic masculinity in a toxic cultural environment, but no one ever will without first identifying it correctly.

Notes

¹ Another reason is to maintain their own legitimacy as liberal feminists despite the “radical” approaches of a few other feminists. From this point of view, tolerance means never having to say that you are “sorry” for (much less to challenge) those who say ugly things in your name.

² In *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), the first of five volumes on misandry, we discuss the negative portrayals of men in popular culture during the 1980s and 1990s. By “popular culture,”

we refer to a wide range of media: movies, sit-coms, talk shows, news shows, magazines and so on. The negative imagery of men ranges in severity from ridicule to dehumanization and even demonization. To summarize our findings: The men these productions portray negatively are either inadequate, evil or both; the few men these productions portray positively are honorary women—either feminists or minority men. Gay men, in particular, often get free passes in gender politics. Our point is not so much that these negative stereotypes harm boys and men (although they do), but that they are symptoms of a much deeper cultural problem (which we explore in later volumes).

³ Judah was the southern Jewish kingdom. Assyria had already conquered the northern kingdom, Israel, in 722. Its population, deported and assimilated, became the “ten lost tribes.”

⁴ Those who turned to dualism identified evil not only with enemy communities, whose evil took on eschatological proportions, but also with closely linked cosmic principles. Just as they polarized “us” and “them,” for instance, they polarized “spirit” and “flesh” (a metaphysical distinction and conflict that was particularly important to Christians such as St. Paul). Some theologians identified the former, in turn, with maleness and the latter with femaleness. To do that, they had to reinterpret non-dualistic texts accordingly.

⁵ Nathanson and Young, *Spreading Misandry*, 199–218.

⁶ See note 9.

⁷ Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006) 269–308. This volume, the second of five on misandry, is about the institutionalization of ideological feminism by legislators, lawyers, judges, bureaucrats and the like, all of whom rely, in turn, on the institutionalization of ideological feminism by academics who produce and interpret statistics. We begin this volume by continuing the discussion of popular culture in *Spreading Misandry*, but with our focus on journalism instead of entertainment. To be more precise, we focus on the journalistic feeding frenzies that so often accompany high-profile legal or quasi-legal cases about conflicts between men and women and lead to legislative change. Examples include the Senate confirmation hearing for Clarence Thomas (which provoked a “national dialogue” on sexual harassment) and the avalanche of court battles over “recovered memories” of sexual molestation or even “satanic ritual abuse” (which provoked the modern equivalents of witch hunts). Most of the volume is directly about legislative change due to the influence of ideological feminism in connection with every point of contact between men and women. Neither the laws that govern these contacts (such as conflicts over sexual harassment, divorce, custody, affirmative action) nor the rules that govern their interpretation, implementation and enforcement rely any longer on philosophical notions such as equality of opportunity and legal principles such as the presumption of innocence.

⁸ For one example, see Nathanson and Young, *Legalizing Misandry*, 471–477.

⁹ See Katherine K. Young and Paul Nathanson, *Sanctifying Misandry: Goddess Ideology and the Fall of Man* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010). This volume, the third of five on misandry, is about the ways in which feminist ideologues have used religion to bolster their claim to female superiority and simultaneously support their conspiracy theory of history, that evil originated in an ancient revolution during which men overturned an egalitarian society, established patriarchy, and began the oppression of women. More specifically, it is about various attempts to reverse a familiar paradigm of profound importance. According to the Bible,

Adam and Eve live in paradise under the aegis of God; Adam and Eve succumb to sin, which leads God to expel them from paradise and into the world of chaos and conflict as we know these in everyday life; the remote descendants of Adam and Eve return to paradise of one kind or another at the end of history. The new version is slightly different: men and women live in paradise under the aegis of a Goddess; men succumb to sin by installing their gods, which leads to the creation of patriarchy; women return to paradise, possibly with some male converts to feminism, at the end of patriarchy. But feminist extremists and separatists are not the only supporters of this revised myth. It has deeply influenced even some liberal forms of Christianity and Judaism.

¹⁰ People classify forms of feminism in many ways according to need. From the specific perspective of *men*, only these two forms are significant.

¹¹ For political reasons, some people refer to equality of result as “substantive equality” and to equality of opportunity as (mere) “formal equality.”

¹² Equality of opportunity entails, among other things, universal *access* to higher education. Equality of result entails, among other things, affirmative action in order to ensure the *equal representation* of all groups in universities (although advocates seldom build in mechanisms that would ensure the end of affirmative action once they have reached their goal, which is why they do not promote affirmative action for men despite the majority of women in universities).

¹³ For a detailed discussion of these revolutions, see Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Replacing Misandry: From Primeval Man to Postmodern Man* (forthcoming). This is the fourth of five volumes on misandry. The fifth and final volume is *Transcending Misandry: From Ideological Feminism to Intersexual Dialogue* (forthcoming). There, we move beyond misandry *per se*. Our focus is on the present and future, therefore, more than the past. The word “dialogue” usually refers to a way of discussing conflicts and resolving them in connection with common ideals—justice, say, or compassion—instead of resorting to intimidation or violence. Among the most familiar forms of dialogue has been interreligious dialogue. This originated in the 1960s as an offshoot of ecumenism, the Christian movement that sought greater understanding among the churches (and sometimes institutional union). It did not take long for many people to realize that interreligious dialogue could include not only Christian denominations but also non-Christian communities. Under Pope John XXIII and his successors, for instance, Catholics sought not to convert Jews and other non-Catholics but to foster forgiveness and reconciliation. Religious communities responded to this idea in many ways. Some feared it on historical grounds as a disguise for proselytism and ignored it. Others welcomed it on practical grounds in the interest of combining forces to solve social problems such as poverty, political problems such as tyranny, or even religious problems such as the rise of secularism. Still others welcomed it on intellectual grounds to the extent that they could reaffirm their own distinctive identities by learning about those of other communities. Nowadays, “dialogue” refers to a possibility for any groups in conflict: religious, racial, ethnic, linguistic—and sexual. But overuse and misuse has almost drained this word of meaning.

¹⁴ Luigi Zoja, *The Father: Historical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives*, trans. Henry Martin (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 2001), 29-45.

¹⁵ See David Schneider, “Primeval Kinship: How Pair Bonding Gave Birth to Human Society,” *Evolutionary Psychology* 6.4 (2008): 557-562.



¹⁶ Most men are slightly bigger, stronger and faster than most women are. Although sexual dimorphism (differences between the males and females within a species) is a feature of our species, its degree is very minor compared to those between the males and females of many other primate species. Scientists have found correlations between low degrees of sexual dimorphism and the participation of fathers in family life, and between high levels and the absence of fathers from family life.

¹⁷ A.O. Scott, "A Tale of Jacob, Esau and Muscles," review of *Warrior*, *New York Times*, 8 November 2011, C-4.

¹⁸ Michael Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: Harper, 2008).

¹⁹ See chapter 1 in Nathanson and Young, *Transcending Misandry* (forthcoming).

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Towards an Integrated Perspective on Gender, Masculinity, and Manhood

JOHN A. ASHFIELD, PhD



For decades our understanding of gender, masculinity, and manhood has arguably been bedevilled by uninformative pseudo-academic gender ideology. Detached from biological reality, and crediting culture with almost autonomous causation, this ideology of gender feminist social constructionism has exhibited a dogged self-preserving reflex of disconfirmation, whenever faced with knowledge challenging its dogmatic assertions. Its unashamed devaluation of thought, through resort to propagandist mantras of global male aspersion and political correctness, underscores not only its fundamentalist nature – disqualifying it from any serious consideration as a basis for understanding gender and social relations, but also the urgent need for a perspective, unfettered by ideology, that reflects current interdisciplinary knowledge, and is actually useful.

In major Western cultures, partisan gender ideology has been permitted to monopolise and censor nearly all public discussion of gender and social relations. Despite

the availability of a broad basis of interdisciplinary knowledge to inform an understanding of gender and its relationship to biology and culture, such knowledge remains largely neglected and underutilized - arguable evidence of just how successfully gender ideology has managed to colonise not only popular culture but even (and perhaps most consequentially) our institutions of higher learning. The mistaken acquiescence of academe, which assumed that gender ideologues might, if permitted, just muddle about relatively harmlessly at the *soft* end of the academic spectrum, was a serious lapse of judgement and responsibility, one which underestimated the metastatic opportunism it afforded an ideology determined to inculcate and proliferate its own partisan and spurious epistemology.



With such scope for ideological renditions of gender and social reality to flourish in some of our most respected institutions, should we be surprised by the position we now find ourselves in, one of wondering how we can commence a gender discourse of integrity and that serves the best interests of men and women?

How can we begin to put things right? Past efforts at remediation have proven to be a perilous reef on which many academic careers and personal reputations have been wrecked. It is a brave thing to resist a bullying gender commentariat, whose stock in trade is not facts or reason, but facile political correctness, the manipulation of cultural taboos, moral sanctimony, sullyng of others' character and reputation, the cultivation of moral panic, and the use of propagandist, literary, and institutional violence.

Past experience suggests there is little point in confronting this fundamentalism head on, since that usually only serves to energise it. It is most self-assured and convinced of its rightness when it feels besieged, and it has an aggressive defensive reflex of disconfirmation in relation to any idea that challenges its overweening sense of rightness. By its very nature this fundamentalism contains the constituents of its own demise; nevertheless, for now, it remains entrenched and pervasive.

Perhaps our most effective recourse is to resolutely refuse to engage with it polemically, and to "step around" it, ignore it, and forge ahead independently of it, focusing on evidence, reinstating our prerogative and responsibility to express a reasonable opinion, and striving for a fresh, sensible, equitable, and practicable perspective. The latter imperative is the endeavour of this article, which contends that, simply by integrating some available basic knowledge of a range of germane disciplines, it is possible to realise a sensible provisional perspective of gender, one not only grounded in the reality of men's and women's lived experience, but one that is also actually explanatory and useful. What we have in the present dominant paradigm of gender is arguably neither of these things.

GENDER: BIOLOGY OR CULTURE?

For decades we have been told that gender (the aptitudes, abilities and behaviours that are characteristically associated with men as distinct from women) is the product of social conditioning or learning, that men and women are the same by nature, and that *biological sex* and *gender* are different things or separate domains. Gender, we are told, is socially constructed, the product of self-serving patriarchal cultural narratives



(Nadeau, R., 1996).

The evidence still widely cited in support of this dichotomy of biological sex and gender is that famous single study published in 1935 by anthropologist Margaret Mead, titled *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. In order to counter some of the rigid thinking about gender roles at that time, she exaggerated the degree to which one of the societies she studied (the Tchambuli) associated what we would call the masculine with women and the feminine with men (Goldberg, S., 1991; Wood, P., 2003; Freeman, D., 1983; Roscoe, P., 2003).

Gender ideologues seized upon this as the “smoking gun,” incontrovertible evidence of a society that had succeeded in reversing gender roles, proving that gender is not only interchangeable, but is wholly socially or culturally constructed (Goldberg, S., 1991; Roscoe, P., 2003).

Despite Mead subsequently and publicly stating over and over that her research had never found or proven any such thing, the “windfall” of “proof” her research report provided was just too useful to let the small matter of the author’s subsequent repeated public repudiations become an impediment. As Goldberg (1991) observed, numerous university introductory sociology textbooks have quoted and continue to quote Mead’s study as evidence of the sex/gender dichotomy and of gender social constructionism.

Assertion of this “evidence” and the averred dichotomy is still predominant in academic gender discourse and gender literature, a sobering reminder of the generativity of the fundamentalist meme — one with an ability to bypass people’s critical capacities and evoke subjective reflexes, one with an inbuilt capacity to repudiate and repel even the most erudite disconfirmations of its dogma.

Fortunately for the future of better gender relations, this fundamentalism is being increasingly eclipsed by compelling evidence from a whole range of academic disciplines, including biology, anthropology, neuroscience, endocrinology, psychiatry, psychology, and others.

Available multidisciplinary knowledge now obliges us to postulate that differences in brain structure and hormone physiology in males and females “result in behavioural tendencies that on average correlate with statistically significant differences in behaviour on the group level” (Nadeau, R., 1996, p. 60). Such knowledge, since the brave release many years ago of *Brain Sex* (1992), remains unremitting in its growing robustness.

Never has this implied that by nature all men act one way and all women act another way, or that all men are alike, or that all women are alike, in their preferences, abilities and aptitudes. Rather, it means that men are *more likely* to act one way and women are *more likely* to act another, and that men are *more likely* to exhibit characteristically male preferences, aptitudes and abilities, and women, those that are characteristically female. The tendencies are fundamentally due to biological differentiation.

Available knowledge suggests that biology is the *primary* (though not exclusive) determinant that drives and orientates human individual and social behaviour in general. Sex-specific abilities and behaviours are grounded in male and female biology, and social systems exhibit conformity with the limits imposed by this reality (Goldberg, S., 1991; Pinker, S., 2002; Baron-Cohen, S., 2003; Sax, L., 2006; Nadeau, R., 1996; Gold-

berg, S., 1973).

The reason why men and women tend to be drawn to and occupy largely different institutional and role domains in society, and why they experience “sexually differentiated socialization” is not to cause or produce male or female qualities or gender. Biology sees to that. Instead, “societies conform their institutions and socialisation to the sexual directions set by physiological (biological) differentiation” (Ashfield, J., 2003, p. 118; see also Goldberg, S., 1973).

This should not be taken to mean that biology can ever be an excuse for inequitable discrimination. Nor can it be justifiably used to generally or artificially limit men’s and women’s options and choices, but “it does explain universally observable sexual differences in behaviour and institutions, where social constructionist explanations cannot” (Goldberg, S., 1973, p. 146. See also: Goldberg, S., 1994).

Arguably, then, biology is the fundamental originator of *gender*, with social conditioning reinforcing, accentuating, limiting, or refining gender characteristics to fit in with and meet the demands of particular cultural and environmental contexts (Ashfield, J., 2003).

The antithesis of the current gender paradigm, this perspective promises to see an end to the needless “industry” of gender partisanship and antagonism, paving the way for endeavours of human service and social enhancement that are equitable and grounded in reality.

MASCULINITY AND MASCULINITIES

Much that is written about masculinity posits or reinforces a deficit view of the male gender. Most of what is written represents a social constructionist endeavour to make sense of gender and behaviour, in the absence of the necessary knowledge to do so (Murphy, P., 2004; Kimmel, M., Hearn, J. & Connell, R., 2005; Smith, J., 2007).

A prime example is the discussion of masculinity or male gender detached from biological reality, as social constructionists are obliged by their ideology to do. Ironically, to avoid many inherent contradictions such a dichotomy necessitates a correspondingly selective and reductionist reading of social reality. Not doing up the “top button” correctly results in an inevitable succession of required intellectual compromises. Even constructionist discussion about *masculinities*, whilst seeking to avoid the obvious problem of viewing all men as a homogenous group, simply adds further confusion to a phenomenon that can be much more satisfactorily explained if reconnected to biological reality and referenced to relevant anthropology (Gilmore, D., 1990).

As already proposed, biology is the fundamental originator of male gender. Far from being interchangeable with femininity or capable of being abolished (as gender ideologues have believed possible), *masculinity* best describes male-specific aptitudes, abilities, responses and behaviours that arise from biologically innate cognitive and emotional processes and capacities (Ashfield, J., 2003).

It would appear that each male is born with a different “blend” of biologically based *masculine potentials* which when actualised characterise male behaviour as discernibly masculine. Masculinity is biologically innate and is expressed through *masculine gen-*



der. It is this differentiation *along with* but in no way exclusive of the potentiating or suppressive influence of cultural demands of *manhood* that gives rise to diverse expressions of manhood, contrary and in contrast to the constructionist idea of *masculinities*.

MANHOOD

“Running the gauntlet” of childhood and adolescent development, masculinity or a male’s masculine potentials are configured, reinforced, exaggerated, limited or downplayed as far as they can be through social learning and cultural conditioning, according to environmental conditions, the demands of survival and society, and the expectations of culture. The effect of this dynamic process of adaptation and conditioning is best described as *manhood* (Gilmore, D., 1990; Ashfield, J., 2003).

For example, in contemporary Western culture the *on-average* male’s brain and hormone physiology, which provide him with a capacity for the forceful and single-minded pursuit of goals, stoicism, risk-taking, and persevering competitiveness, are exploited and reinforced, because they are indispensable to the kind of roles men must perform to keep us all in the standard of living, safety, and security we have come to expect (Pinker, S., 2002; Baron-Cohen, S., 2003; Sax, L., 2006; Nadeau, R., 1996; Goldberg, S., 1973; Ashfield, J., 2010).

Each male occupies a place in the *general manhood culture*, by being matched with and situated in one of its constituent manhood *subcultures*. The general manhood culture consists of the commingled representations of *manliness* of the variety of individual manhood subcultures (Gilmore, D., 1990; Ashfield, J., 2010).

What determines the characteristics of the general manhood culture and its subcultural constituents? As Gilmore (1990) has observed, cross-cultural studies exhibit that the harder, more demanding, threatening, competitive, or dangerous life is, the more stress appears to be placed on a manhood ideal that is tough, aggressive, competitive, and stoical. Conversely, in circumstances that are comfortable, less competitive, and pose little threat to health or wellbeing, the manhood ideal is relaxed and much more liberal.

THE GENERAL MANHOOD CULTURE AND ITS SUBCULTURES

Each society exhibits its own characteristic general manhood culture, and its own variety and emphases of manhood subcultures. Manhood *sub-cultures*, are mostly defined and projected by different occupational groups. They may also be determined by a strongly orientating philosophy, ideology, or lifestyle community. Examples of the former might include hospitality, mining, building and construction, agricultural, corporate finance, and health industries, the armed forces, academia, politics, and the police force. Examples of the latter might include motor cycle groups, sporting organisations, service organisations, alternative lifestyle communities, social justice or social issues focussed groups. Liberal affluent societies appear to exhibit the broadest spectrum and variety of permissible manhood sub-cultures (Ashfield, J., 2010).

Though this may be an oversimplification of the complex way in which culture and society capture (though never fully control) and utilise masculine potentials, it does propose a defensibly useful broad conceptualisation for making sense of the role of and relationship between *biological and cultural determinants* (Ashfield, J., 2010).

MANHOOD AND MALE DEVELOPMENT

Making sense of *male development* in relation to manhood derives much illumination from examination of Post-Freudian male developmental psychology because of its resonance with recent cultural anthropology, in particular that of the seminal work of Gilmore (1990).

It appears self-evident that boys do not achieve a sense of male gender identity or manhood merely through biological maturation. Unlike girls, they must break away from their sense of unity with mother, to be able to achieve a self and public identity recognised by society as manly.

Boyhood bonds with mother must be broken to achieve an independent social status as distinct and opposite from hers. This may be a difficult and lonely process if not cushioned by appropriate male support, mentoring, and role modelling. How else can a boy attain a viable male identity, and achieve the best place possible for himself in the male dominance hierarchy, and in the world of men, men of whom much will be demanded by society (Moxon, S., 2008, Ch. 2)?

He must resist the tempting comfort of puerile regression, running back to “mother” or the world of women for solace or protection, because male gender identity forms in contradistinction to mother and women (Fogel, G., 1986; Stoller, R., 1984; Hallman, R., 1969; Gilmore, D., 1990). Perhaps this is why boys often appear more attentive to the small encouragements of men than the many affirmations of women. This is a matter in need of more observation and research, especially when it comes to the gender of school teachers and appointed female confidants with whom boys must engage. Expecting boys to do things they experience as contrary to their male quest for an independent masculine identity and male status (albeit uncongenial), may be perceived as a most unwelcome invitation to puerile regression and a return to mother dependence.

Perhaps the need for a “man about the house,” in the school, and in the therapy room, deserves better than merely to be dismissed as a sexist archaism?

THE CONFISCATION OF MANHOOD

The attainment of manhood and a sense of masculine social identity are very difficult for a number of important reasons. It serves society’s purposes for manhood never to be fully attainable, because it is a powerful device of social utility. Manhood is never a final or certain state of being. There is always the hovering threat of it being taken away (Gilmore, D., 1990; Ashfield, J., 2004). British recruitment propaganda and strategies of the First World War were a transparent example of this. They idealised manhood, holding it out as a promise to young men and as a reward for steeling themselves



against danger and fear in order to get them to enlist in the army and go off to war. Recruitment posters extolled the bravery, courage, and national pride associated with military service, and shamed those who were reluctant to join up. The White Feather campaign was used to great effect in threatening disqualification from manhood of any young man who refused to enlist. The white feather, which was most commonly handed out by women, was used as a potent symbol of cowardice. Men who received the white feather were swiftly ostracised, and sometimes even threatened with physical violence (Ellsworth-Jones, W., 2008; Wodehouse, P., 1907).

All cultures have words in their vocabulary for the purpose of challenging, undermining, and maintaining the precariousness of manhood: sissy, girly-boy, wimp, weakling, effeminate, pussy-whipped, pansy, putz, schmuck (of the Yiddish idiom), and so on. Women have traditionally figured prominently in the use of language aimed at impugning manliness (Gilmore, D., 1990).

It is interesting to observe how, in many cultures, men's neuroses about penis size and sexual performance arguably are not driven by competitive males but by women and quite obviously because it is a considerable source of covert power. It directly exploits the precariousness of manhood, without which a man's hopes of securing or keeping a female partner may be dashed. It is perhaps one of the most potent counterbalances to the male biological aggression advantage. As Gilmore noted, manhood is a culturally imposed ideal to which men must conform. Manhood is an ingenious cultural device that provides the immense leverage required to get the majority of men to occupy the majority of the most stressful, health-diminishing, dirty, and dangerous roles and occupations in service to society. And it works because human well-being depends so heavily on having a viable gender identity and on social inclusion. For many men, it seems, it is better to die than to be considered a non-man (Ashfield, J., 2010).

Manhood is a code calibrated to cultural requirements that often demands emotional detachment, stoicism, toughness and strength. It may require men to ignore even potentially life-threatening consequences in order to ensure material production and provision, and to protect community and family, all prerequisites for human community's survival and prosperity.

It should be an intolerable contradiction and injustice to demand of men the performance of roles (to benefit us all) that generally lead to greater ill-health and an earlier death than women, whilst at the same time calling for men's feminisation and demasculinisation.

MANHOOD AND THE MALE DOMINANCE HIERARCHY

No consideration of manhood is complete without understanding it in relation to the male dominance hierarchy.

Much research indicates that male status in the human male dominance hierarchy is the basis of female choice in selecting a male partner (Buss, D., 2003; Okami, P. & Shackelford, T., 2001). As with other species, the human male is challenged in various ways that test his "rigour," which may be gauged on the basis of evident physical char-

acteristics or competitive determination. Yet status in the human male dominance hierarchy is also what is being considered even when a man is being judged on personality. Humour may indicate self-confidence and intelligence, and education and intelligence are potent means of attaining status. Status may translate into dependability and a well-provisioned lifestyle (Moxon, S., 2008, Ch. 2). All are preferences that fit with female reproductive criteria.

Of course, money is a proxy for status. Though men seem to pursue it as an end in itself, it is more often that they are less concerned with what a certain level of income can buy than with how, by means of wealth, they might be valued. Interestingly, women who are wealthy high achievers still overwhelmingly choose men with higher incomes than their own, despite having no need for a male provider (Moxon, S., 2008, Ch. 2).

There is no escaping the imperatives of biology or what we share in common with other species, no matter with what sophistication we clothe ourselves. A male instinctively starts vying with his same-sex peers from when he is a toddler for the very purpose of calibrating to what extent he will be able to reproduce (Moxon, S., 2008, Ch. 8). Women will be most interested in him if he succeeds in his competition to attain a favourable ranking.

It is stating the obvious to say that men can never be like women, just as women would never want them to be. But that is not to say that men (and women) cannot benefit their relationships by exploring and negotiating a whole range of refinements and compromises in the way in which they communicate, express affection, exhibit commitment, constancy and fidelity, and seek to understand, appreciate, and value each other.

Men cannot be women. They can only endeavour to be valued and esteemed men. Women cannot be men. They can only endeavour to be valued and esteemed women.

MANHOOD AND MEN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The cultural phenomenon of manhood is a vital key to understanding why men are in fact conditioned not to pay much attention to their health and well-being. To do so would be contrary to many of the roles they must perform for society. Consequently, if some men respond poorly to the promptings of men's health promotion, their response is understandable and not at all deserving of blaming, shaming, or the patronising statements commonly exhibited in health literature. Men do in fact take responsibility for their health and well-being when given support in doing so, just as do women. They also respond positively to health promotion messages that are male gender appropriate and respectful. Health authorities are only now beginning to realise that attempting to work with men in the same way as women is ineffectual. Men must be approached differently if they are to be engaged effectively by health services and respond affirmatively to health promotion messages (Ashfield, J., 2010; RACGP, 2006).

Quite obviously, health authorities need first to understand the nature of manhood and the demands it makes on males. There is a constant hovering threat that, if a man does not live up to his manhood obligations, it may be taken away from him or severely



diminished. Men cannot afford to be seen by other men or women as weak or unmanly if they are to protect the integrity of their manhood identity upon which so much depends in any society. This is not a case of “male ego” or “machismo” as is so often sneeringly suggested. It is a matter of self-preservation through social approval and inclusion (Ashfield, J., 2010).

In Australia, considerable resources are expended on health promotion slogans that are clearly contrary to the demands made of the most at-risk male demographic. On the one hand, it is demanded that men be stoical, show no vulnerability, and get on with their job without complaining; on the other hand, they are told that to be a “real man” they should admit to vulnerability and encourage their male friends to do likewise. See, for example, <http://www.beyondblue.org.au> and <http://www.prostate.org.au>.

Men are now belittled in a multiplicity of blatant and subtle ways. Yet in almost every example, if the gender was reversed there would be a hue and cry.

Men generally need to be given social license to take active “public” steps in tending to their health and wellbeing, which is perhaps why only after much prompting from a female partner will some men seek medical assistance or have a medical check-up when it is needed. It has been observed that, if self-care and health care can be promoted and accepted as a group norm within an all-male group, individuals within such a group will often alter their individual help-seeking and health care behaviour positively because they’ve been given licence and permission to do so by a sufficiently credible social peer group (Rees, C., Jones, M. & Scott, T., 1999; Ashfield, J., 2002; Ashfield, J., 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

The concepts of *gender*, *masculinity* and *manhood* are an essential key to understanding male experience and psychology, the place and role that men occupy in culture and society, and what is demanded of them by society. They provide a vital interpretive frame of reference for all social and human service endeavours.

Through the lens of these interconnected realities, we discover an affirmative perspective, not the alleged male (compared with female) deficiency, but instead real and important gender differences; not the much publicised male (compared with female) ineptitude, but rather a largely biologically determined and culturally demanded aptitude.

Survival is the primary imperative of evolutionary history. It is a wasted effort to try to de-nature gender. Gender differences have been the basis of our survival. However problematic they may appear for the relational preferences of an affluent class, their utility (principally for the affluent who benefit most from them) is deserving of a good deal more understanding and respect than they have been given.

I spoke to a student recently who had decided to pursue studies in social science at university. He is a gentle unassuming individual, interested in ideas and delighted by learning. He excitedly took himself off to his first classes at university. Not one month into his studies he rang me, angry and perplexed. He said: “I know it is early in my

time at University, but I'm feeling somehow demeaned. I'm being bullied into pretending a kind of apologetic stance, for no other reason than because I am male. How can there be higher learning here, when any discussion contrary to political correctness or a negative view of males, is censored or belittled?"

What a disgrace that a first-year university student should feel the need to recount such an experience. How dare we allow any university or college to be an environment that requires male students to chant the mantras of political correctness in order not to be penalised?

Regretfully, I felt the need to explain some things to him, as I have had cause to do with other students: Academe in the West, has, in certain of its disciplines, betrayed a sacred trust. It has acquiesced to a bullying pseudo-intellectual, self-appointed gender commentariat. It has permitted ideology to have ascendancy over intellectual integrity, creating a legacy of gender adversarialism, a jaundiced and disintegrative perspective of psychosocial reality, and a dogmatic fundamentalism unaccommodating of any potential disconfirmation.

We have need of a whole new approach to gender and our understanding of males in particular, one that is factual, sensible, equitable, practicable, and by virtue of its integrity, able to supersede the old. It is possible to make things right, but change will not come without emulating the courage and commitment of the many men and women who have in the past already paid a high price for asserting intellectual integrity in academe and in public. They did so without reward except that of knowing that they hearkened to the moral imperative of trying to move the world from an embittered and divisive place to one enriched and humanly compassionate for both genders.

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The Bold, Independent Woman Of Today and the “Good” Men and Boys in Her Life

A Sampling of Mainstream Media Representations

PETER ALLEMANO



For decades, there has been an abundance of negative portrayals of men and boys in mainstream media, but here and there, especially in recent years, ostensibly “positive” portrayals have also been presented of exemplary men and good little boys who devote themselves to fulfilling females’ wishes and expectations. Although we cannot help but notice the “good” male’s existence (in movies, for example), we nevertheless pay little attention to him as an individual. Such representations of the “good” male do merit our attention, because upon examination, his psychological mindset is peculiar and ought to perplex us. We need to ask some hard questions about this representation. How does the “good” male image influence our attitudes toward the male sex in general? What does it teach boys about their futures, in adulthood? One unusual recent mainstream movie challenges the prevailing “good” male image and strongly suggests that there exists a far better and more realistic way to affirm the male sex’s best qualities.

American women have come a long way since the heady days of 1960s and '70s "Women's Lib." Back then, simply embracing feminist ideals held the potential to transform a woman into a folk heroine, and sometimes it could even lead to celebrity. It did for Jennifer Skolnik, whose autobiographical "Notes of a Recycled Housewife" not only got published in *New York Magazine* (May 22, 1972) but whose photo graced its cover. The image features Skolnik's four children, too, as Skolnik boldly wheels the youngest of them in a baby stroller across a busy Manhattan street. At 31 years of age, Skolnik had forced her doubts into abeyance, uprooted herself and the children from suburban Baltimore, and moved to New York in search of a "new life." Her "worn out" marriage now abandoned, she describes finding "fun" in a short-lived affair with a man who, though admittedly "all wrong" for her, brought her novelty: "There was wise-cracking and there was laughing. There was lying together and then leaping up to play the entire *Sesame Street Songbook* on the piano." To be sure, there was financial uncertainty too, but Skolnik's article ends with the happy announcement that, at long last, she has landed a job. It "may not be the Real Answer," she acknowledges, but it excites her anyway because it is "in publishing."



Photo © Stephen Crowder

Skolnik was subsequently excoriated for her actions (as were similarly-radicalized women) in Joan Didion's *The White Album* (1979). Scoffed Didion, they were "perpetual adolescents."

Nevertheless, it was trailblazers like Skolnik who, despite whatever irresponsibility or recklessness may have afflicted their actions, helped create a very different world for women today in the 2010s. Indeed, a young woman in possession of Skolnik's high ideals for living a life of "fun" (or, to use more up-to-date terminology, *fulfillment*) is far more likely to be well-equipped for pursuing it and with far less difficulty. For example, chances are better for her to be a college graduate, and she likely receives support (directly and indirectly) via billion-dollar spending on special women's programs, both government-sponsored and from the private sector. Indeed, as a feminist, the choices she makes in life can no longer be considered unusual. The word "liberation" has been dropped from everyday references to the "women's movement," and, not surprisingly, today's woman seldom even describes herself (or women's issues in general) using feminist argot at all.

There are specialists in Women's Studies (the self-designated "academic arm" of the women's movement) who acknowledge the change. Although feminism's vision for transforming society is incomplete, a wide spectrum of formerly radical sensibilities nevertheless has become accepted and internalized. Therefore, some say, it no longer is even appropriate to speak of feminism as being identical to what it was in the past. Three distinct eras are now recognized. "First Wave" feminists were those of the 19th and early 20th century. By the time Skolnik's photo was being taken for the cover of *New York Magazine*, the movement had evolved and changed. She was a "Second Wave" feminist. Today is the era of the "Third Wave" feminist.

But even the term "feminist" in any context rarely appears in mainstream media anymore, much less in connection with a numbered "wave." Instead, the current-day female is described with a variety of commonplace words. Frequently, these words get put to use in combination with one another. Some combinations appear more fre-



quently than others, however, and they also tend to appear in predictable patterns. For the sake of clarity in informal discussion, therefore, it may be helpful to dispense with the sometimes confusing, sometimes misunderstood term “feminist” altogether. This author proposes and will employ henceforward a new term, derived from mainstream media’s immediately recognizable language. We live in the era of the “Bold, Independent Woman Of Today,” or “BIWOT.”

The BIWOT is so thoroughly in “take charge” mode that she need not even pause to wonder whether or not any of her actions might detract from her abiding sense of power and control over her own destiny. It is even her prerogative to focus upon “girly” areas of interest, formerly considered dubious among some “Second Wave” feminists, such as fussing with her personal appearance to maximize its attractiveness.

Moreover, the BIWOT dictates the terms of any intimate associations with men in her life, and never the other way around. This is true whether she enters into a temporary “girlfriend/boyfriend” relationship (even the word “affair” is passé) or some other, more formal one, including marriage.

The young BIWOT can be spotted, often prettily-dressed, confidently strolling down almost any urban sidewalk. Sometimes, as in Skolnik’s life in 1972, the BIWOT wheels a baby stroller. Unlike in Skolnik’s life, however, it is also very possible that a man will be wheeling it for her, leaving her “hands free” to chat on her cell phone. The man remains silent while the BIWOT animatedly debates with another, similarly in-motion BIWOT across town any of a wide range of topics. It could be current financial affairs and their potential impact upon her decision to rent a beach house next summer, or it could be personal work issues. It could even be whether the new spritz styling sprays are more effective than the older aerosol mousses.

So if the formerly radical “Women’s Libber” has evolved to become the everyday BIWOT and increased in number so that hers is the predominant postmodern female identity, then what of the postmodern male? Have attitudes towards him changed? Has his life path, in relation to the BIWOT, also evolved?

Many “Second Wave” feminists regarded the male sex with contempt. *Ms.* Magazine editor Robin Morgan famously declared “man-hating” to be “an honorable and viable political act,” and according to Sally Miller Gearhart: “The proportion of men must be reduced to and maintained at approximately 10% of the human race.” “Second Wave” feminist sentiments usually were toned down a bit for widespread dissemination through mainstream media, but references to “male chauvinist pigs” or men as “slime” nevertheless became ubiquitous. In response to what they came to understand about the opposite sex through such disheartening characterizations, women woefully intoned: “Men just don’t get it, do they?”

But as the “Second Wave” feminist began to morph into the BIWOT, a change in attitude occurred. If a watershed moment can be identified, it arguably occurred in 2000 when feminist icon Gloria Steinem surprised the world, at age 66, by getting married. So maybe it was possible, after all, for a man to “get it.”

To be sure, negative portrayals of men and boys continued to abound in mainstream media. Over the past 40 years or so, it has been *de rigueur* for males to be portrayed as ridiculous buffoons. They mindlessly ogle cars and women, are likened to dogs (espe-

cially in beer and pizza ads), bungle every possible household task, and prove themselves hopelessly incompetent as lovers and fathers. Boys, too, get their comeuppance in mainstream media, whether depicted as ne'er-do-wells or nincompoops.

But here and there, especially in more recent years, ostensibly "positive" portrayals can also be found, exemplary men and good little boys who conform to the BIWOT's standards of behavior and rigorously devote themselves to fulfilling her wishes and expectations.

If the BIWOT's "good" male appears cowed or servile in some people's eyes, this is not to be construed by current-day standards as a "minus" for him. Indeed, mainstream media affirm and celebrate the docile male who capitulates to the BIWOT. Although we cannot help but notice his existence (in movies, for example), we nevertheless pay little attention to him as an individual. One reason is that, befitting his secondary status in relation to the BIWOT, his role is often a supporting one. If his role happens to be a primary one, it nevertheless typically remains secondary to the overall plot, upon which we focus our attention instead of upon *him*.

But mainstream media representations of the BIWOT's "good" male do merit our attention because, upon close examination, his psychological mindset is peculiar and ought to perplex us. Moreover, because mainstream media not only reflect current attitudes and beliefs but *shape* them, we need to ask some hard questions about the BIWOT's "good" male image, especially as it is represented in mainstream media. How does the image influence our attitudes toward the male sex in general? What does it teach boys about their futures in adulthood?

Indeed, one of the most unnoticed but potentially very startling of all the BIWOT's "good" male characters in mainstream movies of the early 21st century plays an absolutely crucial role in the smash hit 2001 family feature from Walt Disney Pictures, *The Princess Diaries*. At first blush, the film simply constitutes a new twist on the long-standing "coming of age" genre in which a young person matures and/or learns an important life lesson or two. The surprise for the protagonist in *The Princess Diaries*, an ostensibly ordinary American adolescent girl, is that she actually is a princess from Europe, now being called upon to fulfill her royal destiny.

The BIWOT's "good" male character in this movie is Philippe Renaldi, crown prince of a small European country called Genovia. Philippe is dead at the outset, and he actually appears on screen only once, most of his face hidden from view, in a brief flashback.

During his college days, Philippe had met and fallen in love with an American named Helen Thermopolis, who is the BIWOT *par excellence*. Her parents were Woodstock hippies, but despite the considerable differences in Philippe and Helen's respective backgrounds, they decided to get married. After the birth of their daughter, whom they named Mia, Helen changed her mind about the marriage. She disliked the royal lifestyle and announced to Philippe that she wanted Mia to have a "normal" upbringing. Whatever feelings of resentment Philippe might have felt about this unexpected turn of events he evidently kept to himself. He briefly considered abdicating the throne in order to try to save the marriage, but instead he acquiesced, not only to a divorce but also to Helen's being given sole custody of Mia. During the next 15 years, until his



untimely death in an accident, Philippe proved himself a kind-hearted father, regularly sending Mia presents. For Mia's imminent 16th birthday, Philippe wrote her a letter of congratulations. It was found in his belongings, and near the end of the movie it is given to Mia and read aloud. The boundless love that Philippe conveys through his words is nothing short of magnificent.

Even though Helen's behavior in the past bore a suspicious resemblance to that of a golddigger, Philippe has shown no signs of being bothered by it. Indeed, he has evidently proven himself financially generous to Helen in his payment of alimony and child support. Though Helen's profession is a notoriously insecure and low-paying one as a painter of abstract art, the home she shares with her daughter constitutes an entire building in San Francisco, a city where real estate prices are historically sky-high. Moreover, Mia is enrolled at a tony private high school.

Helen's BIWOT heaven, of course, hardly constitutes a "normal" American environment for a child, Helen's purported reason to have things the way they are. In addition, her heaven is marred by one troubling issue: Mia is maladjusted. Awkward to the point of being clumsy, Mia is also painfully shy and cannot get through a simple oral report in class without having to interrupt it to rush out of the room and vomit.

A thinking person might feel moved to ask a few questions about the situation. Might not the steady influence of ongoing contact with her father, especially considering what a paragon of goodness he was, have prevented Mia's problems from developing in the first place? Indeed, even if there *were* potential "minuses" in the prospect of growing up in the royal palace of Genovia, might not they have been outweighed or at least balanced by the "pluses"? For example, because the possibility existed that Mia herself would assume the throne one day, would it not have been in her best interests to learn from firsthand exposure at her father's side what skills in diplomacy and governance would be required of her?

If Helen really cared about her daughter and not just about her own personal *fulfillment* (which includes, strangely, dating one of Mia's teachers) one cannot help but wonder why none of these questions ever occurred to *her*. Especially considering that Helen's artistry manifests itself some of the time in throwing darts at balloons filled with paint, one might also wonder: Is this BIWOT nothing but a revved-up, postmodern version of one of Joan Didion's "perpetual adolescents"?

But the BIWOT is a culture heroine, and the people who created *The Princess Diaries* seek to entertain and amuse audiences, not involve us in questioning the prevailing gender paradigm that it affirms. So not only has the BIWOT's "good" man, Philippe, acted in ways that are contrary to human nature which include indulging the BIWOT's most unreasonable demands and expectations with alacrity, but he has died an early death without it apparently being of any consequence to anyone except Mia. Though she has never met her father, she does express fleeting sorrow, once, to a friend. But not even Philippe's own mother seems upset. Though she speaks of him in glowing terms, it is more his attitude of devotion to his country that she admires than anything else about him, and her primary concern is for *replacing* him, hopefully with Mia.

If there existed a terrible personal flaw in Philippe that renders him unworthy of being mourned after his death, it remains a mystery. He is a bizarre character indeed.

But he is a “positive” depiction of the male in mainstream media. He scrupulously does everything he is supposed to do, and then, when he becomes unwanted, he obligingly disappears.

Unlike Helen in *The Princess Diaries*, the leading BIWOT character in other mainstream movies does not necessarily have any desire to be rid of the “good” man in her life. To the contrary, many recent movies are about the BIWOT *getting* and *keeping* the man of her dreams. Still, upon examination, the BIWOT’s “good” man in these movies can be just as strange and baffling a character as Philippe.

One such character appears in *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, another blockbuster released in 2001. Like *The Princess Diaries*, it conforms in many respects to a well-established genre. In this case, it is the tale of an undesirable woman who winds up making good with a suave, well-to-do gentleman. Numerous precedents exist. With *Sabrina* (1954) and *My Fair Lady* (1964), Audrey Hepburn established a permanent position of prominence for herself in cinematic history by portraying such Cinderella-like characters who overcome their respective shortcomings with spectacularly life-altering results. *North By Northwest* (1959) represents one variation of the genre. At the beginning of the movie, Eva Marie Saint’s character is already sophisticated, lovely, well-spoken and *ostensibly* desirable. But her personal background and present circumstances are burdened with deeply troubling aspects. By the end of the movie, however, she has surmounted them and married an upstanding businessman who is not only gorgeous but also financially secure enough to reside in a landmark Long Island mansion.

The genre provides a tantalizing fantasy for female audiences to contemplate. But there is a significant difference between the older movies and *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. In the older movies, the undesirable woman undergoes a transformation that enables her to win her permanent position at the man’s side. Put another way, she develops the necessary attributes that finally render her qualified to be in a relationship with him.

Of course, the average female moviegoer of the past was very unlikely, under any circumstances, ever to find herself in the arms of a Humphrey Bogart, Rex (“Sexy Remy”) Harrison, or Carey Grant. For one thing, in the humdrum world at large, charismatic male movie stars were in short supply. Moreover, real-life counterparts to the scintillating characters they portrayed simply did not exist. The devastating female characters of the older movies were also unreal. Not only were they the rehearsed work product of unusually beautiful actresses, but they were *also* the co-creation of a multitude of professional cinematographic technicians, designers, stylists, writers and performance coaches.

Nevertheless, it could be very enjoyable to imagine how things *might* turn out for the ordinary woman if she too somehow could become not only svelte and elegant but also smart enough to dazzle a worldly man in dialogue with her impeccable repartee. To be sure, the storyline of the genre was merely a fantasy, never manifesting itself in real life with such stark simplicity. But embedded within in the fantasy of the older movies there nevertheless exists an honest acknowledgment of a fundamental reality about the nature of adult human relationships. They are *transactional*, and each individual is expected to bring something of comparable value to the table in exchange for what the other person brings. Indeed, if the female moviegoer in the days of yore



had not already “settled” for a man far less glamorous than her favorite matinee idol and the Dapper Dans he portrayed, she had few delusions that an ordinary mate of significantly lower status would probably be her eventual fate.

Bridget Jones’s Diary departs from the genre insofar as the titular character, a 30-year-old undesirable BIWOT, *does not change but gets the glamorous, high-status man anyway*. Bridget lives in one of the world’s greatest cities, London, but none of its beauty or myriad attractions seem to be able to engage her attention or interest. When we are not seeing her at work or in a bar with a small group of cynical drinking buddies, we find her (more often than not) home alone. Apparently she has no hobbies. She watches television, and even when she makes entries in her diary, she takes no joy in the writing process. The entries are usually terse and perfunctory. She describes the faults of her family and co-workers but never so much as acknowledges in passing the existence of laudable qualities in any of them. Consequently, Bridget is often sullen. Her conversational style is prone to fumbling and is punctuated repeatedly with strong pursings of the lips in disapproval of what others have said. To be sure, Bridget comes from an educated background, so she does not shout and scream like, say, the irascible “guttersnipe” Eliza in *My Fair Lady*. It is through mainly understated means that Bridget conveys the fact that she is a very unpleasant person.

Bridget represents one popular and much admired version of the BIWOT: the post-modern woman who is “irreverent” and “dizzy” (screenplay author Helen Fielding’s words describing the character). If she is cheeky, it is forgivable, even likable, because of her daring to defy “demure” female stereotypes. Indeed, this feisty, sometimes even brash type of BIWOT was honored with the very name of a popular magazine for teenage girls from 1988 until 1996: *Sassy*. But in Bridget’s case, insouciance in the face of normative behavior exceeds a level where it might be called charming. Bridget is *obnoxious*, as when, for example, she refers cavalierly to a male homosexual friend using derogatory language: “a total poof.” Making fun of a loyal and supportive friend behind his back with an insulting epithet is not daring and cute. It is mean and reprehensible.

Making Bridget even more repellent is the fact that she is overweight, dowdy, clumsy, slovenly and sloppy. She cares naught about her physical health. As one potential love interest observes (and Bridget herself acknowledges), she “smokes like a chimney” and “drinks like a fish.”

Bridget exhibits no compensatory attractive character traits in the way she manages her life. In the domestic arts, she is helplessly incompetent. Her apartment is a filthy mess, and the one time she cooks a meal, it proves to be an inedible disaster. At work, Bridget is also incompetent whether on the job in the publicity department of a book publisher, or later, as a television journalist. Near the end of the movie, however, a potential love interest goes out of his way to help her shine on camera and grants her an exclusive, newsworthy interview.

At the outset of the movie, Bridget’s history of “romantic attachments,” understandably, has been with equally undesirable men. The list she writes in her diary consists of “alcoholics, workaholics, commitmentphobics, peeping-toms, megalomaniacs, emotional fuckwits [and] perverts.” Over the course of the movie, however, an amazing

thing happens. Bridget becomes the object of amorous interest of not one but *two* dashing handsome, articulate, financially successful men. At the climax of the movie, the two of them duke it out, literally, Old-West-style for Bridget.

Despite his assets, one of the men, Daniel Cleaver, is not a very “good” man by BIWOT standards. He is a womanizer, and during the course of his relationship with Bridget, it is revealed that he has simultaneously been seeing another woman, named Lara. She comes across as a postmodern fantasy female dreamed up by the editors of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, leggy and beautiful enough to have been a Milan fashion model but instead a highly accomplished businesswoman who jets between New York and London for her job. Daniel nevertheless comes to feel that Bridget is the only woman for him, and after Lara leaves him, he asks Bridget to take him back. But she is “looking for something more extraordinary.”

She finds it, too, in the other man, Mark Darcy, the very one who made the unflattering remarks about her smoking and drinking at the beginning of the movie. Though Bridget has reasons to doubt it initially, Mark turns out after all to be about as good as the BIWOT’s “good” man possibly *can* be. It is one year since the beginning of the film as the two of them finally enter into a romantic relationship. During the intervening time, Bridget has put herself through some efforts at self-improvement. But she ultimately has failed in the effort and is exactly the way she was at the outset. She may even be worse, because she evidently now consumes even more alcohol than ever, to the point of binge drinking. But Mark states that, despite Bridget’s flaws, he likes her just the way she is.

The sentiment, on its face, is very lovely. But considering *whom* Mark addresses when he makes his feelings known, the thinking person might feel prompted to ask: “For heaven’s sake, *why?*”

The psychological make-up of the BIWOT’s “good” man again makes no sense. He brings so much to the table, and by contrast what she brings might as well be nothing. Mark is so extraordinary that, to try to sum him up, one is tempted to quote the magic tape that measured the eponymous nanny character in *Mary Poppins*: “PRACTICALLY PERFECT IN EVERY WAY.” Indeed, as *Bridget Jones’s Diary* ends and Bridget’s new relationship with Mark begins, it comes across very much as something involving a little girl inside an adult female’s body who will henceforth be taken care of by a male nanny. For a childish woman like Bridget, perhaps, the desirability of the relationship is understandable. For a demonstrably intelligent man like Mark, it is not.

Mark’s wish to be with Bridget seems even more senseless in light of the fact that never during the course of the movie (an entire year’s in-depth examination of her life) does she express gratitude for anything. Only once, at the end of a speech she gives at work, does she even use the phrase “thank you.” Even then her words are spoken mechanically. So if past behavior is any predictor of behavior in the future, then all of Mark’s gifts to Bridget whether spiritual or material are likely to be taken for granted.

Indeed, upon examination, Mark’s bewildering interest in Bridget seems to suggest that he is not motivated by the dynamics of the human heart at all. Strangely, when viewed objectively, it almost seems that he is entering into a relationship with her be-



cause it conforms to some type of “ideal” mandated by a Marxist authority which he feels inexplicably bound to obey: *from him* there must occur a flow, according to what he can supply; *to her* must come all of what he possesses, according to whatever she needs and wants.

Alternatively, one can only assume that Mark must be some manifestation of the *traditional* male who, in the face of torturous difficulty, is willing to “take it like a man.” Instead of, say, pushing himself to the very limits of physical and psychological endurance in a dangerous job, perhaps Mark has found a new way to test his manly abilities to survive by deliberately exposing himself to the hazards of a relationship with someone selfish who will only take advantage of him. Either way, Mark, the BIWOT’s “good” man in every way, is preposterous.

The BIWOT’s “good” man in *Tadpole* (2002), a Columbia University history professor named Stanley Grubman, is beyond preposterous. He is absurd. Stanley is so “good” to the primary BIWOT character that, paradoxically, he becomes guilty of perpetrating deep, possibly irreversible, harm upon his own 15-year-old son, Oscar. No one in the movie seems to notice or care, however, because judging from the overall tone of the movie, it is after all the cherished BIWOT’s values and wishes that Stanley supports with his neglectful parenting. So Stanley’s priorities, strange as they may seem from an objective perspective, actually are proper in the social world depicted in *Tadpole*, which is situated in a largely upper middle-class, progressive Manhattan neighborhood called the Upper West Side. It may be worth noting that this is the very place that many influential movers and shakers in mainstream media call home.

Tadpole was an independently produced, low-cost feature, a genre that allows for a little more daring than movies created with multi-million-dollar budgets. But it nevertheless had enough mainstream appeal to be picked up for worldwide distribution by a mainstream company (Miramax) after its exhibition at the Sundance Film Festival. *Tadpole* proved to be both a critical and financial success.

Tadpole bills itself as a “romantic comedy,” but for the thinking person the characterization begs two nettling questions: (1) Since when is statutory rape “romantic”? and (2) Since when does deliberate post-rape manipulation and humiliation of the victim constitute “comedy” and not a cruel compounding of the victim’s emotional and psychological trauma?

Oscar, the young rape victim in *Tadpole*, has a patina of sophistication. He reads Voltaire and speaks French fluently. The adults in his life, rather stupidly, choose to interpret this as a sign that he is precocious and far more mature than his 15 years would suggest. They do not pause to wonder whether, perhaps, this charming lad is simply manifesting his own personal version of garden-variety adolescent fascination with special areas of interest. In another boy, for example, the identical propensity might manifest itself in an ability to recite detailed trivia about professional basketball. Indeed, the audience quickly discovers, Oscar is *very much* an adolescent, going through the commonplace throes of puppy love. During this transitional phase of lie, there is also often a tendency to become amorously drawn to totally inappropriate people, and Oscar manifests this teenage trait, too. He has fallen passionately in love with his stepmother, Eve. Fortunately, for the young person suffering through such infatu-

ation, the crush is typically short-lived, and, sure enough, by the end of the movie just a few days later, Oscar's extravagant feelings of attraction to the woman have evaporated.

Tadpole chronicles how, midst the crush, an unmarried BIWOT named Diane Lodder (who is Eve's best friend) exploits Oscar's vulnerability. Oscar evinces no attraction for the woman at all, but she nevertheless maneuvers him into circumstances where she can take advantage of him for her own sexual gratification.

At the beginning of the movie, Diane flirts overtly with Oscar at a Thanksgiving party hosted by his father and stepmother. Late that night when Oscar is drunk, she seduces him. At the time, Oscar is so high on alcohol that he can barely even see what is in front of his own eyes, and indeed his reason for going through with having sex with Diane is that he mistakes her for Eve. Diane, on the other hand, is completely sober and in a position of power either to proceed with the sexual encounter or to stop it before it develops beyond the initial kiss. So not only is Diane guilty of statutory rape, but she has perpetrated a peculiar form of "date rape" too.

The next morning, Oscar is aghast, embarrassed and deeply ashamed of himself. He begs Diane never to say anything about the incident to anyone. Diane's feelings, however, are very different. She appears amused by what has happened, and she exudes an aura of coy pride in her conquest. The reasons for her attitude are unclear. As gender studies professor Nick Davis puts it in his blog: "The film has trouble deciding, and ultimately elects not to, whether Oscar's precocity is really so impressive to a 40-year-old woman, or if Diane will simply sleep with anything that walks."

At any rate, Diane smiles and promises to keep Oscar's secret. But in her mind Oscar's feelings, as well as the agreement into which she has entered, count for nothing. She wastes no time in telling three of her female friends about her adventure that very afternoon over tea. Oscar walks into the restaurant while the gossiping women are at the height of their prurient enjoyment of Diane's titillating tale. Understandably, Oscar is horrified, but the women cheerfully manipulate him into joining the party, where they proceed to flirt with him. Oscar's alarm is temporarily dispelled by the unusual experience of becoming the center of so much womanly attention. He is even able to relax for a while and enjoy the party because he is naïve enough to believe that he sincerely interests the women. Actually, as any observant viewer could have told him, they are merely toying with his feelings and making ironic fun of him.

But Oscar's alarm returns full force when Diane informs him that she will be joining him and his parents for dinner that night in an elegant French restaurant. At the outset of dinner, Oscar is on tenterhooks because he fears that Diane will reveal his secret. Over the course of dinner, Diane taunts Oscar with progressively more sadistic hints that she is going to spill the beans. Eventually, she does so by assaulting him with a passionate kiss on the lips during a moment when the two of them have excused themselves from the table. Oscar struggles frantically to extricate himself from her grasp, but the incident occurs plainly in his father's sightlines. Stanley is surprised, but curiously not particularly bothered by Diane's solecistic impropriety, and he refers to it simply as "something very unusual."

Upon returning to the table, Diane remarks: "Oh, what the hell, we're all adults here."



Oscar protests: “No, actually we’re not!” Diane then proceeds to tell Eve that Oscar and she “are lovers.” Her wording suggests an ongoing affair, and it stuns Oscar. Eve is perturbed and points out that Oscar is a minor. But she does not seem to feel that any corrective action need be taken at this juncture. Stanley’s reaction is even odder than Eve’s. Oscar’s behavior appalls him more than that of his son’s rapist. Because Stanley erroneously believes that Oscar has a girlfriend his own age (on the premises at the moment, no less), he is worried about *her* feelings, because it is possible that she too has witnessed the kiss.

If Eve’s lack of indignation toward Diane is morally inexcusable, at least to some degree it is explainable. Eve is biologically unrelated to Oscar and has apparently not known him for very long. She grew up with Diane, and the two are longtime comrades in BIWOTship. So it is understandable for her to feel a stronger alliance with her predator friend than with Oscar when it comes to the handling of a prickly situation.

Stanley’s behavior is more difficult to explain. Although he is aware of such inter-generational relationships’ acceptability in other cultures and remarks in passing on one example, he ignores the reality of the present moment. His son is in deep psychic pain. Why does Stanley not get up from the table and call the police? Alternatively, if he prefers not to send his wife’s best friend to the nearest precinct station for booking, why at the very least does he not end his own friendship with her on the spot? Indeed, he does not even tell his son’s rapist to pay for her own dinner. What gives?

A possible explanation lies in the widespread popularity of one feminist theory about the historic character of the relationship between the sexes. In a nutshell, the theory states, women as a group, compared to men as a group, have been oppressed, downtrodden and forced against their will to live in a state of deprivation. Moreover, the theory goes, men as a group are entirely responsible for female suffering. “Women’s Lib,” for many “Second Wave” feminists, was largely about “payback.” Because social structures were infused with intractable anti-female malevolence, the thinking went, no “enlightened” woman should have any scruples about doing whatever she wanted and whatever it took to advance her interests. Indeed, it was her moral and political obligation to act accordingly — to become a BIWOT.

The historical record ought to have opened the theory to serious doubt in the minds of thinking people the very minute the theory began to receive widespread attention. But its exquisite simplicity had dazzling appeal. Quickly and easily, it was now possible to determine how anyone should be regarded and treated based on gender alone and not upon individual comportment. In addition, the theory had enormous emotional resonance for women who gloried in feelings of righteous indignation. It stirred them to action. For better or worse, the theory was also attractive for many men who felt both chivalrous toward women and eager to compete against other men in proving themselves “exceptions to the rule” regarding their sex. As “Second Wave” feminism faded and “Third Wave” feminism emerged, the shrillness of the rhetoric with which the theory was articulated became much less pronounced, but its basic sentiments survived unchanged. So, Stanley may simply be a male feminist, politely manifesting his support for the theory. He may be so devoted to social justice, feminist-style, that he is even willing to make a heartfelt sacrifice for the cause: his own son’s dignity as

well as his son's physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.

For Stanley, in other words, it may be that the BIWOT's capacity for wrongdoing is non-existent. Indeed, if one regards Oscar's angst from a "big picture" perspective inspired by the theory, then despite all evidence to the contrary, Oscar cannot possibly have been harmed by Diane's actions at all. Alternatively, if it has to be conceded that he *was* harmed, then, as a member of the oppressor sex, he must have deserved what he got. Therefore, it would be uncouth of Stanley to stick up for his son.

Another possible explanation for Stanley's behavior and his unwillingness to ensure that Oscar's distress receive both logistical and psychic remediation is the possibility that he fears retaliation from Diane. So much as questioning a BIWOT's behavior, much less subjecting it to critical scrutiny, carries with it the unavoidable risk of being called a misogynist. It can be very painful for a man to be accused of wanting (as a BIWOT might put it) to "turn back the clock" and force women into living barefoot, pregnant and chained to a stove.

Stanley is also vulnerable to a second defensive accusation frequently thrown in the face of men by BIWOTs when they feel they are being judged unfairly: the man *fears* a powerful woman, which means he lacks character and therefore ought to be ashamed of himself.

But in Diane, there *is* much for Stanley to fear. She has proven herself dangerously aggressive, disrespectful, cruel and untrustworthy. Being told that he should feel ashamed of his natural, organic response to her willfully atrocious conduct would likewise be painful.

Interestingly, the only thing that changes in Stanley's attitude as a result of being witness to Oscar's misadventure with Diane is his attitude toward Eve. He should "listen" to her more carefully in the future.

If the BIWOTs' "good" men in *The Princess Diaries* and *Bridget Jones's Diary* are bizarre and strange, then the "good" man in *Tadpole* is downright weird. Being exposed to abusive behavior by a BIWOT does nothing to upset Stanley but, instead, fosters within him a desire to become an even better man.

The movie ends on a happy note insofar as Oscar (for the moment) is unperturbed. Implied is that he will move forward with his life and develop healthy relationships with the opposite sex. No mention is made of the sexual assault victim's propensity to experience intermittent flashbacks that are very painful, especially if the trauma is left unaddressed. The development of post-traumatic stress disorder is not out of the question. Who knows? Oscar's wound may fester, and in defense against future hurt he may develop an impenetrable shell. Consequently, this tender-hearted boy may have been completely changed by Diane's behavior as well as by his own father's neglectful response to her criminal action. We should not be surprised if he were to grow up and become a man who qualifies for Bridget Jones's list of undesirables: "alcoholics, workaholics, commitmentphobics, peeping-toms, megalomaniacs, emotional fuckwits [and] perverts."

Ironically, in this case, Stanley's being a "good" man to a BIWOT by indulging her in the BIWOT's restless search for *fulfillment* may wind up generating unhappy experiences for other BIWOTs in the future, in their own relationships with Oscar. Time



alone will tell what happens to Oscar. Essentially, his sexual exploitation by a treacherous family friend and the neglectful response of a primary caretaker have been like a nuclear bomb detonating in the boy's life. After the initial shock, there occurs a moment of calm, at which point the movie ends. But the radiation will soon begin its inevitable outward spread and will wreak heaven-only-knows-what havoc. Presumably, audiences just are not supposed to think about that. Instead, we are supposed to exit the cinema or turn off our DVD players, chuckling gleefully at the destruction of an innocent youngster's life for the sake of indulging a BIWOT in her passing whim.

The popular acceptance of the presuppositions of the three movies discussed above as well as many other movies that express comparable values may move a thinking person to wonder how BIWOTs become so sure of their entitlement to get whatever they want out of the opposite sex. The answer is simple. They are brought up to believe in their own abiding superiority and, consequently, the presumption that the opposite sex exists for the purpose of fulfilling females' wishes. Finding a "good" male for the BIWOT, or in the alternative, converting a problematic male into a "good" male is even the subject of some children's books. In one telling example, the process of fixing the problematic male is a divinely enacted one.

Ex-cabaret singer Marianne Williamson is a "New Thought" minister and bestselling author who claims to be performing her work at the behest of no less a spiritual authority than Jesus Christ himself. Thousands flock to attend her seminars. Though Williamson is not a household name like, say, Oprah Winfrey, she has appeared as a guest, numerous times, on television shows hosted by Winfrey and other celebrities. More important, among people in positions to create television programs and content for other forms of mainstream media, Williamson is a well-known personality and has many followers who take her teachings seriously. Therefore, Williamson's influence upon our culture cannot be underestimated, whether we are examining the attitudes we see and hear about gender issues in mainstream media or we are contemplating the degree to which our own personal beliefs have been informed by those attitudes.

Williamson's perspective is revealed in a short picture book that she characterizes as "a support for parents as well as children" in "the revolution of faith." *Emma & Mommy Talk to God* was published in 1996, and in case there might be any doubt in readers' minds that the titular characters represent Williamson and her own illegitimate daughter, Emma, the two of them, featured in a photograph on the back cover of the book, look very much like the characters depicted in the book's colorful illustrations. Clearly, we are expected to regard them as role models to emulate within our own families. Moreover, the exquisitely beautiful pictures depict an idealized world, strongly suggesting that by espousing the wisdom proffered by Williamson "the revolution of faith" will transform our own world into something similarly lovely.

Other characters in the book include eight angels, of which seven are female and one is male. The disparity between the sexes is unexplained, so presumably there simply exists greater spirituality in the female sex than in the male sex, leading naturally to the existence of more female angels than male angels. Alternatively, perhaps, God has perceived wisdom in feminism-inspired affirmative action programs on earth and decided to enact an affirmative action program in heaven, too, whereby female souls are

given preferential admission over male souls.

In contrast to the 7-to-1 female/male ratio found in the heavenly realms, when it comes to depicting the earthly realm of the family, Williamson presents to “parents and children” a social unit that contains no males at all. There is not even an oblique reference to a one-time father. When Emma asks Mommy, “Where do I come from?”, Mommy tells Emma that she comes “[f]rom God.” Mommy’s complete explanation is as follows: “God loves you very much, and he loves Mommy, too, so he sent you to Mommy so we could be together.” The accompanying illustration depicts a smiling baby, floating downward through the sky.

Of course, overt explanations of what British humorist E. F. Benson referred to as “that horrid thing which Freud calls sex” have long been avoided in stories for children. But at least when a stork flew through the sky carrying a baby in popular folklore, it was typically for delivery to a mother *and* a father or to a family, not just to a woman. If we are to take Williamson on her word that this book is intended “for parents,” then the implication is that we are also to understand there is really only one type of person who qualifies to be called a parent, and she is female. Indeed, the father of Williamson’s own daughter is someone whom Williamson refuses to identify or discuss.

The parent-child relationship in *Emma & Mommy Talk to God* is reminiscent of the same type of relationship in feminist author Charlotte Perkins Gillman’s 1915 novel *Herland*. Gilman depicts a utopian society where contented women, isolated from the polluting presence of the male sex, have spontaneously developed the capacity to become pregnant and have babies through parthenogenesis. In *Emma & Mommy Talk to God*, the absence of even a fleeting reference to the existence of a father for Emma strongly suggests an approving nod in the direction of *Herland*.

The main difference between the worlds of *Herland* and *Emma & Mommy Talk to God* is that the latter does have a high regard for the male. To be sure, no place for him exists within the exemplary family structure, but according to Mommy, he is nevertheless *loved* by God. Moreover, if he is a “good” male by BIWOT standards, as those standards are expressed in Williamson’s book, this means he is *useful* to the female.

In Williamson’s world, however, not all males are “good,” and it turns out that Emma knows a little boy at school named Peter who has been “mean” to her. Mommy explains the reason: “Peter is very sad and scared.” The accompanying portrait of Peter is the sole illustration that does not depict an identifiable location. Peter gazes dolefully at the viewer and weakly clasps his hands. His torso, at an angle for no discernable reason except, perhaps, to suggest that he is off-kilter, is dressed in muted colors and the background is a somber grayish blue.

Mommy tells Emma to pray for Peter “and ask God to make him happy.” Emma obeys Mommy and achieves stunning overnight results: “The very next day, Emma dropped her sweater. Peter picked it up nicely and gave it back to her. Emma knew in her heart that God had helped Peter.” When Emma reports the incident to Mommy, she is told: “I’m proud of you, Emma. You did the right thing. You’re a wonderful little girl. I love you.” Now a “good” boy to the little BIWOT-in-training, Peter has become her servant. And for exercising her spiritual power over Peter, Emma is rewarded with Mommy’s



love.

When a girl is brought up to believe she has power over the opposite sex and not only a right to exercise it freely but to expect that doing so will make the male happy *and* accrue tangible benefits for herself, how can she possibly become anything other than a BIWOT in adulthood? The added incentive of being given love from her mother in exchange for her flowering in this way makes shoe-horning herself into the BIWOT mold all but completely irresistible.

Once a female has become a BIWOT, she is very unlikely ever to want to modify her exalted self-regard or her *modus operandi*. Moreover, because the BIWOT identity receives all but universal endorsement from society at large, stepping back from it would constitute, paradoxically, a bold act of rebellion against the status quo. The repercussions of disapproval would be severe.

As a society, we are *enamored* with the feminist theory, explained above, out of which the BIWOT identity evolved. Indeed, regardless of how silly the theory may seem upon rigorous objective scrutiny, it nevertheless contains a kernel of truth. Throughout history, there clearly *have* been potent “minuses” in the female experience of life. Focusing upon them, ignoring the corresponding “minuses” in the male experience of life, and cherry-picking historical facts in support of the notion of male oppression imparts a compelling impression of plausibility to the theory. Where empirical evidence does not exist to support any given aspect of the theory, it can easily be invented through “advocacy” research methodology that deliberately seeks to prove pre-determined conclusions. If intellectual dishonesty is involved, it hardly matters. Further buttressing researchers’ ability to support the credibility of the theory are currently fashionable fact-finding cognitive processes that are subjective, “non-linear” or “intuitive.” In *Emma & Mommy Talk to God* — a purportedly didactic book, it bears repeating — one so-called “way of knowing” is presented as perfectly acceptable for getting a grip on reality. Emma “knew in her heart” that the change in little Peter’s behavior occurred as a direct result of something *she* had done.

Whatever evidence exists to suggest that the feminist theory of male oppression might be nothing but sophistry cannot compete in the current climate of popular ideas because, frankly, hardly anybody pays any attention to the evidence. So even if the BIWOT herself has doubts about her spiritual superiority and her entitlement to get whatever she wants in life, they tend to get brushed aside by society’s overwhelming eagerness to embrace her as a magnificent breakthrough for humanity, manifesting the most socially significant form of personal identity in recorded history.

Besides, the BIWOT typically possesses a finely tuned personal sensitivity that society has become committed to protect. An acknowledgment that the BIWOT identity in some respects, perhaps, might be a tad pretentious or faddish would feel embarrassing for the BIWOT. It could even have the unpleasant consequence of forcing her dangerously close to admitting she is nothing but another one of Joan Didion’s “perpetual adolescents.”

But some observers have noticed that not all men and boys have responded very well to the now-pervasive BIWOT identity for women. One observer is Kay S. Hymowitz. In her 2011 book *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men into Boys*, she

describes males suffering significant difficulties nowadays. Despite the book's flippant subtitle, not a few of those difficulties, she acknowledges in all seriousness, are due to unfair treatment arising out of the popularization of feminism itself. So, what is to be done? Hymowitz's prescription makes no sense. Men need to "man up." As she describes what she means by the expression, they need to become the BIWOT's "good" man. But, as discussed above, thankless servitude and self-obliteration, however *useful* in a man to the BIWOT, simply do not square with human nature. In addition, any sincere attempt to fulfill the role of the BIWOT's "good" man requires self-loathing. Self-loathing can lead to catastrophe.

In an article called "The Leap," published in *New York Magazine* (May 30, 2010), reporter Jesse Green describes the suicide of 17-year-old Teddy Graubard, who had jumped from an 11th-floor window at the prestigious Dalton School on Manhattan's Upper East Side. The article asks: "How did a generally happy and inarguably brilliant eleventh-grader, who would likely have achieved honors at next week's graduation, had he lived, come to believe his world was over?"

Teddy had been caught cheating on a Latin exam, and after pondering a range of possible explanations, the article concludes: "He jumped because his foolish solution to a passing academic problem reacted with the peculiar ideational rigidity of his condition ['a mild form of Asperger's syndrome'] and, who knows, perhaps with the suicidality that is a potential side effect of most psychotropic medications."

Considering Teddy's family background, however, one cannot help but consider the possibility of at least one additional contributing factor. The article also describes Teddy's mother, Carla, an extraordinary BIWOT who characterizes herself as "very aggressive and very successful and very career-oriented." Teddy was the result of an *in vitro* fertilization and grew up without a father. For Carla, the article explains, there just was not a man good enough to be her husband. Why? Her friend and colleague, Ava Seave, explains: "You have to understand who we women are. . . . We're really efficient. We kick ass and take names. We're not nice. It's not easy for this sort of woman."

Indeed. If "this sort of woman" is going to be in relationship with a man, it will not be "easy" for him either. To meet all her needs and expectations, he had better be some sort of magical combination of Hercules and Santa Claus with a bit of the Marquis de Sade thrown in, too, so that no matter what she dishes out for him, he can "take it like a man."

No such magical combination exists, of course, and Carla's uncompromising perspective led her to "go it alone," the article explains. Sadly for Teddy, he could not live up to Carla's expectations about male flawlessness either. He was *not* Mark Darcy in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Motherhood, the article makes clear, was the ultimate source of fulfillment in Carla's mind. Teddy had tainted her dream with an act about which she would undoubtedly feel disappointment and distress.

So whether Teddy consciously intended to or not, he did what *any* "good" man of the BIWOT would do when he has proved his unworthiness. He removed himself from the scene so the BIWOT would not be troubled by him anymore. However, Teddy was very unlike the BIWOT's "good" male role model Philippe Renaldi in *The Princess Diaries*, who also needed to do the gentlemanly thing and disappear from a BIWOT's



life. Teddy did not have the wherewithal to buy his mother a building in San Francisco, where she might pursue *fulfillment* by throwing darts at paint-filled balloons instead of having to continue grappling with the unpleasant vicissitudes of her relationship with him.

But Teddy *did* fulfill a popular female fantasy with his grisly solution to his problem. Therefore, if we are to be unfailingly supportive of the BIWOT, like Stanley Grubman in *Tadpole* (and the popularity of the movie suggests that many people believe we should), then, chilling as the idea may seem when we first consider it, perhaps we should not mourn Teddy's passing at all. Instead, maybe, we should pat him on the back, metaphorically, albeit posthumously, for his thoughtfulness.

This fantasy of a man willing to die for a woman is, perhaps, most poignantly expressed in a popular Broadway show tune from *Camelot*, called "The Simple Joys of Maidenhood." Protofeminist Princess Guenevere, being forced at a young age into marriage with a man she has never met, complains about being deprived of the pleasure of male death in her personal life:

"Where's the knight pining so for me
He leaps to death in woe for me?
Oh, where are a maiden's simple joys?"

So, in a sense, Carla Graubard succeeded in her life where Princess Guinevere did not. Carla avoided marriage *and* had a wonderful young man die for her. When viewed from a larger perspective, Teddy's suicide can even be considered a praiseworthy act that indirectly benefits women in general — if not all women, then at least feminist theorists like Sally Miller Gearhart who advocate in favor of decreasing the male population. For that highly idealistic group of BIWOTs, Teddy's death might even be a *happy* event because of its being a step toward the opening up of more *Lebensraum* for women.

But "The Leap" describes Carla as feeling unhappy. Interestingly, there is evidence to suggest that more than a few BIWOTs are feeling unhappy. According to the United States General Social Survey, women's overall level of happiness declined steadily during the period 1972-2006, the very timeframe during which the BIWOT emerged into widespread prominence. In 2009, two professors at The Wharton School, Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, further documented the decline in a paper they called "The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness." But just as it is the BIWOT's prerogative to set boundless expectations for her life and the people close to her, it is also her prerogative to complain when her impossibly high standards are unmet.

Especially when an unhappy BIWOT is of the type who, like Carla Graubard, is "not nice," then any men and boys in her life of necessity are walking on eggshells. They *know*, if only unconsciously, that they are incapable of living up to the "good" male standards being presented in mainstream media.

The people who created *I Love You, Man*, a popular mainstream movie released theatrically in 2009, seem to sense that the time has come, at long last, to challenge the concept of the BIWOT's "good" man.

I Love You, Man is a sophomoric comedy, and audience members laugh (or not) in response to whatever degree they find enjoyment in this silly genre, with its contrived plot devices, over-the-top visual gags, characters' idiosyncrasies and occasional vulgarity. But, intentionally or not, the filmmakers in this instance have also incorporated biting social commentary and a political statement about gender issues. So, for viewers attentive enough to notice, lurking in the comedy's requisite happy ending lie undertones that not only raise sobering questions but suggest a strong potential for darkness in the characters' future lives.

The social world of the movie is the chic, moneyed, postmodern elite of Los Angeles. Zooley Rice is a pretty, exuberant young BIWOT and, in partnership with her two best female friends, runs a creative business. Its exact nature is never revealed, but based on the way it looks, it appears to be an interior design studio. At the beginning of the movie, Zooley has been dating a handsome, successful real estate agent named Peter Klaven for a few months, and she has also taken up residence in his spacious, beautifully furnished house.

Much later in the movie, it is revealed in passing that there were a couple of troubling issues in her past. Her father has long been absent from her life, and her last boyfriend became so repulsed by her that, by the end of their relationship, he did not even want her to touch him. Though Peter knows these things, he nevertheless has fallen in love with Zooley and proposes marriage. Immediately after accepting his proposal, Zooley quickly calls her girlfriends to announce the good news, just as if she were letting them know about the acquisition of a new handbag with which to accessorize an outfit. Her cavalier disregard for the sanctity of their relationship visibly hurts Peter as she dishes about even its most private aspects. But he remains silent. Like most chic, moneyed, postmodern, urban elite men, it does not even occur to Peter to protest. Unconsciously or not, he obediently and unquestioningly accepts his proper place in relationship with a BIWOT — under her thumb.

Treating men like dirt is a taken-for-granted prerogative among Zooley's girlfriends, and as always with BIWOTs, their primary bonds of loyalty are to one another and not to the men in their lives. One of Zooley's closest girlfriends, for example, thinks nothing of accepting a call on her cell phone from Zooley during the middle of dinner in an elegant restaurant where she has been taken on a date. Another girlfriend is married but tells Zooley without even consulting her husband that Zooley is welcome to stay with them indefinitely — for years, if Zooley likes.

Men, if they want to have relationships with BIWOTs at all, have no choice but to accept their second-tier status in the realm of emotional connectedness, and Peter does. All is fine, therefore, as he and Zooley begin to plan their nuptials. But then Peter becomes close friends with a societal iconoclast, Sydney Fife. Unencumbered by slavish conformity to the politically correct behavioral pretensions of Peter's social set, Sydney enables Peter to embrace heretofore ignored possibilities of his own individuality, and Peter becomes less concerned with people-pleasing and comfortably relaxes into a richer sense of his own self. When Peter asks Sydney to be best man at his wedding, Sydney is overjoyed.

At an engagement dinner, Peter introduces Sydney to Zooley, her fellow BIWOT girl-



friends, and other chic, moneyed, postmodern, urban elite people who are ostensibly close to Peter (but not really). In a very compelling speech, Sydney declares that Peter is “honest” and “kind” and a very *giving* man who never expects anything in return. Then, speaking directly to Zooley, Sydney says that it would behoove her to try to be giving toward Peter. Because Sydney sees right through the various social veneers of everyone in the room, however, his words are indirectly meant for the others, too.

In Sydney, Peter has not only found a pal, but an ally in the affirmation and defense of his manhood and basic human dignity. Such intimate male/male friendships used to be commonplace in our society, but, for a multitude of reasons, over the course of the past century they have become increasingly rare. Peter and Sydney do *not* relate to each other in a way that is typical of postmodern men. Far more often, at best, men occasionally enjoy friendships imbued with *some* of the affection, camaraderie and devotion that Peter and Sydney experience with each other. This is because, for all the high-minded rhetoric of the women’s movement about establishing “equality” between the sexes, the postmodern feminist woman balks (as Zooley does) at the very first hint of relinquishing any of her longstanding domination of men’s emotional lives. Sometimes, as appears to be the case with Zooley, she is too self-absorbed even to perceive how much power she wields, to the point of being utterly unaware of how badly she abuses it. Indeed, BIWOTs frequently rule in the realm of emotion with such uncompromising ferociousness (albeit in cunning, covert or superficially demure ways) that most men, like Peter until the arrival of Sydney in his life, exist in a state of complete obliviousness to their own utter powerlessness.

The Peter/Sydney friendship, then, is not so much a depiction of what exists between male friends, but the filmmakers’ wishful suggestion of what *might* exist. Indeed, the Peter/Sydney friendship has more love in it than any other relationship in the film.

But will the friendship last? It meets with trouble, and there is a temporary break between the two men. But then, at last, Zooley accepts and endorses the friendship, and the way is paved for it to thrive indefinitely. Or is it?

Tellingly, the script only permits the men to declare their love for each other — an audacious act in today’s world (and beautifully and movingly performed in the movie) — under Zooley and her girlfriends’ direct supervision. The friendship meets with their approval, and thus the film ends on an upbeat note.

But it is one matter for a woman to allow her man take to off now and then for an all-male poker game or to excuse him for a weekend of camping with a buddy or two, and quite another to tolerate an ongoing, intimate male/male relationship of such deep mutual emotional and psychological sustenance that it does not even require sex to maintain its intensity.

Women are correct when they state that there are some things about themselves to which only other women can fully relate, and the bonds of sisterhood, whether literal or figurative, are both celebrated by women and respected by men. Conversely, however, there are some things about men to which only other men can fully relate. But can 21st century men become as deeply bonded with one another as did so many of our male ancestors during, say, the 19th century? Many women give lip service to the idea that the answer is “yes,” but only a tiny minority of them will actually endorse it

with any sincerity. Among men themselves, it tends to be a subject that they would rather not even think about. It can be very scary for a man if he discovers and then begins to act upon his potential to establish a loving bond with another member of his own sex. Far more disturbing than the potential to raise neighbors' eyebrows with questions about sexual orientation is what men understand if only in an inchoate way about the catastrophic consequences they may suffer with their girlfriends and wives if a male/male friendship becomes too close for women's comfort. In all likelihood, the relationship will be punished with excoriating ridicule, belittling, scoffing, name-calling ("overgrown little boys"), and possibly outright ostracism for "failing to cherish the women in your lives." In the case of Peter and Sydney, their love for each other is well-established, and it is a thing of amazing beauty and delight. Also, it has Zooey's endorsement — for now.

But it bears repeating that she is a BIWOT. For her, then, female "empowerment," by definition, inextricably intertwines itself with the misandrist disempowerment of men. Therefore, it would be out of character for Zooey's endorsement to be anything more than a passing flight of fancy. Like most of the people watching the movie, she has never seen anything quite like this friendship before, and it can be a lot of fun to see the two men together. But once the friendship's novelty diminishes and it ceases to be so amusing for Zooey, her original endorsement of it, even if deeply sincere in the moment, is highly subject to revision.

The waxing and waning of fashionable attitudes is a pronounced aspect of feminism's history, and it may well be only a matter of time before Zooey changes her mind and sets about, slowly but surely, to destroy the Peter/Sydney relationship. In her mind, if only unconsciously, Peter will belong back in the position where familiar comfort once lay for both of them: under her thumb. If she follows this tack and fails, however, then she will probably abandon the marriage for some other lifestyle option that does not undermine her position of supremacy in the realm of emotion. The acquisition of and devotion to pets is one favorite alternative for many such women. If Zooey succeeds in destroying the friendship, she may abandon the marriage anyway, because by capitulating to her wish and dumping Sydney, her husband will now have proven how "weak" he is and thereby cease to deserve her respect.

Maybe the filmmakers see in Zooey someone much deeper and less narcissistic than the average BIWOT or someone with potential to move beyond the feminist ideological mindset. Maybe her marriage will not turn sour after all and she and Peter will continue to find happiness together. If so, then it would be delightful to see a sequel that tells this story and depicts Zooey growing personally as much as Peter has grown in the first installment. But if she does not grow, then if a follow-up sequel is ever created about the characters, basing its story in reality will very likely yield a title something along the lines of *I Love You, Man — Part 2: Zooey Throws A Tantrum And Files For Divorce*.

In *I Love You, Man*, a man's emergence into a more complete sense of himself has nothing to do with devoting himself to the fulfillment of women's or girls' wishes and being a "good" man. Moreover, it occurs through means totally contrary to any notion that he can be transformed into something he is not or be fixed via some process along



the lines of what is prescribed in *Emma & Mommy Talk to God* and controlled by the opposite sex. A man's change for the better will now occur in the company and loving support of another man.

Time will tell whether comparable uplifting depictions of male bonding will become more common in mainstream media during the years ahead. If they do, then whatever impact those representations have upon our collective consciousness (our self-perception as well as the ways in which we relate to one another) should be very interesting indeed.

Dedication

For the lovingkindness and inspiration with which they bless my life, this article is dedicated with gratitude and affection to my friends Stephen, Jim, Andrew and Bobby. — P.A.

About the Author

Peter Allemano was born in San Salvador and lives in New York, where he works full-time as a legal secretary and intermittently as a model. He writes a regular column of humor for *Transitions*, the newsletter of the National Coalition For Men. He is a founding member of the National Coalition For Men's Greater New York Chapter (✉ peter.allemano@yahoo.com).

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Moral Panic

Male Studies and the Spectre of Denial

ROBERT A. KENEDY



The absence of male studies programs in Canada is both a result of and clear evidence that political correctness along with moral panic and gender feminism or third wave feminism have a grip on academe, creating an adversarial schism. Over the last three decades, this has marginalized a more inclusive, multi-perspective “male studies” discipline to the periphery of academe. It has resulted in mainly feminist and pro-feminist men’s studies programs and research that focus on men as primarily being violent victimizers, as well as secondary and disengaged parents. Male studies programs and a journal are necessary to reveal the “lived male experience.”



In late 1989, I began to research men’s movements, ranging from pro-feminist to mythopoetic, father’s rights and men’s rights paradigms. At the time there were no men’s studies or male studies programs in Canada. It was with a graduate student’s aspiring enthusiasm, ignorance, and faulty arrogance that I approached the topic of men with an open mind and commitment to the concept of masculinity and the various disciplines’ representations of ‘maleness’. In the United States and elsewhere, most

men's studies programs were often associated with feminist or pro-feminist perspectives and had an otherwise narrow approach to men's experiences. An inclusive study of the male experience seemed to be missing and a course on the topic would provide an opportunity for it to be found.

My research on fathers and teaching a course about men's movements allowed me to consider varied approaches beyond pro-feminist perspectives on masculinity. Male studies could arguably offer broader perspectives to enhance the understanding of men's experiences from beyond a biological model to include historical, sociological, psychological, and interdisciplinary cultural viewpoints.

A perspective based on "male lived experience" has been a major consideration of my research on separated and divorced fathers (Kenedy, 2004; 2006). I observed that these fathers had a particular "situational identity" developed through their specific lived experiences of often being non-custodial fathers. This gave them a particular view of non-custodial fatherhood, which arguably could only be gained through this unique experience. The identity was an ironic social disposition of 'maleness' in relation to parental roles. In that situation, men experience the role of father as a secondary parent, usually being told they are not capable of parenting in light of feminist and pro-feminist ideological perspectives.

There is a continued absence of male studies programs in Canada (Farr, 2010; Cribb, 2010). I suggest this is the result of a moral panic (Fekete, 1995) and what Sommers (1995) refers to as gender feminism. The intersection of gender feminism and a moral panic has had a detrimental effect on academe, actively promoting an adversarial schism in the legitimate and valid dialogue on maleness. Over the last three decades, this has marginalized what could be seen as more inclusive multi-perspective "male studies" to the periphery of academe which has resulted in mainly feminist and pro-feminist interpretations of masculinity, men's studies programs and research, primarily focused on men as being violent and victimizing, as well as secondary and disengaged parents. I will present a working conception of male studies in view of my experience of teaching and research on men. Contextualizing male studies as the study of men's experience compared to men's studies as the study of pro-feminist masculinity, I outline the seminal opportunity to launch a male studies program and an accompanying journal.

Teaching a Men's Movements Course in the 1990s

In 1990 it was time to create, launch, and teach my first course as a graduate student at York University entitled *Men's Movements: Re-examining Masculinity*, which considered masculinity from varying "male lived experiences." The course, as taught between 1991 and 1997, was designed as a first year seminar with a maximum of 20 students. My approach to studying men and masculinity was to look at it from the point of view of all men's movements, in terms of activism and policies, while at the same time working to develop new perspectives on men and masculinity. The purpose of the course was to critically examine the strengths, challenges, and inadequacies of each movement's perspectives and policies on masculinity. Usually, there were more



women than men enrolled in the course, with ages ranging from 19 to students in their mid-40s. Each year I began by asking the students why they were taking the course. The women noted they were most interested in learning more about the men in their lives, specifically mentioning intimates, male friends, and their fathers. The young men were not often as clear about why they decided to enrol, whereas the mature male students wanted to learn more about masculinity in terms of their father's influence, violence, masculine culture and sports, or just understand their emotions and masculine roles.

Based on levels of participation, engagement with the material through assignments, and other criteria, it was clear that the women and mature males seemed to benefit from the seminar discussions. Young men, toward the later instruction period, began to think about their masculinity, question issues related to violence and sports, as well as issues concerning their fathers (especially when absent due to divorce). Most surprising was the tendency of women and the mature males to consistently question gender issues, masculinity, and patriarchy, especially when pro-feminist issues were being discussed. The young men in the course were usually quiet and disengaged. Even when guest speakers active in the mythopoetic, pro-feminist, fathers' rights, and men's rights movements presented their positions on various issues related to masculinity, it was the women and mature male students who asked the activists questions and wanted to know more.

Throughout the years of teaching the course, interest developed amongst graduate students studying issues related to masculinity who often asked to sit in on the course and learn about the course materials. Faculty and graduate students within and from outside the university contacted me about the course. It was apparent that the humanities and social science students were interested in approaching masculinity from multiple perspectives. Most students, researchers, and faculty commented on the importance of studying both men and women and how little research there was on men and masculinity.

I quickly realized that a perspective that encompasses the essential aspects of the male experience was missing. All men's movements and their accompanying perspectives could be used as springboards for accounting for the male experience, but they did have clear limitations. A male studies approach that examines maleness and masculinity from varied theoretical and methodological perspectives was necessary. This would include developing a male perspective or viewpoint that includes and goes beyond feminist and pro-feminist perspectives in order to create a more varied understanding of being male and notions of masculinity. As Urschel (1999) points out, male studies courses are designed to develop the perspectives and voices of men.

It has been over 16 years since Fekete (1995) and Sommers (1995) began to scrutinize the rise of political correctness in the 1980s and how academe has become a less open and more censored environment spurring on what Fekete (1995) refers to as a "moral panic." Political correctness has also encouraged "gender feminists" or what I refer to as "third wave feminists" to marginalize and often accuse those involved with male studies of being anti-feminist, misogynists, or anti-female. Studying men, boys, fathers, and general aspects of masculinity has been relegated to the periphery of acad-

eme and is taken up only if study favours the feminist or pro-feminist perspective for explaining maleness. The result has been a silencing of both men and boys who do not conform to the will of gender feminists.

Male studies is essential and should include a range of perspectives on boyhood and childhood, gender relations, heterosexual and gay men, men and racism, as well as the realization in society of maleness and femaleness. These areas can be navigated using multiple frameworks that permit the understanding of the male experience. The expression of maleness needs to transcend the feminist and pro-feminist polemicist approach in order to develop a specific male perspective. Most important, it is necessary to identify the "male experience" with studies centred on stereotyped male roles: boys in their life course through high school and post-secondary education, misandry, fathers, social justice, violence, tolerance, and gay and certain race-related male stereotypes. Such studies will clarify the range of perspectives on these issues.

Little has changed in terms of men's or male's studies since the 1990s. In Canada, there are few courses explicitly about men being taught at universities that consider men and masculinity from multiple perspectives of "male lived experience". Most, if not all, men's studies programs in the United States and internationally focus on a feminist or pro-feminist theoretical and methodological framework that often distorts other perspectives.

TOWARDS A MALE STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

Sommers (1995) notes that gender feminists have "divisive view[s] . . . and believe we are in a gender war" (p.16). She is careful, as I also want to be, to not include what she calls "equality feminists" and what I refer to as "second wave feminists," but only those who have an ideological agenda prone to using divisive tactics and not bridging the gender divide through encouraging male studies and/or gender studies using a variety of frameworks. To contextualize the problem, it is important to consider the waves of feminism and the problematic third wave. I will first provide a brief synopsis of the various feminist waves and their accompanying perspectives.

The first wave of feminism evolved over centuries. This wave strived for basic equality in terms of women being recognized as "persons," having voting rights, property rights, and related recognition. Suffragettes of the 19th and 20th century challenged the status quo. The second wave pushed again for more complete equality in the 1960s. This wave consisted mainly of liberal feminists concerned with the civil and equal rights movements in the United States and elsewhere. Their main causes were employment equity, equal and balanced responsibilities in the family, and issues related to the rights of women. The second wave saw men as partners and invited them to take on more equal roles at work and in the home, in childcare, and in other issues such as confronting spousal abuse. Balance and equality between men and women were their main goals.

An outcrop of the second wave was radical Marxist-socialist feminism. This ideology took hold and began co-opting the entire feminist movement in the late 1970s (connected to the NOW 12th Annual Convention in 1978), morphing into the third wave of feminism. Fekete (1995) notes that bio-feminism "has much to answer for, for hijacking



the discourse of women's liberation" (p. 14). The mix of political correctness and moral panic associated with "biofeminism," as well as gender feminism, created a "perfect storm" that relegated areas such as male studies to the periphery of academe.

Aspects of post-modernism nurtured a climate where interpretation and multiple realities became the foundation of third-wave feminism. Post-modernism has ignored the necessary challenging of the negative view of male inadequacy and exposing the effects of third-wave feminism on men. It "rejects totalities, universal values, grand historical narratives, solid foundations to human existence and the possibility of objective knowledge" (Harrington, 2005, p. 326). This led to a shift on the political left from looking at the focus on production and property to a focus on identity. Feminism in relation to post-modernism is based on relativity in terms of "the view that any one person's point of view is as good as another's, or anything goes" (Harrington, 2005, p. 327). Fekete (1995) sees post-modernism as being connected to the "sexual politics of storytelling" (p. 11-12).

Third-wave feminism is clearly post-modern in terms of focusing more on ideologically-based social constructionism. The third wave seems to move away from facts to what appears to be interpretation. Fekete (1995) notes that "everyone wants to tell a story." His book is "at odds with the sexual politics of storytelling" (pp. 11-12). I would argue that third-wave feminism has moved away from gaining equality and overall equity issues that were the goal of first-wave feminist suffragettes and second-wave feminists influenced by the civil rights movement.

It is this third wave of feminism that dominates academe and has had a detrimental effect on establishing male studies programs. While the third wave supports men's studies, it blocks any potential for mounting male studies courses and opposes the possibility of creating male studies. The third wave is mainly interested in supporting pro-feminist curriculum and related research. In short, pro-feminists study males from a feminist perspective that does not account for the lived "male experience," thus offering a limited perspective on masculinity.

TEACHING MALE STUDIES

There are various approaches to men's studies ranging from pro-feminist and mythopoetic, to men's rights and father's rights. August's (1982) experience of teaching men's issues is close to my own, while I find Hearn's (1989) perspective restricted to a pro-feminist view. Most of the literature pertaining to men's studies seems to be more exclusive and limited to an anti-male, politically correct, morally panicked perspective. While there have been various proposals for male studies programs that outline overall structures and potential courses (Tomasson, 1972), these programs still do not exist at North American universities.

Hearn (1989) found the term "men's studies" to be "unacceptable for several reasons: it appears to be politically neutral; it may lend itself to incorporation and take-over by men, with no pro-feminist commitment" (p. 671). Hearn reviews various primarily pro-feminist men's texts that take a viewpoint that begins and ends with focusing "on the effects of male power on women and young people" and "men as oppressor" (p.

686). Male studies can include a pro-feminist perspective, but there needs to be a more multidimensional and inclusive view of masculinity and being male.

August (1982) moves beyond a feminist analysis of masculinity, through sharing his experiences with teaching male studies and sees the discipline as necessary in order to “extend and re-evaluate our knowledge of men and men’s lives” (August, 1982, p. 584). He points out that though “there were major areas in which men are legally and socially discriminated against [this] was usually greeted [by those in the women’s movement] with incredulity or hostility” (p. 586). The women’s movement is considered by August to be unwilling to do away with stereotyped gender roles of “men-as-oppressors and women-as-victims.” August notes that Herb Goldberg criticized the feminist approach as deconstructive, failing to recognize “how both sexes perpetuated restrictive gender roles and how both could correct the situation” (ibid.). August also notes that in the past he was sympathetic to the feminist cause but realized that feminists “use literature as an instrument to induce male guilt and to rally female anger” (p. 587).

The literature indicates that approaches to studying men vary from pro-feminist and feminist perspectives to more male-centred viewpoints. However, I would argue that male studies should include courses and a journal that considers all men and varying aspects of being male. More specifically, a curriculum that examines maleness using an interdisciplinary and inclusive approach is absent from academe. Concurrently, a specific journal that encourages ideas and research about the area of maleness is also necessary. There needs to be the inclusion of multiple perspectives that work toward explaining maleness, masculinities, and gender in order to work toward a new and more detailed understanding of the male experience. A more reflective view of maleness needs to be developed along with a male studies curriculum which goes beyond the pro-feminist notions of men’s studies is necessary. There needs to be a continuous critique of maleness and notions of masculinity that are theoretically and empirically grounded. A curriculum encompassing male studies has to be able to be open enough to include various disciplines and go beyond ideological constructs of masculinity through comprehensive research and ideas about males.

A comprehensive male studies program examining males and masculinity needs to be broad enough to examine male health, being male in contemporary society, conceptions of masculinity, violence and males, male suicide, a critical analysis of being male in literature and research, men and work, boyhood, and fathering. Male sexuality and sexual orientation have to be considered in terms of gay men’s lives and sexuality as well as gay fatherhood. A multidisciplinary approach to male studies should include courses such as the psychology of men, sociology of men, religious studies and men, the history of masculinity, masculinity and popular culture, as well as other topics related to male studies and masculinity. Finally, courses related to policy and activism such as masculinity and men’s social movements, fatherhood and parenting, male health, and other issues are needed. Overall, there should be the development of theoretical frameworks that conceptualize male studies as well as related methodologies to study males, masculinity, and gender issues. This should be considered in the context of both research related to a journal and the pedagogical aspects of curriculum.



These interrelated elements have to be developed as the core of male studies. Overall, there needs to be room to develop a better understanding of maleness that considers the problems with ideological constructions of masculinity and explores other possibilities of maleness.

SUMMARY

The opposition to male studies initially comes from areas of feminist and pro-feminist men's studies programs that arose in light of the ideology of political correctness, moral panic, and gender feminism. A "perfect storm" has limited the possibility of moving beyond a pro-feminist view of men as being violent, secondary fathers, and exclusively connected to patriarchy, and has resulted in the stagnation of male studies in terms of curriculum and research. It negates the possibility of developing a more comprehensive view of maleness that transcends the limits of a restrictive pro-feminist analysis. I would argue that political correctness has shut down our capacity to think critically about the male experience and develop a more comprehensive approach to studying males and facilitating more research on the topic.

CONCLUSION

Recent accounts in the media have pointed to the absence of male studies programs in Canada and the limited number of such courses in the United States (Farr 2010; Cribb, 2010). While programs exist in the UK and elsewhere, there is often a pro-feminist slant in them that usually does not leave room for other perspectives on maleness.

It is very clear that a journal for male studies is necessary to complement male studies programs. *New Male Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* is committed to being theoretically inclusive and challenging notions of political correctness and its accompanying moral panic. This journal represents a challenge to existing perspectives on maleness and seeks to broaden the literature, research, and theory on the topic. The position statement of the journal notes:

Discussion of gender in the last half century has often been *characterised by a polarisation of the sexes; making it very difficult* to engage with issues of vital importance to healthy interpersonal and social relationships. Gender ideology—and reactions against it—all too often have not only curtailed possibilities of reasoned dialogue, but have sidelined crucial informative evidence and silenced individuals with unpopular views.

NMS recognises the need to pursue a different approach to understanding gender issues and the contemporary experience and roles of males in society; an approach that is:

- open to constructive academic dialogue guided by available evidence of a range

of different academic disciplines, consideration of both men's and women's particular cultural experience and circumstances, and the indispensable contribution both sexes make to the quality and viability of family and community life;

- guided by principles of equity, intellectual integrity, and a view of human experience, society, and ethics that is inseparable from biological, psychological, cultural, economic realities <http://newmalestudies.com/OJS/index.php/nms/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope>

It is clear that this journal seeks to present a balanced view of maleness, challenging gender ideology and providing a viable alternative to it. Having complementary goals of creating a male studies program and journal may open the possibility of more expansive views of being maleness and understanding the "males experience" in order to develop an inclusive view in the area of male studies.

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But Are the Kids Really All Right?

Egalitarian Rhetoric, Legal Theory and Fathers

KATHERINE K. YOUNG AND PAUL NATHANSON



*The underlying but disguised premise of a widely acclaimed recent movie, *The Kids Are All Right*, is that children do not need fathers. Because fatherhood is the only remaining source of masculine identity, however, this premise damages not only children (especially boys) and men but also, by implication, society as a whole.*

*The Kids Are All Right*¹ is a deceptive title for the popular movie that has so effectively promoted gay marriage. A longer but more descriptive title would have been “The Kids Are All Right with Two Moms but No Dad.” The story revolves around Jules and Nic, the genetic mothers of Laser and Joni. Jules is a somewhat flighty woman in search of a “meaningful” career, Nic an ambitious and somewhat prissy professional. Paul, the sperm donor, has long been out of the picture. One day, though, the children decide to find him. Not only do Laser and Joni find him, they begin to like him. Paul is an unpretentious co-op farmer. With the spontaneous, honest and non-conforming

ways of an aging hippie, he becomes a vaguely exotic figure for the children of an upper-middle-class suburb. They hesitate to tell their mothers about him. When the women meet Paul, sparks fly. Jules finds him attractive and has an affair with him. Nic dislikes him. For one thing, she considers Paul not quite respectable and therefore not a good influence on the children. More important, though, she worries about losing control over her Jules and the children. Nic finds out about the affair, of course, and Jules feels guilty. She tells Paul to get lost. After a long talk about their feelings, Nic promises to be less manipulative. Now that the intruder and his influence are gone, the two women restore order. As for the children, they seem uninterested in maintaining relations with their father.

This movie features not only A-list actors—Julianne Moore and Annette Bening—but also high production values. It is in addition, nonetheless, overt propaganda for gay marriage. It presents a family with two mothers as if it were no different, certainly not in any significant way, from a family with one mother and one father, two fathers or any other domestic arrangement. In fact, it presents Jules as the stereotypical wife and Nic as the stereotypical father (or father figure). Viewers could never imagine that children might actually need fathers on an enduring basis in daily life (as distinct from genetic information about sperm donors). In other words, the movie confirms what has long been conventional wisdom in our society: that fatherhood means little or nothing.

Consider the dominant image of fatherhood not only in popular culture but also in elite culture—which is to say, that of academics in the humanities and social sciences, social service agencies, government bureaucrats, politicians, lawyers and even journalists. It is deeply hostile to fathers.² Many academics, in particular, have tried to “deconstruct” fathers, whether “patriarchal” ones or not. Prevalent notions about fathers, both popular and academic, suggest that they are not necessities at all but either luxuries at best (as assistant mothers or walking wallets) or liabilities at worst (as potential molesters).

During the 1980s and 1990s, some feminists began to promote reproductive autonomy—complete control over reproduction—for women.³ They tried to deconstruct the legal definition of fatherhood by exposing its fictitious or contradictory features. But their strategy entered a new phase with the rise of single motherhood by choice and, later, the emergence of controversy over gay marriage. Both movements had political implications, and it became “politically incorrect” to challenge either. To oppose the former was to endorse misogyny, they argued, and to oppose the latter was to endorse “homophobia.” In other words, they tried to silence any opposition. We suggest that the trivialization of fatherhood, let alone its demonization, harms not only men (both straight and gay) but also children and women (or at least straight women). Ultimately, therefore, it will harm society itself.

We begin this essay by commenting on (1) the academic background of current controversies over the family. Next, we discuss two feminist approaches to parenthood in the context of debates over gay marriage: (2) an ostensibly egalitarian one that relies on *de-gendering* and (3) an ostensibly egalitarian one that relies on *re-gendering* (for women). We continue by discussing (4) the need of children for fathers; (5) some legal





measures that could support fathers; (6) the need of men for fatherhood; and (7) the need of democratic societies for equality.

BACKGROUND

Political and academic battles over marriage and the family have raged in the West for over a century. Feminists have traditional notions of women, especially of their functions within and beyond the family. Evolutionists, nationalists and religious traditionalists have reminded us that the purpose of parenthood is survival. Evolutionists have focused on the “selfish” genes of individuals, nationalists on the demographic requirements of states, and religious traditionalists on the needs of families within communities. Recently, though, the debate has shifted dramatically under the impact not only of extreme individualism (a perversion of liberalism) but also that of collectivist movements such as feminism and its gay offshoot. The latter have fixated on “gender” in the same way that Marxism did on “class” and National Socialism on “race”—that is, as the central problem to be solved on our way to some utopian order.

Complicating the debate has been the simultaneous rise of postmodernism, which directly or indirectly provides academic legitimation for ideological forms⁴ of both the feminist and gay movements. Postmodernism emerged out of the “Frankfurt School” of neo-Marxism. Advocates deny the possibility of knowing objective truth (which departs from Marxism), adding that what passes for objective truth is always biased in one way or another and therefore subject to “deconstruction” (which continues the neo-Marxist “hermeneutics of suspicion”). Postmodernists use deconstruction directly to attack opponents (who include those who foster just about everything “traditional”). Because postmodernists attack all claims to objective knowledge, including those of science, moreover, one result of this fashion has been to re-create a form of Cartesian dualism. One side is the material, or natural, order. Though no longer evil or inferior, it is unknowable and therefore politically irrelevant. Opposing it is the mental, or cultural, order; people impose that on nature, say postmodernists, to serve their own political and economic interests.

To protect themselves, however, postmodernists refrain from following their own logic to its logical conclusion by deconstructing their favorite political ideologies (let alone their own epistemological theories). And this opportunistic inconsistency creates two more serious problems. First, if objective truth about the natural order were unknowable and irrelevant, then anyone could reduce all debates to mere relativistic “discourses” about “social constructions.” But they do not do that. They resort to expediency, not relativism, arguing that some “social constructions” truly are preferable to others. Second, if all “social constructions” were equally arbitrary, then anyone could refuse to acknowledge any historical or cross-cultural patterns.⁵ But they do not do that, either. They resort to expediency, once again, by referring repeatedly to the “bourgeois,” “colonial” or “patriarchal” patterns.

As for feminism, that has taken two major forms over the last fifty years. Many feminists since the 1960s (at least in the United States and Canada) have embraced egalitarianism and thus absorbed the Civil Rights model of political activism. For them,

“equality” has meant sameness. Men and women have slightly different bodies but are, for all intents and purposes aside from reproduction, alike and therefore interchangeable in a society that removes the artificial barriers of gender. Other feminists since the 1990s have embraced an ideological worldview and thus absorbed the Black Power model of political activism (but also that of some feminists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). For them, hierarchy has replaced equality. Men and women are not only different but also unequal; from this point of view, women are superior to men. Clearly, these feminists have fostered a form of dualism: “us” versus “them,” which in this case means female versus male. Under the protective guise of postmodernism, both egalitarian and ideological feminists have felt free to deconstruct marriage, fatherhood, gender and even sexual dimorphism without taking seriously any critiques—all of which are presumably biased in favor of men and therefore contaminated from the outset.

DE-GENDERING PARENTHOOD

All egalitarian feminists, by definition, promote the equality of men and women. Some of them believe that this ideal can accommodate the few innate differences between men and women, if society can value the distinctive features of both sexes and thus place them in a context of complementarity. But many egalitarian feminists believe that equality implies the sameness of men and women. They use the discredited notion of “separate but equal” races to illustrate their point about “separate but equal” sexes. Just as segregation was inherently wrong because of its origin in white racism, gender is inherently wrong because of its origin in male sexism. And yet the obvious fact is that men and women—certainly as fathers and mothers—are *not* quite the same. To solve that problem, these egalitarian feminists rely on two supporting ideas.

One idea that supports egalitarian feminism refers to *culture* (masculinity and femininity). Yes, a few *gender* differences remain after decades of de-gendering. But these are mere “social constructions” and should therefore have no legal credibility. In fact, some egalitarian feminists argue that “gender equality” per se would be an oxymoron, public rhetoric aside, because all gender differences correlate with inequality and discrimination (against women, from their point of view, not against men). To achieve true equality, in short, would mean abolishing gender itself, *including* the notion of gender equality. It would mean *completing* the process of de-gendering, which began long ago, by eliminating every vestige of this cultural system and therefore eliminating every distinction not only between men and women in general (although American feminists have generally refrained from demanding the elimination of a law that requires young men but not young women to register for the draft)⁶ but also between husbands and wives or fathers and mothers in particular. The other idea that supports egalitarian feminism refers to *nature* (maleness and femaleness). Yes, a few *sex* differences will always exist. But these are vestigial and should therefore have no legal status.

Those who adopt this version of egalitarian feminism (or its offshoot, the movement for gay marriage) oppose legal distinctions between fathers and mothers. They believe



that anyone who chooses to be a parent—that is, anyone who is capable of loving and caring for children—is an effective one. After all, according to conventional wisdom, “love” is the main or even the only thing that children need from parents (partly, but not only, because children can rely on the state if necessary to look after their material or physical needs). Inherent in the logic that equates equality and sameness is the notion that fathers and mothers are *interchangeable*. And from this, it follows that no type of family is inherently better than any other. There is no such thing as an ideal family, therefore, only a wide range of “alternative families.” A good family can form around a straight couple, a gay couple, a single parent, a group of parents, and so on.

Equality is surely a noble ideal, one that supports the most fundamental premise of democracy. Whether it actually serves the needs of real children when applied to parenthood in particular, though, is another matter.

With all this in mind, consider the perspective of one expert on feminist legal theory and family law. Linda McClain relies on egalitarianism—that is, egalitarian feminism—to legitimate her approach to parenting. “By proposing a focus upon fostering equality,” she writes, “I invite attention to two dimensions of equality—equality within families and equality among families.”⁷ We suggest that equality is for her the means to an end, not the end itself. In other words, we suggest that her ultimate end is to establish the primacy of *personal autonomy* (especially for women) within the legal context of equal persons.

McClain argues that only “inclusive marriage,” which includes both straight and gay unions (although she says nothing about polygamous ones), expresses true equality by acknowledging the importance of neither gender distinctions nor sexual differences. Historic definitions of marriage, by contrast, have always directly or indirectly expressed the inequality that both gender distinctions and sexual differences assume. “Marriage was a hierarchical relationship,” she writes, “in which women lacked capacity because their legal personhood, under the doctrine of coverture, was suspended. Consider this puzzle about the civic role of families: even as married women were denied personal self-government within marriage and equal citizenship within the polity, they were thought to meet their civic obligations—and to foster civic virtue—by serving their husbands and children.”⁸ Her main point is that marriage, like almost everything else, has changed a great deal over the centuries. The idea of love and the insistence on voluntary marriage, she points out as examples of cultural evolution, go back to the Enlightenment.⁹

To put all this in slightly different terms, McClain comes close to ignoring sexual (innate) differences as factors in parenthood by conflating them with gender (cultural) differences. “[I]n light of family law’s move to gender neutrality in assigning rights and duties within marriage,” she asks, “is the gendered definition of marriage justifiable as reflecting ‘real’ or ‘inherent’ differences between the sexes? Can the state offer an ‘exceedingly persuasive justification’ for defining marriage by using a sex-based classification? Or are sex-based rules anachronistic or not sufficiently substantial to justify different treatment in marriage?”¹⁰ These questions are clearly rhetorical.

McClain refers to legal reforms that gave women the right to vote (which meant that a man was no longer the “political representative of the household”) and more recent

ones that gave women reproductive autonomy (notably by permitting abortion). With legal theory in mind, she cites “contemporary understandings of the constitutional liberty of spouses to engage in non-procreative sexual intimacy and of a wife’s right to make decisions about pregnancy without notice to or the consent of her husband.”¹¹ Moreover, the Supreme “Court has noted the role that sex-based classifications have played in denying women equal opportunity, perpetuating inferiority, and reinforcing stereotypes.”¹² Because the differences between men and women are negligible, in short, there is no need to restrict marriage to man and woman, fatherhood to men or motherhood to women. Even though McClain acknowledges a need for *two* parents, who can cope more effectively than single parents with the economic and practical hardships of daily life, she believes that *any* two parents will do—including two mothers or two fathers. From this, it follows that one of the two women in each couple can be an adequate father (or at least father-figure) and one of the two men an adequate mother (or at least mother-figure). McClain does take equality (in the sense of sameness) to its logical conclusion and thus serves the needs of adults. But does she serve those of children, too?

RE-GENDERING PARENTHOOD

On the surface, nothing could be clearer than the distinction between de-gendering and re-gendering. The former refers to *eliminating* gender as a cultural system, the latter to *revising* it. This means that re-gendering is incompatible with a conservative approach, which would involve *restoring* an earlier gender system. If the earlier gender system was so good, after all, why revise it? Why not start all over again from scratch? Re-gendering is nonetheless incompatible also with egalitarian feminism, which sees gender itself as inherently oppressive for women since it uses culture to elaborate on natural differences between the sexes. Gender relies on culture to elaborate on natural differences between the sexes and thus, according to feminists, to institutionalize a hierarchy in which men dominate women. From the perspective of egalitarian feminism, gender in any form is the ultimate problem. And yet some feminists use the *rhetoric* of equality to undermine the possibility of equality. They do so in ways that would allow women to dominate men, of course, not the reverse. Despite ostensible reliance on the notion of equality, therefore, some feminists truly rely on the notion of hierarchy. Far from being egalitarian feminists, in short, they are what we call *ideological* feminists.

With this in mind, consider the work of Susan Appleton.¹³ She wants to change the legal redefinition of parenthood in order to support gay parents (and therefore to promote gay marriage). But her proposal¹⁴ amounts to support primarily for *gay female* parents. Instead of calling for governments to overturn legal theories, however, she calls merely for a reinterpretation of one: the presumption of paternity. Relying on precedent makes her conservative, legally, but in the interest of what amounts to social revolution.

It is not always easy to establish paternity, so most societies have used culture to define it for practical purposes. Our society presumed, by law, that the man who lived



with a woman was the father of her children. He usually was the genetic father, but not always. The courts did not worry about that distinction, though, because they had to ensure that someone provided resources for the children. But many feminists have challenged all that. They argue that the law has always defined fatherhood in “social” terms, not genetic ones; it is nothing more than a widespread “social construction.” They draw the conclusion that fathers are unnecessary; anyone, after all, could perform the jobs that society has assigned to fathers. But this is a non sequitur. If fathers are unnecessary, after all, why have most societies found it necessary to “construct” fatherhood?

The presumption of paternity is a legal fiction, Appleton argues, because the man who lives with a woman might or might not be the genetic father of her children; the law does not presume, she adds, that a woman living with a man is the mother of his children¹⁵ (although even that would be a legal fiction, we suggest, because she might or might not be the genetic mother). Remember that any legal presumption is always of crucial importance, because it assigns the *burden of proof* to one side. If the genetic father has a presumptive right to joint custody, for instance, then he does not need to prove himself fit for custody. On the contrary, his adversary must try to prove that he is unfit.

One of Appleton’s explicit goals is a default mechanism that would confer parental rights automatically on both parties of gay couples. The new presumption of parenthood, extended from fatherhood, would then include a father’s male partner or even mother’s female partner as the legal “father.” You could say that she uses a conservative means (extending an established legal principle) in order to attain a radical end (supporting gay couples). Ironically, she does so in the name of equality, making gay parents equal to straight ones.

The advent of genetic testing for paternity, even more than the older presumption of paternity, threatens Appleton’s position. This is because her other explicit goal is to avoid a genetic definition of parenthood, one that currently allows genetic fathers to claim parental rights. She does so not only by extending the legal presumption of paternity, however, but also by replacing the genetic definition of parenthood with several functional ones: gestational mother, social mother, social father and so on. Moreover, she replaces the presumption of paternity with a rule that would allow “no space for rebuttal by genetic evidence.”¹⁶ DNA testing would not help gay people, she argues, because female couples must rely on the sperm of outsiders and male couples on both the eggs and gestational services of outsiders.

According to Appleton, the legal definition of mother “persistently has emphasized biological ties.”¹⁷ But the story is more complicated, we think, than that. For one thing, people knew nothing of genetics until very recently. Parenting has always had cultural dimensions, moreover, because the ability to produce culture is a genetically programmed part of human nature. The advent of genetic testing has made many feminists reject a genetic definition of parenthood, because that would establish equal claims for genetic mothers *and genetic fathers*. And because it would not help *gay couples* (who must rely on reproductive technologies, some of which preclude genetic links), Appleton agrees.¹⁸ Besides, testing would eliminate any justification, not only

for the presumption of paternity (a legal fiction that would be unnecessary) but also for Appleton's extension of it. In other words, it would privilege "genetic" fathers over social mothers, mere egg donors over gestational mothers, and so on. Equality talk notwithstanding, in short, Appleton would allow some claimants to take priority over others. Of primary interest to us here is what all of this means specifically for fathers, children and equality.

Implicit in Appleton's new hierarchy would be an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, it would imply the supremacy of gestational mothers over genetic ones and encourage female couples to use reproductive technologies such as artificial insemination; that is, to rely heavily on *culture*. On the other hand, ironically, it would reaffirm the traditional link between women and nature and thus the supremacy of *nature*. After all, gestation is both functional (because gestational mothers might or might not be genetic mothers) and genetic (because only women have wombs). Women as a group would win either way, and men as a group would lose either way. This point of view would discourage the law from recognizing genetic fatherhood, which would allow both straight men and gay sperm donors a reasonable claim to custody of their genetic children (or at least visitation and other parental rights) and thus prevent reproductive autonomy for women.

Appleton acknowledges that not everyone would like the new hierarchy.¹⁹ She acknowledges that gay men in particular would lose out due to (what we consider) the inherent inequality of her proposal; surrogate mothers would almost always trump them in court. Ironically, the interests of gay men (let alone their children) would be much safer in a system that assumes the primacy of genetic ties, because Appleton's proposal rewards only gestation. And gestation is an exclusively female ability (although that could change with the advent of an artificial womb).

Appleton does not mention that some gay women, too, could end up as superfluous social parents. This would happen if legislators were to recognize the supremacy of gestational mothers over social parents. Worse, we would add, these gay women could still end up (as so many divorced fathers have) with unfair financial obligations for children. Gay women who know how the courts often exploit straight fathers in custody and child-support cases,²⁰ we suggest, might well have second thoughts about relationships with gestational mothers.

According to Appleton's functional definition of parenthood, neither the genetic nor the custodial claims of men could ever trump those of women in court. This playing field would never be level enough for men to function as the equals of women, in other words, no matter how much they contribute to work in the home. Moreover, this definition would give surrogate mothers primacy over their clients, including gay men, in cases of legal conflict. This takes us back to the 1980s, when feminists had much to say about the evils of surrogacy. They saw it as a patriarchal institution that exploited and controlled women's bodies.²¹

THE NEED OF CHILDREN FOR FATHERS

In theory, children should be the most important topic by far in almost any discus-



sion of marriage, divorce or custody. In practice, unfortunately, that is not always the case; very often, the needs of adults override those of children and thus turn children into bystanders. A humongous elephant stands silently and sadly, therefore, in this metaphorical room—that is, the public square. And one need of children, we suggest, is for fathers.

This does not mean that fathers respond to this need purely or even primarily on the basis of instinct. Hormonal changes do affect fathers in some ways,²² to be sure, and genetic links with children do make a difference for fathers.²³ But we agree with anthropologist Meyer Fortes, who argues that “institutionalized fatherhood, unlike motherhood, comes into being not by virtue of a biological ... event” but as “a creation of society.”²⁴ From this, we do not conclude that paternal childrearing is less important than maternal childrearing. We conclude only that it requires a major *cultural* effort in addition to natural mechanisms such as the low levels of testosterone in new fathers.²⁵

Unwittingly, at least in some cases, many feminist approaches to the family undermine the notion that children need fathers. Appleton ignores that need, for instance, and therefore the moral or legal right²⁶ of children to have fathers.²⁷ Feminists who adopt that point of view, therefore, exploit the family as a vehicle for promoting either the personal autonomy or the collective identity of women. And yet some of them find it convenient to stay well within current legal norms by looking for precedents.

So, why do we argue that children need fathers? Many studies indicate that they need two parents,²⁸ which is bad news for single mothers. But what if children need both mothers *and* fathers? That would be bad news for both single mothers and gay couples. The need for two parents is obvious; no one would seriously argue that one parent alone is as effective as two. The need for parents of both sexes is less obvious, because it could be the result of cultural transmission, teaching women to do some things and men to do other things, instead of genetic transmission. If so, then two mothers or two fathers would do just as well as one of each. To know for sure, we will have to wait twenty or thirty years for the results of longitudinal studies on the children of gay couples. And these would have to be scholarly ones, not those that study small or self-selected samples.²⁹ Meanwhile, we suggest that children have at least two reasons for needing both mothers and fathers. Because no one questions the need for mothers, though, we emphasize here the need for fathers.

At their best, mothers give children *unconditional love*.³⁰ Children who fail to heed maternal rules or guidelines face disciplinary measures, to be sure, but not the withdrawal of maternal love. Mothers have additional functions, but this is their most distinctive one in families with both mothers and fathers. This is why young children usually run to their mothers, not their fathers, for comfort in times of emotional or even physical distress. No matter how many mistakes they make, most children can feel secure in the knowledge that their mothers will forgive and continue to cherish them. At their best, fathers expect children to *earn respect* by facing challenges and acting honorably whether at home or in the risky and dangerous world beyond home. Children who fail to earn paternal respect do not necessarily face the withdrawal of paternal love, but they do face paternal disappointment, which leads to lack of self-

confidence or even self-esteem.

Fathers do not have an easy job, because they must accept an inherent psychological contradiction: the urge to shower children with affection versus the need to prod them with expectations. In other words, they must navigate the narrow but treacherous stream that separates two fundamentally opposing attitudes toward their children: distance (which is sometimes necessary) and indifference (which is not). The most important psychological task of fathers as such is not to provide what children want immediately, therefore, but what they need in the long run. Not surprisingly, many children are more ambivalent about their fathers than about their mothers. Even though children enjoy paternal rewards for achievements, after all, they do not enjoy paternal disappointment or even paternal disapproval for failures. Very often, in fact, fathers must do their jobs precisely in the context of *conflict* with their children. Adolescents characteristically experience *alienation* from their parents, especially boys from their fathers. And some degree of alienation is a good thing, not a bad thing. Otherwise, why would adolescents feel the powerful urge to leave home and become adults in the larger world?

Fathers do not necessarily have even an attractive job. At first, after all, most fathers must do without the immediate, direct and profound emotional gratification that mothers expect from their infants and young children. Many fathers are emotionally close to their children, but they must still wait many years before their children demonstrate effective socialization (and, in some cases, before their children demonstrate even gratitude). Many men who grew up before the 1980s remember their fathers as either unwilling or unable to express affection, which might or might not have been due to indifference. They felt close to their mothers but not their fathers. After all, children explore relationships primarily through emotion. They respond happily to anyone who gratifies them emotionally and angrily to anyone who frustrates them emotionally. Many men who have grown up more recently, on the other hand, might well remember their fathers as *too* willing to express agreement or support at the cost of not challenging them to achieve goals and become independent. These conflicting attitudes often place fathers in no-win situations.

To make fatherhood more attractive than it would otherwise be, many cultures have supported or even promoted it with joyful public rituals that emphasize the communal importance of fathers. These express the ties that bind children to their fathers and grandfathers. Consider the religious Jewish father, for instance, who stands proudly in the synagogue with his *tallit* (prayer shawl) wrapped around both himself and his young son or blesses the Torah before his adolescent son reads from it for the first time (thus becoming a *bar mitzvah*). In Orthodox synagogues, moreover, only married men (fathers or fathers-to-be) may wear the *tallit*. Here is another example. Hindu men must have sons to perform the funeral ritual, *shraddha*, for them. This enables men to reach heaven and therefore indirectly reinforces the importance of fatherhood. Modern societies do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, they have eliminated not only initiation rituals in general but also gendered rituals in particular. Many religious communities have eliminated the distinctive emphasis on father-son relationships.³¹ Even Father's Day has become controversial in some circles. In 2008, for instance, some



schools in Scotland forbade children to make Father's Day cards. The ostensible reason was not all children have fathers. The schools wanted "to avoid causing embarrassment to classmates who live with single mothers and lesbian couples."³² Never mind that only *seven percent* of the children in Scotland live with single mothers. Not one school, however, forbade children to make Mother's Day cards.

No parent can do both jobs, providing both unconditional love and earned respect, without giving his or her children deeply confusing mixed messages. But could two parents of the same sex not perform these conflicting tasks? Cinematic fantasies such as *The Kids Are All Right* say that they can. We do not yet know if mothers on the whole are innately less able than fathers to provide children with earned respect—or if fathers on the whole are innately less able than mothers to give unconditional love. But we do know that most mothers, perhaps even most social mothers, are unlikely to withhold unconditional love for their children in the interest of offering them earned respect instead. That might be due to innate tendencies, or it might be due to countless centuries of cultural conditioning. Either way, changing women in this way would probably require a transformation of colossal magnitude, one that goes far beyond anything that feminists have achieved so far even with massive support from both public and private agencies. After all, this might require the use of culture to work against nature—that is, against the urge to hold, fondle or "nurture" infants. And using culture to work *against* nature is always at least somewhat harder than using it to work *with* nature. We are not there yet, in any case, not nearly there. No schools or social service agencies offer courses on fatherhood for mothers. And even if they did, it would take at least a generation of scholarly testing to find out how effective they are. In the meantime, *too* many fathers and mothers perform one task much more effectively than the other. This state of affairs does not justify our experimenting on children by denying them fathers in order to satisfy the desires of adults.

But children need both mothers and fathers for an additional reason. Although it seems counter-intuitive in an age that accepts the fragmentation of institutions such as marriage and the family into countless "functions" or other legal categories, the fact remains that we all have bodies. And these, a few anatomical anomalies aside, are either male or female. Unless parents take the extremist position that nature is utterly irrelevant and that we can use culture to do anything at all (a position that some feminists promote in order to change whatever they dislike about society and others abhor as a dualistic "male" fantasy that oppresses women), they must help their children feel comfortable with male or female bodies. At no time is this task more urgent than during adolescence, when both physiological changes and new psychological urges require attention.

Feminists have long complained with good reason that men—male physicians, psychologists, philosophers, theologians and so on—have tried to tell women what womanhood is or should be all about. These days, men could complain with equally good reason that women—ideologically feminist academics and activists—are trying to tell men what manhood is or should be all about. This would be a major problem even if these notions of womanhood or manhood were all benign. But they are not. The fact is that mothers are innately more qualified than fathers to teach their daughters specif-

ically about being female. Similarly, fathers are innately more qualified than mothers to teach their sons specifically about being male. On the other hand, neither girls nor boys live in a one-sex world. Mothers can and must teach their sons about the needs and expectations of women. Similarly, fathers can and must teach their daughters about the needs and expectations of men. In other words, knowledge from within (what anthropologists call “emic” knowledge) is no less important than knowledge from without (what anthropologists call “etic” knowledge).

SOME LEGAL MEASURES TO SUPPORT FATHERS

Because children need fathers, we must rely on cultural measures—including those enshrined in laws—that support fathers. And these, ideally, rely on the genetic link between a father and his children. As Margaret Somerville has pointed out,³³ many adult children of single parents and adoptive parents are already making considerable efforts to locate or even merely to learn about one or both of their genetic parents. And only the most cynical observers would argue that their motivation is purely or even primarily the possibility of financial gain. Some of these adult children think primarily about the medical implications of their genetic identities. One would be inherited disease, which might make it risky for them to have children of their own. Most think primarily about the psychological or cultural implications of their genetic identities: links with both ancestors (their ethnicity, history or religion) and living relatives (parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles). This might sound irrational to some people, but evidence reveals it as a deeply rooted need.³⁴ Otherwise, why would so many adopted children search for their genetic parents? Finally, we have evidence that genetic fathers, who live with their genetic children, are more likely to invest heavily in providing for and protecting them than the children of other men.³⁵ This is not a slur on adoptive or other social fathers who consciously choose to invest heavily in the children of other men. Suspicion of adultery does not enter the picture.

If the family is a schoolroom that promotes social equality, as Linda McClain says,³⁶ then sheer logic would make the legal presumption of equality between mothers and fathers not merely desirable but necessary. Consider custody. This is a hotly “contested site” for men and women, even though gender-neutral legislation hides not only the fact that courts usually give custody to mothers³⁷ but also the fact that many feminists advocate that solution despite their egalitarian rhetoric.

One would think that joint custody is the most obviously egalitarian solution from the perspective of parents (and also the most obviously helpful from the perspective of children), and yet many feminists reject that solution. Given the legal need for gender neutrality, however, feminists do not argue overtly for maternal custody as a general principle. Instead, they do so for a seemingly practical reason. Mothers make greater contributions than fathers, they say, to the care of their children. To support that premise, the American Law Institute makes a careful (but dubious) distinction between “caretaking” functions and “parenting” functions.³⁸ Most people would associate the former functions (emotional, moral, cognitive, artistic or other functions that involve close personal interaction) with loving mothers and the latter functions (financial and



other functions that do not involve close personal interaction) with dutiful fathers. Courts usually assume that mothers are better at the former and fathers better at the latter. And the courts are probably correct from a statistical point of view. American mothers do contribute more time and effort than fathers to caretaking in this sense (at least partly, ironically, because of their “patriarchal” cultural conditioning). But the courts are not necessarily correct from an *evaluative* point of view.

This brings up a linguistic problem: the conflation of “caring” (but not “parenting”) with “love.” Many people assume that most mothers *love* their children more than most fathers do, because most mothers are more emotionally demonstrative than most fathers, and therefore that most children *love* their mothers more than their fathers. From this, the courts conclude that most children *need* their mothers more than their fathers. Ergo, they give custody to mothers instead of fathers *despite the gender-neutral language of legislation*. This is how the courts can simultaneously satisfy both egalitarian feminists (who might or might not insist on legal preference for mothers) and ideological ones (who usually do insist on legal preference for mothers). In other words, this is how the courts can maintain the rhetoric of equality (referring to explicitly gender-neutral legal texts) but nonetheless promote inequality (referring to implicitly gendered interpretations so that they can award custody most often to legal “caretakers” instead of legal “parents”).

Mothers do contribute more than fathers to the “nurturing” of infants, because only women can give birth and lactate. But that in itself does not necessarily make mothers better than fathers at all aspects of childrearing, we suggest, because infants and young children have needs that neither mothers nor fathers *alone* can satisfy. It does not make mothers better sorts of parents than fathers at all *stages* of childrearing, moreover, because adolescents and older children have needs that fathers can provide most easily.³⁹ We suggest, in short, that mothers and fathers are not interchangeable. Children need both, not one or the other—and not two of one. This should lead to the presumption of joint parenting in custody cases.

There was a time when the presumption of paternity rested by default on a legal fiction. But that was then, and this is now. With access to genetic facts, it would be folly to establish laws that rely instead on legal fictions, especially ones that support inequality and thus bring the entire legal system into disrepute. We suggest that courts rely not merely on the presumption of paternity but on the results of mandatory genetic testing.⁴⁰ On the other hand, we recognize the need for an exception in the best interests of some children. With all this in mind, consider the following plans for establishing paternity.

Plan A, the *default setting*, as it were, would require genetic testing of both the infant and the mother’s husband or boyfriend.⁴¹ If he is the genetic father, then this would be the ideal scenario. It would give the genetic father a presumptive⁴² right to joint custody in case of divorce (barring verifiable evidence of abuse) but also the economic and other responsibilities of fatherhood until the child’s coming of age. Otherwise, the law would proceed to one of the following *contingency* plans.

Plan B would come into effect if the mother's male partner is *not* the genetic father. If her partner chooses to be the social and legal father, he would have to marry the mother and *declare his paternal intentions* in a legal document. This would give him the presumptive right to joint custody in case of divorce (barring verifiable evidence of abuse) but also the economic and other responsibilities of fatherhood until the child's coming of age.

Plan C would come into effect if both the genetic father *and* the social father want to be the legal father. The social father, already in the home and bonding with the child, would *declare his paternal intentions* in a legal document and thus become the legal father. In this case, the social father would trump the genetic father.

Plan D would apply to a situation that is very far from the ideal, coming into effect if the mother's male partner is *not* the genetic father and does *not want* to be the legal father because it would impose a considerable financial burden on him. To stay on as the social father by default, he would become the legal father as well. If he were to leave, of course, then the genetic father would become the legal father. The court should encourage the genetic father, possibly by establishing visitation rights, to become the social as well as the legal father.

THE NEED OF MEN FOR CHILDREN

Children need fathers, but men need fatherhood. Many people have written about masculine identity as a problem, and most of them—Michael Kimmel is an obvious example—have tried to explain this “problem” as the result of an atavistic sense of “entitlement.” Like their “patriarchal” forefathers for countless generations, men feel entitled to higher status and more power than women, according to Kimmel in *Guyland*.⁴³ But men can no longer expect these things in the modern world. Ergo, he claims, they express their frustration by seeking revenge against society in general and women in particular. We suggest a modified version of that explanation. Some men do feel entitled to higher status or more power than women, lamentably, but most men feel entitled simply to an acceptable *identity*. And an acceptable identity, unlike unearned privilege, is a legitimate and universal human need. Elsewhere, we argued that a *healthy* identity, whether personal or collective, is attainable only by those who can make at least one contribution to the larger society that is distinctive, necessary and publicly valued.⁴⁴

The problem begins with distinctiveness. You do not need elaborate psychoanalytical theories, let alone conservative theological traditions, to know that there is at least one thing that women can do but men cannot do: give birth and therefore ensure communal continuity. Until very recently in human history, though, the asymmetry did not matter. Whether due to nature or culture (or both), after all, most men were well suited to make their own distinctive contributions as providers, protectors and pro-



genitors. In our time, the first two are now anachronistic. (And the second, given the need to teach boys the psychological skills that they would require in war and withhold the contrasting psychological skills that they would require for intimacy, is potentially dangerous in any case.) Women are increasingly able to provide resources on their own (sometimes with help from the state). Women are increasingly able to protect themselves (sometimes with help from the state). And women are increasingly *claiming* that they are able to become both mothers and, in effect, fathers. If they could demonstrate that children do not need fathers, that men either do not or should not have any stake in producing new generations and therefore in the communal future, then men would be left without even one legitimate source for a healthy collective identity. The consequence of social engineering with that scenario in mind, pervasive alienation among men, would be catastrophic not only for men but also for children and thus for society as a whole.

THE NEED OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES FOR EQUALITY

This brings us to sexual equality. Almost all people in modern societies, including most men, now believe that women can do—and should do—everything that men can do. This belief expresses an egalitarian ideal, a noble ideal. It is also a somewhat naïve ideal, though, if you assume that equality means sameness, because men and women are not quite interchangeable.

Some of those who adopt the “diversity” model of family life, at any rate, will worry about our emphasis on fathers and therefore a “patriarchal” subtext. But our emphasis is due mainly to the fact that so many other scholars have either trivialized or ignored fathers—or, to put it another way, the need of children for fathers. We consider equality, including sexual equality, a fundamental principle of every democratic society.

No one in America today is going to argue explicitly for any form of inequality. To see how seriously anyone takes equality, therefore, we must examine what they argue *implicitly*. Does what they espouse really add up to equality? Or does it add up to some new form of inequality? In the case of feminists who write about the family, we must examine not only their definitions of marriage and parenting in an egalitarian and presumably genderless society but also how these definitions affect (or change after) divorce. *Cui bono?* Who benefits most? Who gets the best deal: children, fathers or mothers?

Consider Appleton’s proposal more closely with this in mind. As we say, it would extend the legal presumption of paternity to include the female partners of mothers. This would eliminate one form of inequality, to be sure, but replace it with another. In theory, gay couples would have the same status as opposite-sex couples. In fact, though, not all gay couples would be equals. Female couples would benefit from her proposal, because the law would recognize both women immediately as legal parents (one genetic mother and one social mother). Male couples would lose, on the other hand, because the law would still give priority to surrogate mothers over social fathers.

Appleton’s definition of parenthood would institutionalize a hierarchy that places not only gestational mothers over genetic or social mothers (because gestation puts

the “labor” in labor) and women over men (because neither social nor genetic fathers would ever win custody unless gestational mothers were obviously unfit for parenting)⁴⁵, but also gay women over gay men (because neither gay genetic fathers nor gay social fathers would win custody unless gestational mothers were obviously unfit for parenting).

To conclude, we propose the following *moral* presumptions, which every society should translate into legal ones:

1. Every society, community, or family has a vested interest in continuity from one generation to the next and thus in reproduction.⁴⁶
2. Every child needs the intimate and enduring presence of a same-sex parent (to place distinctive physical and developmental needs in a larger context of meaning and to provide convincing guidance) *along with* an opposite-sex parent (to establish the patterns of relations between the sexes and thus prepare them for both social life in general and reproduction in particular).
3. To establish basic security for their children, parents must provide for their emotional, intellectual, social, physical and financial needs.
4. A democratic society should promote equality between women and men (including mothers and fathers), not by establishing utopian standards that require rigorous and intrusive state control but by accounting legally for sexual asymmetries that leave men and women “differently situated” (and doing so in ways that maximize both their personal liberty and their moral responsibility as parents).
5. To establish healthy identities, both boys and girls must learn that they can make at least one *distinctive, necessary, and publicly valued contribution to society specifically as either men or women*. And in the case of boys, as we have written elsewhere,⁴⁷ that would now be their contributions as fathers.
6. Genetic ties, usually being stronger and more enduring than cultural ones, should be the default setting that defines parenthood in most cases. This is particularly important now that divorce and social fragmentation have become so pervasive.⁴⁸

Notes

¹ *The Kids Are All Right* (Lisa Cholodenko, 2010).

² We discuss portrayals of fathers throughout *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001). We discuss journalistic and legal attitudes toward fathers in *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006) 3-20,



125-156, 415-438, and in chapter 4 of *Transcending Misandry: From Feminist Ideology to Intersexual Dialogue* (forthcoming from McGill-Queen's University Press).

³The Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering (FINRRAGE) is more than a network; it is a movement. Since the 1980s, members such as Gena Corea, Jalna Hanmer, Pat Spallone, Rita Arditti, Renate D. Klein, Janice G. Raymond, Robyn Rowland, Maria Miewes, Christine Crowe, Paula Bradish, Shelley Minden, Linda Bullard, Susan Ince and Sultan Kamal have contributed to anthologies on reproductive technologies. They have challenged new scientific developments and policy positions, often viewing these as attempts by men to control women's bodies or even to eliminate women themselves (*Made to Order: The Myth of Reproductive and Genetic Progress*, ed. Patricia Spallone and Deborah Lynn Steinberg [Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987], 6). "We want to maintain the integrity and embodiment of women's procreativity. Externalization of conception and gestation facilitates manipulation," ("Resolution from the FINRRAGE Conference, 3-8 July 1985, Vallingbe, Sweden," in Spallone and Steinberg 2-30). Although it originated in Western feminism, this movement has increasingly shifted its focus to the rights of women in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Here are some passages from the network's website (finrrage.org).

As a network, FINRRAGE does not have formal membership. Instead, the network provides links between individual women, as well as different kinds of local, national or international women's organisations who share common concerns and viewpoints and wish to participate in an ongoing process of analysis, discussion and political activities. FINRRAGE activists work within their countries in choosing priorities, both regarding issues and activities which are suited to their specific situation. This may involve critical research and investigation, information to the public and the press in the form of seminars, publications, interviews, lobbying, outreach to interested groups and individuals, cultural and political forms of expressing resistance and the establishment of alternatives for women (e.g. counselling or self-help groups).

Until 1997 the links between FINRRAGE associates working in different countries were maintained by the FINRRAGE international coordinating group and the national contacts. The international coordinating group functioned as a clearinghouse to provide linkages, to collect and distribute information, and to coordinate and facilitate the activities of the national contacts and other network women internationally.

Since 1997 national contacts carry on this work on a national level. There are no elected representatives who formulate FINRRAGE policy but common consensus positions decided upon by all participants at FINRRAGE conferences.

⁴ Elsewhere, we define our use of the word "ideology" very carefully in connection with world-views on both the political right (such as nationalism or racism) and the left (such as Marxism). An ideology is any way of thinking that involves all or most of the following characteristic features: dualism (believing that "they" are inherently evil); essentialism (believing that "we" are inherently good); hierarchy (believing that "we" are superior to "them"); collectivism (believing that group needs take priority over the needs not only of individuals but also, at least during the struggle, of society as a whole); utopianism (believing that the emergence of an ideal society requires the elimination of those who oppose it); selective cynicism (suspecting only "their" motives); revolutionism (overthrowing the current order as distinct from merely trying to re-

form it); consequentialism (believing that ends can justify means); and quasi-religiosity (conferring meaning, purpose, community and especially identity on believers). To the extent that any form of feminism has absorbed these characteristic features, therefore, we would classify it as ideological feminism as distinct from egalitarian feminism. See Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 200-233.

⁵ Ironically, advocates of egalitarian parenting exemplify both social constructionism and deconstructionism. Academics like to deconstruct gender, for example, into discrete cultural "discourses" and then declare that gender amounts to nothing more than one "social construction" among many other real or possible ones (albeit one that men "constructed" to serve their own interests and therefore to oppress women). In that case, gender is irrelevant to parenting.

⁶ In *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), Jane Mansbridge makes it clear that the possibility of drafting women into the armed forces and the possibility of using them in combat, was a *major* factor in defeating the Equal Rights Amendment. "Two things happened between 1970, when the major ERA organizations first articulated formal positions on women's role in the military, and 1982, when the ERA went down to defeat. First, the idea that the ERA would require not just drafting qualified women but sending them into combat had become a powerful substantive objection to the Amendment. Second, the organizations campaigning for the ERA had come to insist more and more strongly that the Amendment would do exactly this" (67). To their credit, most feminist leaders took a principled position. For several reasons, they opposed any exemptions for women.

In the first place, any exemptions for women would have reinforced the belief that women were inherently incompetent. Even worse, it would have reinforced the belief that women need protection by men. Then, too, exemptions would have compromised their belief in equality. If women expected equal rights as citizens, they should also expect equal responsibilities. But these women were motivated by moral principles, not only legal or political ones. Most of them being opposed to the military in general, let alone the war in Vietnam and registration for the peacetime draft, they understood that brutalizing young men was just as wrong as brutalizing young women. This is reflected in a position paper written by the National Organization of Women: "War is senseless. Neither the lives of young men nor young women should be wasted. But if we cannot stop the killing, we know we cannot choose between our sons and daughters. The choice robs women as well as men. In the long and short run, it injures us all" (National Organization for Women, "Position Paper on the Registration and Drafting of Women in 1980"; quoted in Mansbridge 74).

⁷ Linda McClain, *The Place of Families: Fostering Capacity, Equality, and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5.

⁸ Linda, McClain, "God's Created Order: Gender Complementarity, and the Federal Marriage Amendment," *BYU Journal of Public Law*, 20 (2006): 339.

⁹ We disagree with McClain about love in marriage. That goes back at least to the biblical period. Jacob loved Rachel so much, for instance, that he spent fourteen years working for her father in order to marry her (marrying Leah after the first seven years, even though he and Leah did not love each other as much as he and Rachel did). If that is not "voluntary marriage," what is? And biblical texts provide many other examples. The troubadours of medieval Europe glorified love, too, though not in the context of marriage; "courtly love" referred to a bond both



erotic and spiritual between knights and usually unattainable ladies.

¹⁰ McClain, "God's Created Order," 341.

¹¹ McClain, "God's Created Order," 340.

¹² McClain, "God's Created Order," 340.

¹³ Susan Frelich Appleton is the Lemma Barkeloo and Phoebe Couzins Professor Law at Washington University School of Law in St. Louis.

¹⁴ Susan Frelich Appleton, "Presuming Women: Revisiting the Presumption of Legitimacy in the Same-Sex Couples Era," *Boston University Law Review*, 86 (2006): 227-294.

¹⁵ Appleton 237. She argues that it was wrong to apply this presumption only to men, so how could it be right to apply the same presumption even more widely? Two wrongs do not make a right. This would be revenge, due to an inherent flaw, not justice.

¹⁶ Appleton 291. If "this approach leads to the conclusion that genetic evidence is irrelevant to the parentage of lesbian couples," Appleton adds, "then the 'parity goal' indicates that the same principle should apply to traditional couples, making genetic evidence irrelevant for them as well" (291).

¹⁷ Appleton 238.

¹⁸ Appleton 269-284.

¹⁹ Appleton 292, 294.

²⁰ Nathanson and Young, *Legalizing Misandry*, 125-156; 415-438.

²¹ Surrogacy remains legal in the United States but not everywhere else. For the arguments against surrogacy, see Gena Corea, "The Reproductive Brothel," in *Man-Made Women: How New Reproductive Technologies Affect Women* (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

²² See Louann Brizendine, *The Male Brain* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010).

²³ For approximately twenty years, anthropologists rejected the whole idea of kinship as an artifact of Western cultural imperialism. This was due entirely to the work of David Schneider. In *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), he argued that not every society even acknowledges what Westerners think of as kinship. Genetic ties between fathers and their children are unimportant, from his point of view, even though some societies insist on supposing that they are important. This point of view supported the cultural relativism that had long been popular among anthropologists. But like academic fashions in every field, the new and improved anthropology is itself open to question. In "Primeval Kinship: How Pair Bonding Gave Birth to Human Society" (*Evolutionary Psychology* 6.4 [2008]: 557-562), Bernard Chapais threw down the gauntlet by taking seriously the work of primatologists and evolutionary psychologists. Some things, he argued, really are universal among humans. Of interest here is his claim that kinship is not merely a cultural "construct." This means that ignoring the ties that bind fathers and their children, ties that emerge not only from culture but also from nature, would be unwise.

²⁴ Meyer Fortes, *Rules and the Emergence of Society* (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1983), 20.

²⁵ Scientists have now observed that fatherhood accompanies a significant hormonal change; the level of testosterone falls dramatically, making fathers much more likely than they would have been to stick around and participate actively in family life. "The real take-home message," says Peter Ellison, who teaches evolutionary biology at Harvard, is that "male parental care is important. It's important enough that it's actually shaped the physiology of

men ... My hope would be that this kind of research has an impact on the American male. It would make them realize that we're meant to be active fathers and participate in the care of our offspring" (Peter Ellison; quoted in Pam Belluck, "In Study, Fatherhood Leads to Drop in Testosterone," *New York Times*, 12 September 2011, A-1). The study, conducted by Lee Gettler and Christopher Kuzawa at Northwestern University, found that high levels of testosterone help men find mates while low levels help them stay with those mates and their children. "A dad with lower testosterone is maybe a little more sensitive to cues from his child," says Peter Gray, an anthropologist at the University of Nevada, "and maybe he's a little less sensitive to cues from a woman he meets at a restaurant" (Belluck A-1).

²⁶ The United Nations, however, has defined the rights of children. According to article 7 of its Convention on the Rights of the Child, the "child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, *the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents*" (our emphasis). By not specifying any parental type, this legal text clearly refers to the most obvious type: biological parents of opposite sexes. By adding "as far as possible," it alludes to the fact that some children lack biological parents because of death or abandonment.

²⁷ By citing cases that repeatedly link the "best interests of the child" and the government's interest in saving tax dollars, not with other rights of the child (such as an identity that includes knowledge of genetic parents, siblings and other relatives), Appleton supports her case for extending the presumption of paternity to the presumption of parenthood for lesbian partners (Appleton 247).

²⁸ Many studies of children from broken families have come out over the past twenty years. Here are some of the most interesting ones: Paul R. Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62.4 (2000): 1269ff.; E. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly, *For Better or for Worse; Divorce Reconsidered* (New York: Norton, 2002); and Judith S. Wallerstein and others, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study* (New York: Hyperion, 2000).

²⁹ One meta-study evaluated 49 empirical studies on same-sex parenting focussed on how each study formulates its hypothesis, designs its project, controls for extraneous matters, measures bias and reliability, composes its sample, compiles statistics and deals with the problem of false negatives. The researchers found more than a few major problems, including: unclear hypotheses; inadequately designed projects; self-constructed, unreliable and therefore invalid measurements; small and non-random samples; missing or inadequate statistical analysis. At least one "fatal research flaw" invalidates each of these studies (R. Lerner and A.K. Nagai, *No Basis: What the Studies Don't Tell Us about Same-Sex Parenting* (Washington, D.C., Marriage Law Project, 2001).

³⁰ Nature itself prompts mothers to interact with their children, first in connection with gestation and then in connection with lactation. And culture strongly reinforces nature long after mothers wean their children. Fathers, of course, neither gestate nor lactate. This allows them to care for their children in the broader perspective of long-term needs, one of which is the need of every child to leave the protected world of home and enter the riskier world beyond it. Most cultures reinforce their efforts by offering status to fathers per se.

³¹ Boys have a much deeper need than girls for cultural mechanisms to mark coming of age. (See Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, "Coming of Age as a Villain: What Every Boy



Needs to Know in a Misandric World,” *Thymos: Journal of Boyhood Studies*, 3.2 (Fall 2009): 155-177.) Even so, many Jewish communities, including some Orthodox ones, now celebrate *bat-mitzvot* of girls, a functional equivalent of the coming-of-age rite for boys. In many congregations, for instance, both girls and boys give speeches in which they interpret passages from scripture. Whether girls read those passages from the Torah, as boys do, is another matter. In any case, coming of age for girls, no less than for boys, has become nothing more for many Jews than the excuse for a lavish party. As for Hindus, some communities celebrate coming-of-age for both boys and girls at the beginning of elementary school.

³² Kathleen Nutt, “Scottish Schools Ban Father’s Day Cards,” *Sunday Times*, 22 June 2008.

³³ Margaret Somerville, “Children’s Human Rights and Unlinking Child-Parent Biological Bonds with Adoption, Same-Sex Marriage and new Reproductive Technologies,” *Journal of Family Studies*, 13.2 (November 2007): 182-185.

³⁴ Margaret A. Somerville, “What about the Children?” in *Divorcing Marriage: Unveiling the Dangers in Canada’s New Social Experiment*, ed. Daniel Cere and Douglas Farrow (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 63-78, and “Children’s Human Rights to Natural Biological Origins and Family Structure,” *Bioethics Research Notes* 23.1 (2011): 1-11.

³⁵ Evolutionists and evolutionary psychologists make this argument. For the former, see David C. Geary and Mark V. Flinn, “Evolution of Human Parental Behavior and the Human Family,” *Parenting: Science and Practice* 1.1-2 (2001): 5-61. These authors analyze the transition from primates to humans. For additional references, see Donald S. Browning, *Marriage and Modernization: How Globalization Threatens Marriage and What to Do about It* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

³⁶ Linda C. McClain is Rivkind Radler Professor of Law and Paul M. Siskind Scholar of Law at Boston University School of Law. See Linda C. McClain, *The Place of Families: Fostering Capacity, Equality, and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) and “‘God’s Created Order,’ Gender Complementarity, and the Federal Marriage Amendment,” *Brigham Young University Journal of Public Law*, 20 (2006): 313-343.

³⁷ For a while, American law relied on the “tender years” doctrine, which required maternal custody for young children. That doctrine clearly conflicts with gender neutrality, however, which would require shared custody. Feminist lawyers had to find a way around this problem. Many now affirm the gender-neutral language of laws but interpret those laws to favor mothers.

³⁸ See American Law Institute, *Principles of the Law of Family Dissolution: Analysis and Recommendations* (Philadelphia: American Law Institute, 2002). See §2.03 (5) on caretaking functions: “Caretaking functions are tasks that involve interaction with the child or that direct, arrange, and supervise the interaction and care provided by others ... “ and §2.03(6) on parenting functions: “Parenting functions are tasks that serve the needs of the child or the child’s residential family. Parenting functions include caretaking functions, as defined in Paragraph (5), and all of the following additional functions ... ”

³⁹ Robert Veneziano and Ronald Rohner, “The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence,” *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (December 2001): 382-405.

⁴⁰ Some people might resent mandatory genetic testing as an invasion of privacy or an extra cost, but not many people resent mandatory fingerprinting for those reasons.

⁴¹ Courts would presume that the birth (gestational) mother is the genetic mother and would

take legal precedence in the recognition of *parenthood if she is married to a man*. Unlike the egg donor, after all, she has protected, provided for, and bonded with the fetus and then infant through gestation, birth and nursing. This parallels the exception that we have already made by acknowledging “the best interests of the child” in connection with a woman’s husband even if not the genetic father, if he has lived with her, bonded with the infant, and made a legal declaration of his willingness to assume the legal responsibilities of fatherhood. If the birth mother has not married a man but the egg donor has, then the egg donor would take precedence.

⁴² A legal presumption is always of crucial importance, because it assigns the burden of proof to one side or the other. If the genetic father has a presumptive right to joint custody, for instance, then he does not need to prove himself fit for custody. On the contrary, his adversary must try to prove that he is unfit.

⁴³ Michael Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: Harper, 2009).

⁴⁴ Katherine K. Young and Paul Nathanson, *Sanctifying Misandry: Goddess Ideology and the Fall of Man* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 175-182.

⁴⁵ Appleton knows, however, that the fatherless family has become an urgent social problem. “Although a majority of the Michael H. [v. *Gerald D.*] Court did not find troubling he exclusion of an interested and committed biological father, does an approach that appears to marginalize fathers and would-be fathers contract today’s efforts to cultivate and support paternal involvement?” (Appleton 268).

⁴⁶ Societies can try to lower the growth rate of their populations by encouraging the use of birth control or encouraging mothers to have their first children later than they would otherwise. Totalitarian societies are more aggressive. Under Chinese law, for instance, no couple may have more than one child.

⁴⁷ See chapter 4 of *Transcending Misandry: From Feminist Ideology to Intersexual Dialogue* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming).

⁴⁸ See June Carbone and Naomi Cahn, “Which Ties Bind? Redefining the Parent-Child Relationship in an Age of Genetic Certainty,” *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal*, 11 (2002-2003): 1066-1070.

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Meeting Men

Male Intimacy and College Men Centers

MILES GROTH



Given the ongoing trend of declining enrollments of males in college (currently at 40%), it is essential for educators and parents to understand its causes. As the issue becomes better understood, in the meantime the important part played by men's groups on college and university campuses to support young males has become evident. The functions of such groups are varied, but their basic value is to provide a safe space for an experience of genuine intimacy with other males.



THE SETTING AND THE PROBLEM

In the States, attending college and completing a program of study leading to an undergraduate degree is now, for most young people, a common aspiration, if not a necessity in order to be well placed to find a position in society where a sustainable income should be attainable. While it may seem that most of what one needs to know

to take an entry-level position can be found on the internet, without guidance, however, a course of study in cyberspace is not an orderly journey. Besides, the internet does not grant degrees. And so, the traditional way of acquiring the skills to function effectively in a technologically sophisticated culture—formal education—remains essential for access to most positions that confer on an individual, along with official, legally sanctioned recognition of presumed competence, what is perhaps the most important prerequisite of a life lived well, a degree of autonomy. And yes, it is still possible for a young person to be educated at a college or university, although for how long is a serious question. For some, of course, genuine autonomy may mean having maintained independence from all institutions, but while this may be a noble goal, it is not yet one that is supported by the culture and its institutions.

With so much riding on being able to don the bachelor's sheepskin when needed, not all, however, will have the opportunity to attend college through to commencement. For some, the venture is too expensive. Others have not been well prepared by public schooling to do the work at college. Finally, teenagers are now savvy to the fact that even with a costly diploma in hand, there may not be jobs for them after they turn tassel and frisbee their mortarboards skyward. All the same, college is the way to go, no matter how difficult it may be to get there. The evidence is that, in the States, about 70 percent of high school graduates will at least begin a period of tertiary education. Employers, the media, and parents all support this. Besides, campus life promises social pleasures.

What I have to say here is about what is now a minority of these aspirants—young men—and the special predicament in which they find themselves, quite apart from whatever else makes attending college more difficult and perhaps less rewarding for everyone. Yes, men are now in the minority of college students. Currently, they constitute roughly 40 percent of the total, parity between the sexes in college attendance having been reached about 1980. There is much to be said about this trend. It is closely related to fundamental changes in the intellectual and ideological environment of academe since 1970. In fact, talk about academe and talk about men in academe have a great deal to do with each other.

An objection is often raised that more *people* are attending college than ever before and that obviously this means there are more male bodies on campuses overall, even if many of them are non-traditional, older or part-time students. That is not the issue. The problem is the atmosphere on campus, given the shift in *proportion* of men to women living and studying there.

We have heard hardly a peep about how men are experiencing campus life and the college classroom, but this is what, more than anything else, is causing fewer men to stay in college and, as word trickles down, fewer to matriculate. Why have we heard next to nothing about these young men's dysphoric experience?

First, the trend is quite new, even though for a matter of such importance, thirty years is a long time, and news of what men are experiencing is long overdue. More important, the full force of the trend has only hit home in the last decade. Even though explicit warnings were sounded as early as 1990, they have been ignored. This is something about which the pilots of higher education must be ashamed, especially since



for some time now *in camera* their admissions office teams have been puzzling over what to do about declining male enrollments and how to get more men to attend without breaking the law, short-changing female students, or offending anyone. I suspect we will eventually learn that trustees and governing boards were often not informed of the problem. Accountability will eventually be demanded, but will it be too late?

Next, most males in their late teen years are long-suffering. They have learned the habit of male silence from their fathers and grandfathers. From about age six on, they learn the lesson that they must accept what happens to them. The performance of American cowboy and Indiana Jones masculinity is still required across the board beginning early on. This holds for sons of blue-collar workers as well as for those whose parents completed college and professional schools. Boys learn to pretend they are not feeling pain when injured. They come to accept the imputation of predatory, testosterone-driven adolescent male aggressiveness. They are taught to accept guilt for the original sin of presumed patriarchal privilege, no questions asked. Just as a 16-year-old will still usually not complain of testicular pain because he expects people will think he is a sissy if he does, a young male scholar who witnesses a malignant image of him painted in a gender studies class will say nothing. He will put up with it. He has learned that if he does speak out, he will likely be charged with wielding the overbearing assertiveness that comes with being an embodiment of willful male "attitude." And so he sits, silent, in disbelief that the professor could be talking down to him and about him. Of course, in doing so, he loses credibility in his own eyes. On the other hand, if is not docile, he becomes an advertisement of the need to correct his male excesses.

Finally, feeling unwelcome is not something anyone likes to admit to, especially when he is young and chronically suspects something might be wrong with him, as young males are taught to believe about themselves. The late adolescent years for boys and male teenagers are a minefield of well-disguised self-doubt, fueled by demands for accountability vis-à-vis expectations about what it means to be a "real man." For a young male undergraduate, to acknowledge not feeling at home on campus is equivalent to not feeling at home in his body.

So, the *problem* young college men are facing is still barely visible. Tutored to silence by relentless demands imposed on them to live up to the "big impossible" (as the Fox Indians termed manhood) and sustained by the fragility of the developing young male psyche, a male at college is increasingly invisible. Gradually, he has been disappearing. If he fails to hide, he is seen as implicated in a presumptive self-serving conspiracy to maintain patriarchy at all costs. His presence on campus (unless perhaps he is an athlete) is often perceived as a threat. At best, he is superfluous.

Not remarkably enough, however, his presence is still desired by what we once called co-eds. This should not be surprising, since most young women still like men, just as most young men still like women. It is noteworthy that as the number of males has declined on campus, gay guys are now often befriended by co-eds, not because they do not pose sexual risk, but because no matter how they might want to be perceived, these guys exude masculinity. How about that! Moreover, masculinity remains a desirable human quality for many. For example, it is the basis for homosocial relation-

ships between men. Young men honor it in each other, and that will not change, no matter how often a gender neutral culture is imagined in the dry dreams of aficionados of “queer theory.” At the same time, however, we see masculinity increasingly denigrated on campus and in the culture at large, unless it is performed in the context of athletic contests, which to the disappointment of feminists remain admired by men and women. This is a problem for even the most effective anti-male folks, since male athletes generate a lot of income for institutions of higher learning. And, yes, it is no compliment to a young man to be labeled a “jock,” even if MTV representations of the endless spring break party seem to suggest otherwise.

For most college males, campus is increasingly a world in which they are marginalized, at best perceived as an annoyance, at worst as bad weather brewing. For those of us who teach undergraduates, it is well known that putting down men has never been a hobby of young college women. The source of the practice was and is some faculty, albeit a small but powerful group, whose animus against men has been institutionalized, for example, in the compulsory “date-rape” consciousness-raising seminar required of incoming fresh-men in most schools, or in more and more course syllabi. Administrators who have been complicit in supporting this will soon be accountable for their sins of omission. On college campuses, misandry is tolerated. Is this an exaggerated account? I invite the reader to show that it is not.

A SOLUTION AND A MODEL

Three noteworthy developments have taken place in response to the decreasing numbers and increasing silence of young males on campus. First, the past few years have seen the appearance of studies of the measured lack of men’s involvement in campus life. Second, in Australia, Canada and the States, male studies programs and projects are being established. Third, men’s centers on college campuses are being instituted. All of these initiatives are path-breaking, yet the studies have yielded only preliminary data, the programs and projects are just under way, and the establishment of college men centers is slow-going and meets stubborn obstacles. I will limit myself to talking about the last of these developments, since it represents an immediate, concrete response to the problem of the fading college male.

At the time of writing, there are only a handful of college men’s centers. Over the next few years, however, they will increase in number here, in Australia, Canada, the UK and Europe. Each center is inventing itself and formulating its unique mission and face. As noted, setting one up meets resistance (if only by being ignored), and a precarious funding base is a common problem for all of them. In what follows, I will briefly describe a few existing men’s centers and the part they play in responding to the new invisible man on campus. I will pay special attention to one model and recommend it because of its focus on the matter of male intimacy.

Pioneering Groups

Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota, was the first school to establish a



men's center. Formed in 2005 under the stewardship of Gar Kellom, the Center for Men's Leadership and Service gained funding from the Lily Endowment to carry out pilot projects on sixteen campuses. It hosted a series of conferences for participating schools. The results of its work were published, in 2010, in *Engaging College Men: Discovering What Works and Why*. Saint John's is an all-men's college based on principles of the Benedictine tradition: <http://news-business.vlex.com/vid/introduction-men-leadership-saint-john-63424975>. Its story is especially noteworthy as an illustration of how precarious the situation is for a men's center even after it has been established. Men's spirituality groups continue at Saint John's, even though financial support for the Center was lost after six years.

Winona State University's men's group is Dedicated Academic Dads (DAD). It provides a place for discussions among young fathers about how to balance studying and parenting. While the group of about 20 men meet, their sons and daughters are tended by staff at the university's day care center: http://collegemcenters.com/?page_id=21.

Gustavus Adolphus College, in St. Mary, Minnesota, was one of the Saint John's pilot project schools. Begun in 2008, its "M-Pact" program is one of the most inspired among those that have developed for college men. The motto of M-Pact is "Mentoring Men for Lives of Meaning and Making a Difference": <https://sites.google.com/a/gustavus.edu/m-pact/>. The group sponsors a speakers series and members are involved in community service in the States and abroad.

The *University of Portland's* "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" (LXG), another Saint John's pilot school, was formed in 2007. This group boasts the largest membership at a men's center with 75 students and more than a dozen faculty mentors participating. It features a highly organized program. During each of the four college years students focus on a theme: identity (fresh-men), relationships (sophomores), resiliency (juniors), and life after college (seniors). The group has received recognition from the national Catholic Campus Ministry Association: http://collegemcenters.com/?page_id=247.

Temple University's Men's Health Initiative was the birthplace of its men's group. Formed in the summer of 2010, the group's goal is to spread the word about the importance of attending to the overall wellbeing of young men. Its work extends to the Philadelphia community in which this major research university is located: http://collegemcenters.com/?page_id=225.

Springfield College, in Springfield, Massachusetts, is the newest college men's group. Formed at the end of the spring semester, 2011, among its by-laws is a commitment to encourage male-positive attitudes on campus and to challenge trends that marginalize men or foster misandry: http://collegemcenters.com/?page_id=88.

The Men's Center at Wagner College was established in 2010. Also one of the pioneering pilot programs sponsored by Saint John's University, the Wagner Center is conducting research on men's centers. However, its Men's Study Group is the heart of the Center's initiative, serving as a safe space for college men to talk and generate information about how men are experiencing college life. The Wagner model is one among many represented at www.collegemcenters.com, a website which is maintained by the Center. Student-driven, the Study Group's weekly discussions return again and

again to a few fundamental questions, including: What is life like for men at Wagner (and other colleges and universities)? And then there is the all-important question: What is male intimacy? At orientation, fresh-men are introduced to the group as a place to meet other male students outside of classes, especially if they may not be considering pledging a fraternity at some point or do not play a varsity sport. Wagner, like Gustavus Adolphus, is one of the twenty-six colleges and universities historically affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=145349208837901>.

The history and character of each center are different. Since the purposes and importance of college men centers are only gradually becoming known, membership in them is small. As administrators and faculty discover that such centers are not reactive and “against” any constituency, however, their programs are receiving more attention, and the experience of young men who meet in groups is being seen as valuable. Recognition of their importance is increasing (See Kellom, 2004, and Kellom & Groth, eds., 2010).

The Wagner Model

The Wagner College model has tried to incorporate the most effective elements of other programs. As its faculty mentor and director of the Men’s Center at Wagner College, the author is in a position to present the model in some detail.

We are learning what works and why in *re-engaging* college men in campus life. We do this by *promoting* male-positive attitudes on campus, *emphasizing* once again what young men do well, and *demonstrating* the need and desire college men have for being mentored. Above all, young men are *rediscovering* their need for meaningful friendships with other men. It has quickly become clear that to understand groups for college men, the core issue is, quite simply, male intimacy.

I will first describe how a group forms at the Wagner Men’s Center and what goes on in it. Next I will review related activities of the Center as they illustrate its stated goals. Throughout, I will highlight the importance of intimacy in young college men’s lives.

Formation

The core of a men’s group is a number of students who are acquainted individually with the faculty mentor. They, in turn, bring friends. But what is the purpose of a men’s group? What do the guys talk about? What do they do together? Here the essential meaning of college men groups comes into view: intimacy between men. In the end, that is what they are about.

This is sensitive territory. Why would men meet other than in a fraternity (to drink alcohol) or on a team (to play a sport)? Often, when a men’s center forms on a campus, it is perceived as “gay.” As men who have been part of a group will tell you, they have all worried over the misperception. But they stopped by.

The group begins by discussing the situation for men on campus. Soon enough, however, other themes emerge. These include closeness between the members and their



girlfriends, but also other bonds, such as the father-son relationship, the chum or pal bond of boyhood, bonds formed in the past with male teachers and coaches (often some of the closest homosocial relations young men have known), the links between men that eventually coalesce and constitute a team (athletic, artisan and, yes, military), comparably deep and intense non-sexual relationships with women, and the all-important kind of relationship some have experienced with a mentor. As the nuclear family and with it the father-son relationship have become more tenuous for many boys and young men, mentors have come to have a greater role in young males' lives. Eventually, they risk talking about their own friendships. The most successful groups achieve this.

A word is in order about male intimacy. Until the end of the 19th century, friendships between men were a vital part of their lives. Husbands and fathers were in close sexual and personal relationships with women, but men also maintained extremely close ties with other men, some younger, some older, some peers. These were the days before the invention of homosexuality, which for several generations of men has cast suspicion on deep male friendships, suggesting that they always have an implicit sexual subtext. This is a legacy of late 19th-century sexology and a century of Freudianism. Freud's own lack of close male friends was anomalous for his time. The 20th century produced a remarkable shift from seeing same-sex sexual relations as a very small subset of intimate relationships between men to a view of intense same-sex relations in general as being always unconsciously sexual, while only occasionally having been "sublimated" into a "purified" friendship. Such a reading of men's relationships with each other has been disastrous. College men's groups answer a need to expose the oddity of American culture in this respect.

Obviously, some male-male relationships will be sexual, but most are not. More important, it is well known that among gay men, intimacy may well be lacking. In fact, for some gay men, becoming part of a men's group might mean finding the first genuine friendship with another male he has known.

One of the first important discoveries made in a men's group, then, is that intimacy between any two members does not imply sexuality, but that something else is going on that men crave, something that our culture, however, no longer values.

Men of college age are renegotiating their relationships with their fathers (if they are on the scene), weighing the differences between friendships with women and sexual relationships with females, reconsidering their boyhood, wondering what fatherhood might mean to them, especially as the father of a boy, and coming to terms with having a male body. These topics increasingly come up in college men's groups.

Other Activities

Apart from the group's regular meetings on campus, the Wagner model includes two other elements that are especially meaningful to members of the group and bring into focus the issue of intimacy: retreats and forming connections with young men in the local community. A few words about each are in order.

Each semester, members of the Men's Study Group spend a weekend at a rural lodge

north of New York City. A college-approved driver who is usually also a member of the group transports the group there in a college van. One member of the group coordinates scheduling the retreat as he does the weekly meetings. Not surprisingly, the weekend is structured around getting to know each other, figuring out living arrangements and preparing meals. However, each man is also invited to be responsible for an hour sometime during the weekend. This may mean leading a walk in the wooded area around the lodge, providing an hour of music-making, or essaying a spiritual practice. Some members of the group pass on “making an hour” during the first retreat. Most of the time, what takes place is given up to serendipity and the exploration of living together as a small group.

Living closely together for even a few days forces situations to form and topics to surface that are usually insulated from discussion by the routines of the regular college day on campus and the option of having a room to go to away from the group. Sometimes the most important “event” during a retreat is the discovery by the group of some previously unknown interest or talent of a member. One turns out to be a remarkable cook. Another knows about living in the wild. For some, the retreat may be a time to be alone for a greater part of the weekend, observing other interactions. For him, the difficulty of closeness hits home. On the other hand, this is an important discovery for each member of the group. Nearly always, new relationships form and existing relationships are modified. These changes become topics of private conversations or discussions in the group back on campus.

Now if all this sounds unlikely and hokey beyond belief for inhabitants of the sophisticated world of New York junior academics, I am here to tell you that we have found that a few days away from cell phones and computers (yes, this is suggested for retreats) is refreshing. By the way, keeping cell phones away except for emergency calls is recommended. The Wagner group has tried it both ways. One result is questioning the world of online relationships (if that they be), the phenomenon of Facebook (which many are now abandoning), and the need for unmedia-ated interactions in a crowded city where people must learn how *not* to look at someone else, whether it be on a street, in packed subway car, or in the campus cafeteria. In short, the retreats foreground face-to-face encounter.

A recent development of the Wagner group has been to try to include young men from the local community. Friends of members of the group are invited to sit in on a session. Some will return. A by-product of this innovation is bringing the college community into closer contact with young men living on Staten Island, New York, where Wagner College is located. The most valuable result of this collaboration has been the realization that young men who are in college and those who are not face the same problems and challenges.

Fundamentals

The Wagner model continues to be modified and redesigned as we gain in experience. Ongoing renovation is part of its youth. Like other centers, however, it has identified some basic features that work for it. We think that a few may be an important



part of any men's center.

I. The Wagner Center secures external funding. Harold Theurer, an alumnus of the college with a young teenage son, and his wife committed to supporting the Center for a two-year start-up period. After that, we will have to look for funding elsewhere. The benefactor has offered to advise the Center on how to raise money to support itself. It should come as no surprise that our supporter is the author of an important children's book on father-son relations, *Hey Dad! Let's Have a Catch!*

While it is recognized by the college as a legitimate student "entity" or activity, the Center values financial independence from the constraints of the institution's budget. This is important. We strongly recommend that every men's center find support by reviewing with a colleague in the Alumni Relations Office prospective contributors for the start-up period and beyond. This will require some effort on the part of the faculty mentor at the outset. Later on, members of the group might look to the local community, parents and friends to help support a center from which their young men can benefit.

II. And who is the faculty mentor? Every college and university campus in the States, Australia, Canada, the UK and Europe has among its tenured faculty a man who is keenly aware of the situation described in the opening section of this paper. As men's centers multiply, they will do so because someone stepped out of the shadows and had the courage to speak up on behalf of young men on the campus he shares with them. Speaking up for them permits college men to begin to speak for themselves again. This means, first of all, talking to each other. Given the current campus culture and the not so "great" male silence, the role of the mentor is significant.

Mentors are not paid for what they do. That is in the nature of mentoring, which is freely given and based on a perceived need that cannot be ignored. This makes mentoring closer to fathering than any other intergenerational male relationship. Do not confuse mentors with advocates for a cause or coaches. Interest in the wellbeing of young men is the sole motivation for organizing a college men's center and this population's wellbeing is not a cause but a moral duty especially for older men. Some mentors are themselves fathers; others are not. Not all have known a father and the intimacy of the son-father relationship, but they understand its power, perhaps precisely because they have missed it. Those who have benefitted from a strong relationship with their fathers have a precious legacy to share. Mentors of young men understand the empty place in a male's experience that forms without the intimacy that a long-term relationship with another man provides. Until recently, the first and most important of these was with the father. Mentors model a kind of relationship that is, however, different from that bond. We believe it is one that college men can emulate in forming friendships with each other.

A mentor realizes that, like fathering, mentoring a young man is something only a man can do. The gratification of mentoring is in seeing the young men for whom they have made a place to meet experience deep friendships. Again, this is more than anything the goal of a college men's group. It is a simple thing, but profound: the authorization of intimacy between men. Like a father, a mentor has a part to play for a time

in a young man's life. That time follows its course and passes.

Given the now nearly universal ethos of competitiveness between men at all levels and in all kinds of work, for a little over a century men have been deprived of close relationships with other men. Compare this to a time when cooperation among farmers or artisans in guilds was essential to the economy of the community. For many men since 1900, the only glimpse they have had of a deeply meaningful relationship with another man was in the context of war: two World Wars and later venues in Korea, Indochina and parts of Asia. While terror and imminent death do galvanize deep friendships, surely they are not the only or the most desirable circumstances in which to form them (Fussell 1975, 1989; Gray 1959). College men are in a setting that is favorable of forming such bonds, especially given the deprecation now showered on fraternities and even some athletic teams by campus culture.

A college men center is effective only if the mentor knows to step back. Providing funding and a place for meeting are obviously necessary functions, as is maintaining a tie with each of the members of the group if he can. He will make recommendations about which member of the group might best coordinate its meetings and retreats. He will provide guidance as needed and act as liaison with the institution. But the effectiveness of a college men's group depends on its being student-driven. This brings me to the third fundamental element of an effective college men's group.

III. Each year of a group's existence requires the presence of at least one strongly committed member. Often, several share the responsibilities of coordinating meetings and providing presence in the Center during the week. Avoiding setting one member up as the "head" or "leader" of the group is desirable, however, just as is downplaying the authority of the faculty mentor. At Wagner, we have been lucky in having had a series of such young men.

Here, then, is a model for a college men's center. It may not be the best and certainly will not work at every institution. Its aspirations are generous but not grandiose. We think it has identified a crucial need young men on college campuses have today. They do not need snazzier dormitories or more technology. They will find and enjoy close physical and emotional relationships with young women. They do not need anyone's help in that area. On the other hand, they do need the acknowledgment that this is a precarious time for college men. Young men welcome the news that deep friendships with other men have always been part of men's lives, even though they are looked upon with suspicion in our time.

IN CONCLUSION

College men's groups are experiments in rediscovering the importance of intimacy and friendships in young men's lives. They are in the service of making college campuses once again a place where young men can feel completely at home. This is of the greatest importance to academe. If the trend identified above were to play itself out, the last bachelor's degree awarded to a male would be conferred in this century. That surely will not happen, but it is a sobering and alarming thought that such a projection



has been calculated at all. As for friendships between men, they may well be critical for maintaining a sane sociopolitical environment for everyone and modeling loving and supportive relationships between the sexes as well as between parents and their children.

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Manliness, Gentlemanliness, and the Manhood Question in George Eliot's *Adam Bede*

DENNIS GOUWS



Adam Bede revisits topical changes to English manliness and gentlemanliness at the turn of the nineteenth century. In her novel, written almost sixty years into the 1800s, George Eliot recognizes how new thinking about these gendered concepts changed the traditional ways men governed their manhood. Arthur Donnithorne and Adam Bede most prominently represent contending late-eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century forms of manhood in the novel, and they fittingly test their mettle by boxing, which many contemporary Britons thought fostered manly and gentlemanly qualities. Both men are profoundly affected by their fight. Each learns the limits of his particular form of manhood: Arthur realizes that traditional gentlemanliness no longer entitles him to unaccountable behavior; Adam discovers that attaining manhood requires a commitment to managing manly conduct attentively.



Adam Bede revisits topical changes to English manliness and gentlemanliness at the turn of the nineteenth century. In her novel, written almost sixty years into the 1800s, George Eliot recognizes how new thinking about these gendered concepts changed the traditional ways men governed their manhood. Since the fourteenth century, men's identities and conduct had been conceived of as a question of manhood; *manhood* had elucidated men's difference from women and boys, men's sexuality, men's duty to

society, and men's courage.¹ Manhood, moreover, had traditionally been contingent, a reputation that a man had to attain and maintain. In newly industrial nineteenth-century, the manhood question considered traditional and new ways a man might grow into and sustain a meaningful, productive, and commendable type of manhood. Arthur Donnithorne and Adam Bede most prominently represent contending traditional and new forms of manhood in the novel, and they fittingly test their mettle by boxing, which many contemporary Britons thought fostered manly and gentlemanly qualities.

Manliness and gentlemanliness contributed to the manhood question established concepts for assessing repute. From the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, men primarily understood their gender-specific, socially prescribed conduct as an issue of manliness, and they customarily expressed their manliness by behaving with fortitude.² Attaining manhood, therefore, depended on recurrent demonstrations of manly vigor and self-discipline. In addition, as John Tosh observes, "manliness expresses perfectly the important truth that boys become men, not just by growing up, but by acquiring a variety of manly qualities and manly competencies as part of a conscious process which has no close parallel in the traditional experience of young women" (*Manliness* 31). Men alone bore the responsibility of managing their manliness, and although their actions certainly impacted women and children, men's inattention to this monitoring had uniquely serious sociopolitical and personal consequences. If a man failed to sustain manly behavior, he might have become unmanned, a passive condition described by the *OED* as "deprived of courage," or "made weak and timid." An unmanned man would be considered unmanly and consequently condemned for his lack of determination (commonly referred to as *pluck* or *bottom*) and, possibly for being effeminate.

Although nineteenth-century Britons became increasingly alarmed at its subversive homoerotic potential, effeminacy had traditionally denoted both irresponsible political conduct (demonstrated by corrupt manners and military unpreparedness) and insalubrious personal conduct, exemplified by luxury (indulgent extravagance) or unconventional sexuality (often exemplified by a love-struck man's willing surrender to his desire for a woman.)³ The Regency dandy; defined by Ellen Moers as "a man solely devoted to his own perfection through a ritual of taste" who "stood for superiority, irresponsibility, inactivity"; was its most conspicuous turn-of-the-century exemplar (13). Many thought that infirm, undisciplined state leadership was a symptom of effeminacy and, consequently, a threat to national security; in addition, men who were overly concerned with politeness and sensibility were often considered effeminate.⁴ Effeminacy was believed to have infected body politic and Britons alike. At the turn of the nineteenth century Britons believed that it inevitably threatened the health of the body politic because it modelled *louche* foreign manners ostensible in Orientalist fantasies, Italian culture, and French politeness. Carolyn D. Williams suggests this was because, "[t]he association between luxury, warm climates, and perceived oriental degeneracy encouraged assumptions that luxury and effeminacy took their rise in the south-east, flowing towards the north-west in an ineluctable current that threatened to engulf all manly virtue in its path" (23).⁵ Suspicious



eighteenth-century Britons lampooned as effeminate Italian and French culture, and their idiosyncratic flaws were notably personified in caricatures of the opera singer (otherwise the *castrato*) and the mannered fop. According to Williams the *castrati* embodied, “the enervating effects of luxury, and the degeneration of ancient Rome to modern Italy,” and after the publication of John Dennis’s *Essay on the Opera* (1711) and *Essay upon Publick Spirit* (1726), many in Britain believed that all male opera singers were *castrati* (183). Moreover, Williams notes that for Alexander Pope and his *milieu*, “Italian opera [was] the malign reverse of epic: an art form destructive of manliness, patriotism, and public spirit” (181). Effeminate Italian opera, therefore, was considered antithetical to and corrosive of manly British patriotism. In late-eighteenth Britain, French culture and military power had most urgently threatened British sovereignty. French manners influenced the British aristocracy, and these aristocrats’ love of luxury led to a form of trickle-down effeminacy which, as Kathleen Wilson observes, “was chiefly objectionable because it had produced a weak and enervated fighting force that was undermining Britain’s position in the world by relinquishing to France her ‘Empire of the Sea’”; consequently, “the aristocratic state was identified with ‘French influence’ and corruption at home and with timidity, effeminacy and ignominy abroad” (189). The British nobility were perceived as effeminate for valuing luxury over patriotism. The influence of French manners on British politeness also contributed to the effeminacy problem. In the eighteenth century men increasingly indulged in what was perceived to be the women-centered, “refined kind of suffering that preoccupied cultivators of sensibility” (Barker-Benfield xx). Men’s sensitivity to women’s concerns potentially compromised manliness. Michèle Cohen notes, moreover, that gentlemen practiced French manners in the company of women, where men were expected to converse with formal civility: “politeness and conversation, though necessary to the fashioning of the gentleman, were thought to be effeminating not just because they could be achieved only in the company of women, but because they were modeled on the French. The question is could men be at once polite and manly?” (47).

This important framing of the manhood question, as an issue of reconciling politeness and manliness, was addressed, as Cohen notes, by a change in attitude to politeness: “By the 1780s, priorities had been significantly altered....The particularly affinity between French and politeness which, early in the century, had served to deplore English monosyllabic harshness and taciturnity, now served as a foil to celebrate these very same traits” (56). Popular British attitudes to politeness (and the French who exemplified them) shifted from diffidence to defiance. To prevent unmanly, effeminate conduct (resulting in subjecting oneself to overpowering desire for a woman and adopting polite manners in their sphere of influence), manly behavior required chivalric courage (on behalf of a desired woman) and plain speaking rather than formal politeness.⁶ A revived interest in chivalry, a code of “disinterested bravery, honour, and courtesy” (*OED*), enabled men to understand their manhood as manly, gentlemanly, and civil—or, as Cohen argues, “chivalry provided a vocabulary for refashioning the gentleman as masculine, integrating national identity with enlightenment notions of progress and civilization” (“Manners” 315). This new,

progressive chivalry enabled men to be direct, manly, and (even if not so by birth) gentlemanly.

Manly neo-chivalric nationalism and imperialism (its foreign-policy form), celebrated in those predominately male arenas of war and politics, could effectively calm anxieties about an increasingly effeminate body politic in Britain. Evident in Williams' discussion of the *castrati* was a vivid cautionary tale about the degenerative impact of luxury on society. Barker-Benfield similarly notes, "Those who warned Englishmen that effeminacy was the inevitable effect of luxury had the most powerful of all precedents in mind, the history for the degeneracy of Rome, from virtuous republic to luxurious empire" (104). A virile patriotism would cure what ailed the body politic, uniting Britons in a manly common sociopolitical cause. In addition, as Wilson observes, "empire—its attainment, acquisition, settlement and preservation—was now represented as the antidote to aristocratic 'cultural treason' and effeteness, the bulwark and proving ground of the true national character, of national (and middle-class) potency, identity and virtue" (189). This middle-class militarism, inculcated "not just by direct incentives or because of pressure from above, but also by idealism, by a desperate concern for their homeland and by their youth" as Linda Colley puts it, served both manliness and nationalism (302). Karen Downing similarly argues that, "the surge in membership of volunteer and militia regiments after 1793" suggests broad middle-class interest in "demonstrating manliness" as a means of attaining and sustaining manhood (348). By the early nineteenth century Colley notes that "more young, unmarried men were available than ever before, brash, eager, hungry for a chance to fight (particularly perhaps on home ground) and desperately concerned not to seem a coward in the eyes of friends and lovers" (303). Cowardice implied both unpatriotic social opprobrium and unmanliness. Nineteenth-century Britons inherited this manly remedy for the declining health of the body politic evident in both an increasing national and imperial pride and a masculine poetics, texts informed by topical men's deeds, consisting of what Colley calls a "cult of heroic endeavour and aggressive maleness" (303).⁷ This new form of manhood countered constitutional effeminacy with a chivalric, disciplined, and powerful assertion of national unity, and one of its most popular manifestations was boxing.

Boxing occasioned social unity and an honorable opportunity for betterment. Fist fighting was popular with working men, and as Philip Mason observes, "through [the eighteenth century] and into the next, an indulgence, sometimes an affection" was felt for a rich man who listed among his accomplishments "an amateur of boxing" (82).⁸ An important reason for this broad interest in boxing was a growing consensus about what made a man honorable. Downing observes that, "a shared meaning of honor was becoming established during the eighteenth century across the social spectrum as the idea spread that individual virtue could be earned through deeds rather than heredity" (334). Regardless of their rank, men could earn respect through the skilled and disciplined use of their energies in fair competition. Reflecting the topical shift from valuing polite manhood to manly manhood, honor, as David Castronovo notes, had gone "from being a matter of forms and appearances to being a matter of character" (30). Turn-of-the-century boxing matches could certainly be



controversial: Michael Brander reports that, “Pickpockets at any such meeting were an accepted hazard, but the prize-ring roughs far exceeded them, even being successful on occasion in stopping the fight if it was not going the way they wished” (170). The ideal prize fighter, however, was popularly described as, “mild and sociable in demeanor, conducting himself with discretion and civility, displaying respectable manners”; however, when he was fighting, he was, “steady in his strategy, was cool of temper (quickness to temper and submission to unrestrained passions were the cause of failure), was capable of giving and taking powerful blows, and had unquestionable ‘bottom’” (Downing 334). These manly traits suggest that the mastery of social conventions (including respectable rather than refined manners) and an honorable character could earn a man esteem and social advancement. As Downing notes, “There was great appeal, therefore, in a boxer who seemed to have found a self-controlled equilibrium: one that embodied not only the characteristics of a champion but also those of a gentleman” (346). Most fighters were artisans or laborers; distinguishing themselves as gentleman boxers could earn them a more agreeable form of manhood.⁹

Gentlemanliness traditionally denoted a man’s distinguished rank as well as his appropriately chivalrous and refined conduct.¹⁰ Before the nineteenth-century a British gentleman could only be of noble birth or from the gentry (the social rank between the aristocrat and the yeoman). Access to the gentry traditionally depended on what Robin Gilmour calls “a system of subtle exclusions” which

conferred gentility on the army officer; on the clergyman of the established church, but not the Dissenter; on the London physician, but not the surgeon or the attorney; on the man of “liberal education,” but only if he had received that education at Oxford or Cambridge, from which the Dissenters were excluded and which was, in effect, a training-ground for Church of England clergymen. (*Idea 7*)

This arcane system ensured “the prestige of those occupations which reinforced the stability of social hierarchy based on the ownership of land,” but initially “had little to offer the new men who were creating the industrial revolution” (*Idea 7*). Nineteenth-century gentlemanliness, however, gradually accommodated new kinds of men. Gilmour observes that “it was not the possession of a caste, like the French *gentilhomme*”; gentlemanliness was not exclusively based on blood and was, therefore, open to the kind of redefinition that occurred in the nineteenth century (*Victorian 20*). This social elasticity enabled upward mobility, eventually including self-made men and captains of industry among the ranks of gentlemen, but the values of these generally manly gentlemen often conflicted with those reputedly unmanly (even effeminate) gentlemen from the aristocracy or the gentry. Gilmour notes that “Between what Dickens understood by ‘manly’ and what Lord Chesterfield would have accepted as ‘gentlemanly’ an important change in attitudes has taken place,” and that *manly* derived “much of its force from the attack on the supposed effeminacy of dandyism and being used generally to connote a wholesome disregard for the niceties of etiquette and the cramping decorum of the ‘fine gentleman’ ideal” (*Idea 17, 85*). The new manly gentleman valued meritorious honor and integrity over heredity and appearances, and

Eliot dramatizes the conflict between Arthur's traditional gentlemanly manhood and Adam's manhood, which anticipates this new manly gentlemanliness.

In her journal Eliot remarks that "the character of Adam" and "his relation to Arthur Donnithorne" were central to her first thoughts about the novel, and in its events she provides sufficient details about each man for readers clearly to discern his position *vis-a-vis* the manhood question (*Journals* 297). Arthur and Adam both imagine successful manhood involves doing one's duty; what distinguishes them are those rewards each feels he might justly reap as a result. Arthur's manhood depends on his reputation as a gentleman. His "love of patronage" was primarily selfish because he "liked to do everything that was handsome, and to have his handsome deeds recognized" (208). Moreover, he "liked to feel his own importance" and "cared a great deal for the good-will" of the people in his community (309). His imagined future manhood involves him performing a benevolent public role:

all his pictures of the future, when he should come into the estate, were made up of a prosperous, contented tennantry, adoring their landlord, who would be the model of an English gentleman—mansion in the first-rate order, all elegance and high taste—jolly housekeeping—finest stud in Loamshire—purse open to all public projects.... (170)

When he does inherit the estate, he thinks he "would show the Loamshire people what a fine country gentleman was," imagining himself, "spoken well of as a first-rate landlord; by-and-by making speeches at election dinners, and showing a wonderful knowledge of agriculture; the patron of new plows and drills, the severe upbraider of negligent landowners, and withal a jolly fellow that everybody must like" (483). This public performance of his duties would be complemented by those of his future wife, "who would play the lady-wife to the first-rate country gentleman" (484). Arthur's gentlemanly exhibition would even include a "picture" of married Adam and Hetty Sorel in its "panorama" (485). Away from public scrutiny Arthur would, as a traditional gentleman, "have property enough to support numerous peccadilloes" whose possible adverse consequences he could remedy with a "handsome" pension or "expensive *bon-bons*, packed up and directed by his own hand" (170). His rank entitles him to appear a respected gentleman, and his money would license him discreetly to indulge his appetites without serious consequences. Arthur's repute, however, would depend on his ability to demonstrate dutiful manhood and manly self-discipline. Although Adam believes him to be, "one o' those gentlemen as wishes to do the right thing, and to leave the world a bit better than he found it," the narrator wonders "whether he would have self-mastery enough to be always as harmless and purely beneficent as his good-nature led him to desire" (314, 170). This concern about his manliness is corroborated by the topical luxurious and sexually unconventional tropes that frame Arthur's desire. He discloses, for example, a homoerotic childhood Orientalist fantasy when he recalls, "I used to think if ever I was a rich sultan, I would make Adam my grand-vizier. And I believe now, he would bear the exaltation as well as any poor wise man in an Eastern story" (106). Arthur's cultural tastes seem *outré*. When contemplating an encounter with Hetty he sings a song from Gay's *Beggar's Opera* that, Stephen Gill remarks,



reveals “Arthur’s state of mind”; the lyrics describe a man’s luxurious surrender to his desire for a woman: “Her Kisses / Dissolve us in Pleasure, and Soft Repose” (600). The powerful influence of this effeminate desire on Arthur is clearly articulated both when he concedes, “he would have given up three years of his youth for the happiness of abandoning himself without remorse to his passion for Hetty” and when the narrator observes, “a man never lies with more delicious languor under the influence of a passion, than when he has persuaded himself he will subdue it tomorrow” (330, 334). In keeping with his effeminate preoccupation, Arthur’s reading matter at the time notably includes Dr. John Moore’s racy novel about a morally corrupt Italian nobleman-seducer, *Zeluco*. Arthur’s traditional gentlemanliness consequently affords him to opportunities to indulge in the kind of effeminate luxury that could compromise how he manages his manliness.

Adam’s manhood depends on his honorably performing his manly duty. He strives to do “a man’s plain duty” which consists of having “the skill and conscience to do well the tasks that lie before [him]” (258). This Carlyle-inspired productivity topically defines the individual responsibility a man had to manage his manhood as an ethical question of meritorious labor and anticipates the “quintessence of individualism” and close identification with work that Tosh argues were central to Victorian manliness (*Manliness* 93, 92).¹¹ The narrator notes that, “Adam had confidence in his ability to achieve something in the future; he felt sure he should some day ... be able to maintain a family, and make a good broad path for himself” (254). Although Adam “was very susceptible to the influence of rank,” he decisively defers to men with useful knowledge and personal integrity, choosing to “admit all established claims unless he saw very clear grounds for questioning them”; if, however, he saw fit, “he would have maintained his opinions against the largest landed proprietor in Loamshire or Stonyshire” (209). Adam’s confident reasoning is a tribute to his commitment to furthering his education (at Bartle Massey’s school) and Eliot’s acknowledgment of a trend to self-improvement evident among nineteenth-century working-class men. Just as turn-of-the-century masculine poetics described new, manly ways of attaining manhood, popular biographical and fictional literary examples of appropriate industrial manhood increasingly became available to working-class Victorian readers—one of which was Eliot’s first novel.¹² Gilmour recognizes this significant trend (and Eliot’s part in it): “Industrial society had its own legitimating myths and models.... The independent, night-school attending, self-helping artisan was one of the models which middle-class writers held up to the working class, in novels like George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859)” (*Victorian* 21).¹³

Adam’s diligence and integrity are central to his sense of honor, and he is esteemed for it. Mr. Irwine, for example, asserts, “when a man whose duty lies in that sort of work shows a character which would make him an example in any station, his merit should be acknowledged. [Adam] is one of those to whom honor is due, and his friends should delight to honor him” (313). Arthur shares this respect for Adam and wishes him “all the prosperity in life that he deserves” (312). These tributes acknowledge that growing nineteenth-century consensus that merit should earn honor from all ranks of society. Adam’s open, manly manhood, evident to all in his duty, integrity, and

honor; contrasts favorably with Arthur's gentlemanly manhood that consists of an overt show of dutifulness and a covert sense of entitlement. This impression that Adam is honest and meritorious while Arthur is duplicitous and a dilettante is strikingly apparent in their perceived military capability.

At a time when military preparedness and a man's ability to fight were important indicators of manliness, Adam seems more inherently martial than Arthur. Adam is praised for his soldierly demeanor even though he is not a soldier. He is described as having, "the air of a soldier standing at ease"; Colonel Townley, moreover, describes him as, "marching along like a soldier" and asserts, "We want such fellows as he to lick the French (50, 61). Adam's battle-ready manliness convinces while Arthur military bearing does not. Although he is a captain, Arthur lacks military discipline and training: he is "only a captain in the Loamshire militia," and consequently, as John R. Reed observes, neither "a trained warrior," nor "a genuine officer" because "[at] the time in which the narrative is set, militias were almost comical," serving primarily as vehicles for youthful demonstrations of manliness (*Adam* 104; "Soldier" 272). Arthur laments being away from his regiment not because he is foregoing training with them but because they were "enjoying themselves at Windsor" (172). Adam Bede, on the other hand, has the manly discipline and "soldierly bearing" that make up what Reed calls, "soldierliness" (277, 278). Arthur's and Adam's true pluck is tested when their disagreement concerning Hetty turns physical.

Arthur and Adam seem capable boxers, yet their attitudes to fighting differ. Both men are physically able: Arthur, who "could hit better than most men at Oxford," is described as "looking as if he could deliver well from the left shoulder, and floor his man"; Adam, who has "an iron will as well as an iron arm," had once fought "for fun" but will now only fight when another man "behaves like a scoundrel" (105, 212, 211). Like the rich "amateur of boxing" observed by Mason, Arthur merely considers pugilism one of his gentlemanly accomplishments. Adam demonstrates the "respectable manners" and the ability to "give and take powerful blows" described by Downing, but his "quickness to temper" prevents him from attaining that "self-controlled equilibrium" evident in an ideal gentlemanly boxer. He admits being "the cause o' poor Gil Tranter being laid up for a fortnight" and according to Bartle Massey had "pommelled young Mike Holdworth for wanting to pass a bad shilling before [he] knew whether he was in jest or earnest" (211, 290-91). While Arthur and Adam argue over the primacy of gentlemanly entitlement and chivalrous, manly honor in this chapter; they box because each is unable to control his manliness.

When confronted by Adam in the woods, Arthur postures like a dissolute Regency dandy: having drunk "more wine than usual at dinner ... he sauntered forth with elaborate carelessness—his flushed face, his evening dress of fine cloth and fine linen, his white jewelled hands half thrust into his waistcoat pickets" (342). He makes light of having just kissed Hetty and feels entitled to ignore Adam who, resolved to conduct a manly defense of Hetty's honor, "had told himself that he would not give loose to passion, he would only speak the right thing" (342). From this point in the chapter the narrator intrusively sides with Adam, contrasting Arthur's duplicitous performance with Adam's honorable integrity. Arthur is "preoccupied with the part he was playing";



however, neither the narrator nor Adam accept it (343). Arthur is shocked by Adam's defiant attitude: "you don't deceive me by your light words" Adam asserts, and the narrator agrees that Arthur had "thrown quite enough dust into honest Adam's eyes" (343). Adam, on his chivalrous high horse, holds Arthur accountable for the probable consequences of his entitlement and defends Hetty's honor: "You know, as well as I do, what it's to lead to, when a gentleman like you gives kisses and makes love to a young woman like Hetty" (344). Displaying his characteristic independence of mind, Adam argues that this matter concerns honorable conduct rather than appropriate deference to rank.

They fight because they feel slighted. Arthur throws the first punch because he feels insulted by Adam's insubordinate remarks challenging him to "fight ... like a man" and accusing him of being "a coward and a scoundrel"; Adam is enraged because he claims that because Arthur considers him "a common man," he feels entitled to "injure" him "without answering for it" (346).¹⁴ The narrator naturalizes Adam's victory as physically inevitable because he is manly and strong, while Arthur is effeminate and weak:

The delicate-handed gentleman was a match for the workman in everything but strength, and Arthur's skill in parrying enabled him to protract the struggle for some long moments. But between unarmed men, the battle is to the strong, where the strong is no blunderer, and Arthur must sink under a well-planted blow of Adam's, as a steel rod is broken by an iron bar. (347)

This passage topically suggests that skillful evasion is no match for physical competence when men contest as equals; that when a gentleman is not protected by rank, the manly worker will deservedly beat him if he is of stronger constitution. In addition, his triumph will be deemed honorable because it resulted from his demonstration of manly character, which as Castronovo notes gained increasing currency in nineteenth-century Britain. It is, however, a hollow victory for Adam because he feels "sickened by the vanity of his own rage" and he "[shudders] at the thought of his own strength" (347). His passionate vanity led him to assume a chivalrous defense of Hetty was appropriate because of false assumptions he had made about her feelings for him. Girouard observes that "one of the great dangers of chivalry was that it could make people totally out of touch with reality" resulting in them "revering women who did not want to be revered, serving others, who would have preferred to serve themselves, gallantry charging in the wrong direction" (270). Adam has been unmanned because his judgment was clouded by his chivalrous feelings. Concerning his strength Adam later concludes about knocking down Arthur, "I felt what poor empty work it was, as soon as I'd done it" (509). He now "distrusted himself: he had learned to dread the violence of his own feeling" (509). Unlike the gentlemanly boxer, Adam was unable to temper his feelings with careful thoughts and strive for "a self-controlled equilibrium." After the fight, Arthur loses his reputation as a gentleman and is temporarily unmanned. He keenly feels a twofold loss because alongside his

sensitiveness to opinion, the loss of Adam's respect was a shock to his self-contentment

which suffused his imagination with the sense that he had sunk in all eyes; as a sudden shock of fear from some real peril makes a nervous woman afraid even to step, because all her perceptions are suffused with a sense of danger. (356)

Arthur's public persona and private desiring self implode, exposing him as unmanly—Eliot's devastating simile suggests his womanly trepidation about his future manhood. This exposure has taught Arthur how crucial an honorable reputation is to gentlemanliness. Both men are profoundly affected by the fight. Each learns the limits of his particular form of manhood: Arthur realizes that traditional gentlemanliness no longer entitles him to unaccountable behavior; Adam discovers that attaining manhood requires a commitment to managing manly conduct attentively.

Both Adam and Arthur eventually attain respectable forms of manhood, but their achievements require a gambit. Having learned more effectively to manage his expectations and his manliness, Adam marries Dinah, even though doing so meant that "there was a tinge of sadness in his deep joy" (578). Adam has, moreover, learned a valuable lesson about the unintended consequences of misplaced chivalrous behavior. Arthur is now a colonel, but he is ill, unmarried, and exiled from his home community. His last words in the novel acknowledge "the truth" of the Adam's assertion that, "There's a sort of wrong that cannot be made up for" (584). Arthur accepts that to earn their respectability, gentlemen must be held accountable for all of their conduct. Although English manliness redefined gentlemanliness in the nineteenth-century, both concepts continued to be useful indicators of men's attempts at attaining and maintain manhood. In this retrospective novel George Eliot famously claimed, "I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" (221). She certainly succeeded in describing the drama and the costs incurred by embodied men such as Adam and Arthur who strove to improve their lives while managing their appetites and their dutiful relationships with others.

Notes

¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter, *OED*) cites the first such occurrence of *manhood* in 1340; distinguishes men from boys and women in 4.a and 4.b; describes a man's sexuality in 4.d; and notes men's societal duty and courage in 3. and 5. respectively. Peter N. Stearns concisely traces significant classical, religious, and socio-economic influences on the history of Western manhood his second chapter, "The Tradition of Manhood: Western Patriarchy."

²The *OED* lists definitive examples of such expressions of manliness occurring from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries in 2. Defining *manliness* as "the traditional word for prescriptive masculinity," Tosh briefly surveys the history of the term in *Manliness and Masculinities*, chapter one, "The Making of Manhood and the Uses of History" and chapter three, "The Old Adam and the New Man," 72-76. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall examine the religious, sexual, and commercial views of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century manliness in *Family Fortunes*, chapters two, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus': men women and religion," nine, "Lofty pine and clinging vine': living with gender in the middle class," and five "A man must act': men and the enterprise." Elizabeth Foyster discusses how prior to the

nineteenth century men managed their aggression, negotiating a “manly self-control and governance” that did not smack of foppishness, understood as a surrender of “all the traditionally manly virtues of hardiness, courage and strength” (165). Harvey Claflin Mansfield briefly but usefully surveys prominent sixteenth- through nineteenth-century philosophers (Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Burke, Kant, Hegel, and John Stuart Mill) on their association of manliness and liberalism in chapter six, “The Manly Liberal.” Carolyn D. Williams examines eighteenth-century assumptions about maleness and manliness on 10-16.

³ Foyster notes that

in the seventeenth century ‘effeminate’ was a term that was applied to those men who were deviant in some way within their heterosexual relationships, it was not until the mid-eighteenth century that it began to connote homosexuality. The deviancy which was typical of men who were in love with women was that they fell so excessively in love that they relinquished their control and power to their lovers. (56)

By the mid nineteenth century, anxieties about effeminacy’s subversive potential were expressed in what James Eli Adams calls a “hermeneutics of suspicion” concerning male monastic and artistic communities. This suspicion arose from “a gendered rhetoric that facilitated the subsequent sexualizing of gender transgression, in which ‘effeminacy’ was seen not as a public failure of forthright courage, but as the outward manifestation of a private sexual deviance” (*Dandies* 227, 17).

⁴ Williams discusses the corrupting impact of effeminacy and luxury on the body politic in eighteenth-century Britain in chapter one, “Manliness and the Body Politic.” On concerns about men’s ability to bear arms see Tosh *Manliness* 65-66. Linda Colley discusses British recruitment of men for war in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century in chapter seven, “Manpower,” and the decline of British military preparedness after the Napoleonic wars in chapter eight, “Victories?”

⁵ Williams explains, “In early modern Britain, the same paradigm was applied to different countries. Italy was now portrayed as a source as well as a victim of corruption, especially by critics of the Roman Catholic Church. The most consistent vituperation, however, was reserved for France, whose geographical proximity, military rivalry, and pervasive cultural influence made her an object of suspicion, envy, and contempt” (23).

⁶ Cohen convincingly argues that, “since the middle of the eighteenth century,” a shift occurred “from the hegemonic ideal of politeness to a new ideal of gentlemanliness incorporating elements of a revived chivalry” (“Manners” 325). Mark Girouard concisely surveys the history of English chivalry and its late eighteenth-century revival in chapter two, “Survival and Revival.”

⁷ Fiction also celebrated new homosocial opportunities for proving oneself manly. Herbert Sussman observes that “British writers often set the masculine wild zone in remote geographic space, the ships of the British Navy, the colonies, or the imperial war,” locales whose purpose Tosh notes mirrored a British imperialism that enabled masculinities that satisfied aggressive needs, that diffused domestic anxieties about masculine toughness, and that accommodated forms of homosociality unavailable at home (*Victorian* 44). On imperial aggression and its presence in masculine poetics see Patrick Dunae, “Boy’s Literature”; Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* 234-64 and 406-24; James Louis, “Tom Brown’s Imperialist Sons.” On domestic anxieties about masculine toughness see Davidoff and Hall, “The Family” 105 and Elaine Showalter *Sexual Anarchy* 4-6 and 78-95; on homosociality see Dunae’s *Gentlemen Emigrants: from the British Public Schools to the Cana-*

dian Frontier and Tosh's *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* chapter nine, "Manliness, Masculinities and the New Imperialism, 1880-1900." Colley cites as evidence of the combination of heroism and aggression "that was so pronounced in patrician art and literature at this time was just as prominent in popular ballads and songs" a Newcastle song, "The Pitman's Reveneg [sic] against Bounaparte," whose jingoism anticipates nineteenth-century imperial masculine poetics:

Then to parade the pitmen went,
 Wi' hearts both stout and strong man,
 God smash the French we are so strang;
 We'll shoot them every one, man:
 God smash me sark if I would stick,
 To tumble them a down the pit,
 As fast as I cou'd thra a coal.... (qtd. in Colley 303)

⁸ Downing discusses the class dynamics of boxing on 330, 225-340.

⁹ Downing notes that, "There were pragmatic motivations for rural laborers and their urban counterparts in London and the new industrial towns to step in to the ring... Many fighters came from the lowest paid trades ... and from occupations such as coal heaving, where the job requirement for physical strength was an asset in the ring. The bulk of fighters came from the largest single group in the population—artisans and laborers" (36-337).

¹⁰ The *OED* definitions suggest the traditional importance of both social position and conduct to being a gentleman: "A man of gentle birth, or having the same heraldic status as those of gentle birth; ... but also applied to a person of distinction without precise definition of rank" (1.a); "A man in whom gentle birth is accompanied by appropriate qualities and behaviour; hence, in general, a man of chivalrous instincts and fine feelings" (3.a.).

¹¹ Eliot's phrase references "The Everlasting Yea" in Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. Teufelsdröckh learns from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* to "Do the Duty which lies nearest thee" (148).

¹² R. K. Webb usefully surveys the tastes of and changes to the pacific and diverse nineteenth-century reading population in "The Victorian Reading Public." Interestingly, in a observation whose numbers are at odds with Gilmour's below, he remarks on "a tiny minority of the working classes...sober and intelligent artisans" for whom "knowledge was power" (198).

¹³ Gilmour's subsequent discussion concerning models for working men's aspirations exemplifies new aspirations to respectability and gentlemanliness, useful to understanding respectable, productive industrial manhood in many of Eliot's novels, but most notably in *Felix Holt*:

Smiles did not so much develop a new model as codify an old one, which seems more appropriate to the pre-factory stage of industrial development and to the minority which has usually been seen as the 'labour aristocracy'; yet recent work in Victorian history has argued that the aspiration to an independent 'respectability' was much more widely spread in the mid- and late-Victorian working class.... The ideology of self-help appealed to this and to the individualism which was the religious inheritance of the new industrial proletariat, and may explain something of their resistance to trade unionism in the nineteenth century. Self-help, like the gentleman—and Smiles's final chapter is called 'Character: the True Gentleman'—may have played an important part in reconciling new groups to the respectability-seeking thrust of the new society. (21)



¹⁴ Downing mentions a “writer known only as an ‘amateur of eminence’” who “believed that the higher orders should be skilled in boxing to guard against ‘the insults of inferiors’ who took advantage when they thought ‘genteel’ men could not defend themselves” (339).

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Boaz Behaving Badly

MALINA SAVAL



Temper tantrums, emotional meltdowns and screaming fits in public venues are everyday events in the life of Boaz, a feisty and affectionate five year-old boy with behavioral issues and developmental delays. The wondrous yet sometimes thorny world of boyhood is presented from the perspective of a mother who feels the incessant need to leap to her young son's defense.



Boaz woke up the day he turned five a changed man. It was like something out of Kafka, only better, because Bo didn't scream, "I NEED to watch TV!" or fling his soaked Pampers pull-up diaper across the room like he was a major league baseball pitcher hurling a 90 mile-per-hour curveball across home plate. On cue, as if he were embracing the beginning of a new year in his young verdant life, Boaz climbed into the bed I shared with my husband, Paul, our two-year-old daughter, Ayla (she has a toddler bed; never uses it), and our two grossly entitled cloud-white Bichon Frise-poodle mutts that have come to believe they are human. He buried his head in my chest as we all wished him a happy birthday, and politely asked for his sippy cup.

At breakfast at Central Park, a local Pasadena eatery, Boaz ate voraciously—four scrambled eggs, apple juice, ice water, several packets of strawberry jam—a rarity for a kid who normally subsists on chocolate milk and cereal bars from Trader Joe's. He used his cutlery and sipped his beverages through a straw. He didn't bang Ayla over the head with a butter knife or throw a tantrum when the waiter took away his menu before he was finished pretending to read it. Bo's food remained on the table. It was as though over the stretch of one good night's sleep he had been completely transformed, this kid who was prone to pitching fits all day, every day, for whatever reason, often for no reason at all.

This morning things were different. Boaz didn't clench his fists in heated frustration, his face turning an apoplectic shade of red like he was about to explode because his toast had broken apart. He didn't throw himself onto the ground like a bad actor playing dead in a Shakespeare play and punch the floor with tight-fisted blows because the restaurant didn't carry strawberry-banana smoothies. He didn't push the salt and pepper shakers slowly over the table's edge, watching with mischievous wide-eyed wonder as they plummeted to their deaths, shattering to pieces as a pool of salt-and-pepper coagulated on the wooden floor below.

Suddenly, as if he had imbibed a bottle of Alice in Wonderland-like potion and emotionally matured overnight, Boaz was smiling, sanguine, laughing—a perfect gentleman in size 4-T clothes.

After we'd gotten the check, Boaz wiped his face clean with a napkin. With remnants of strawberry jam on his upper lip and in his soft puppy dog voice that rises gently at the end of each sentence, he asked when we were going to ride the ponies, as I had promised, because this was his birthday and he was turning five.

Boaz must have ridden his little almond brown Shetland a total of sixteen times around the white-fenced corral, grinning sheepishly as I tried to snap pictures when he trotted past the viewing area, the pony gently snorting and shaking its shiny golden-sugary-brown mane as if he were performing in an equine beauty pageant. Boaz is happiest on a horse—calm, serene, focused, and quietly submissive. Boaz showed that pony respect. He looked like a movie still from the documentary "The Horse Boy," about a British couple that takes its autistic son on a horseback journey across the vast uninhabited landscape of Mongolia in search of a cure. He belonged on that horse.

Boaz wasn't autistic—not unless you counted the 45 minutes he was observed by a clinical psychologist who diagnosed Boaz with being on the "spectrum" because he stared at the wheels of a toy truck; later there'd be other psychologists, other diagnoses—but on that horse he was lost in his own little world, carefree and swept up on the romance of it all, communing with nature and the surrounding greenery of Los Angeles' Griffith Park.

And as I watched him I thought, maybe this whole time Boaz was just being four.



When Boaz was two I took him to the pediatrician for his scheduled routine physical.



“How many words does he have in his vocabulary?” asked the pediatrician.

“Two,” I shrugged. “Three.”

“Three?”

“I think. Mama and Dada and—”

“That’s not good.”

I looked over at Boaz sitting on the floor digging through a basket of books, most of them Spanish translations of Dr. Seuss and P.D. Eastman titles. It hadn’t really occurred to me that he should have a more extensive vocabulary. I only knew that while other kids his age could point to their nose or ears or head and say their corresponding names, Boaz showed an active interest in grunting and pointing to objects he wanted/demanded, be it orange juice, a ball, or a butterfly fluttering past. Looking back it’s all a bit of a blur, but I remember simply thinking: He’s just being Boaz.

“He should have more words?” I asked the pediatrician.

The pediatrician nodded as she surveyed Bo’s chart. “Yes,” she said. “He should have at least twenty-five.”

Several rounds of language disorder assessments and hearing tests later, Boaz was diagnosed with both a receptive and expressive speech delay. At this same time he started preschool, whining his way through finger painting, snack and morning recess. Because he was ridiculously cute and infectiously affectionate—and it probably helped that I dressed him like a miniature skate rat with Vans, cool designer tees and Appaman shorts—he was an instant pet among his teachers.

Bo’s new speech-language pathologist was smitten. Emily was young and blond, with azure blue eyes and a sweet, patient disposition. And she was paid by the state, which made this whole thing possible since neither my husband nor I could afford a private speech therapist. Boaz sobbed whenever she’d lead him into the room in her office with its stacks of learning toys and blocks; then he’d sob when it was time to leave. I believe Boaz had a bit of a crush.

By the time his sister Ayla was born in November 2008, Boaz learned his fourth word: “Baby.”



But as his expressive language skills steadily improved, Boaz wasn’t making much progress in the way of his receptive ones. If you asked Boaz a question, he might only understand one or two words - or understand them, but out of order. If you said, “Boaz, what did you do in school today?” he’d answer: “Yes.” If you asked him, “Boaz, did you have a fun day?” he’d respond: “Why?” If you asked him, “Boaz, what do you want to eat for lunch?” he’d stare at you blank-faced, his brown, glazed-over doe eyes darting back and forth.

Fussy was an understatement. Bo’s tantrums grew in rapid fire frequency and he was prone to throwing whatever was in front of him across the room—or straight at you (on more than one occasion, this resulted in me getting a black eye, looking like I’d stepped out of a casting call for *The Fighter*). If we visited relatives out of town, he’d spend the entire time whining, from the moment he woke up to the moment he went

to bed. Boaz found it impossible to sit still and was wildly disruptive during pre-school group time. If you sang him a lullaby in an attempt to calm him down—I tried humming the Hebrew tune we sang during his circumcision; clearly the wrong song choice—he'd block his ears and scream for you to stop. Bo wasn't interested in books and refused to eat except at odd late hours. By the time Boaz turned three, he still wasn't sleeping through the night.

Soon, I became The Mom who was constantly defending her kid. Anytime Boaz was invited anywhere, he'd destroy said venue within minutes, upending IKEA storage bins and wicker baskets filled with color coordinated stuffed animals and miniature play kitchen items. If the host offered Boaz a piece of fruit he didn't want, he'd completely freak out; if he wanted something they didn't have, he'd all but implode. If anybody asked him to *please not drop foreign objects like forks and car keys in the fish tank*, Boaz would devolve into a loud blast of biblical-like tears. If anybody he didn't know or trust tried to touch him, he'd kick them where it counts, likely compromising their chances of reproduction. If someone asked Boaz to share a toy or return a toy or "Please, do *not* break that toy," Boaz would emit a protestation louder than a stadium filled with tween-age girls at a Justin Bieber concert.

Once, at a Chanukah party held at the home of one of Bo's classmates, Bo started banging on a huge Yamaha drum set that was positioned in the middle of the modest-sized living room. The drum pretty much took up the entire space; people were standing and sitting up against it. The sticks were resting atop the cymbals just waiting for a four-year-old to grab.

Boaz grabbed the sticks and proceeded to bang on the snare drum like he was Ringo Starr. And, yea, he drowned out everybody that was talking but, really, was anybody even saying anything all that interesting? The moms were exchanging tips on where to get the best Vietnamese manicure in the San Gabriel Valley and the dads were saying things like, "Yea, my stocks *really* took a beating last month."

Boaz was the most interesting person at that party.

But after numerous requests to stop, the Dad of the house yanks the sticks from Bo's soft little hands (his hands were so smooth, his nickname was "soft paw"). This, obviously, did not go over well. Boaz started wailing like a drunken nun at an Irish wake—bereft, inconsolable.

And now everybody's staring at him because he's making an even bigger commotion than when he was playing the drums.

I'm tempted to scream: "You've got a *drum set* the size of a mini-van in the middle of your living room and twenty preschoolers racing around. What did you *think* was going to happen?!"

Next, the Dad turns to me, and without the faintest trace of an apology, he says: "He wouldn't listen to me. I *had* to take the sticks away." His wife, the Mom, peels Boaz off the drum stool, swiftly ejecting him from the living room area. She crosses over to where I'm standing by the front door, depositing Boaz in my arms like a bag of donated clothes at Goodwill. "We all follow the same rules in our house," she tells me, as Boaz sobs into my shoulder. (In history, this will go down as The Moment that I officially started hating Parents.)



That January, one of his preschool teachers wrote down on his mid-year report card: “Boaz has zero regard for authority.”



About a year ago, a close friend of mine invited Boaz, Ayla and me over for a swim. A little background: Boaz and Ayla are both excellent swimmers. I’ve made sure of that. From the time both of them were six months old they were taking swim lessons, even if it meant that I had to drive an hour-and-a-half back and forth on the 110 freeway in the height of LA traffic to get them there. I’m grooming them for the Olympics, or at least the high school swim team, or at the very least attempting to save them from drowning. (The *Talmud* says that you should teach your child to swim, and it’s probably one of the scant few pieces of rabbinical advice to which I strictly adhere.)

So there we are swimming, my friend growing increasingly irritated because Boaz is in the deep end and it’s making her nervous. I assure her that he’s fine and, anyway, I’m in the water right next to him. She demands that Boaz swim back to the shallow end. Of course, he doesn’t. Why should he? He’s splashing, kicking, showing off. Boaz is having the time of his life. It’s Los Angeles in June and it’s 90 degrees and Boaz has no interest in going to the shallow end to wade in 2-foot-deep water. She asks him again. Again, Boaz swims across the pool away from her. He’s laughing, his light brown eyes are sparkling in the late afternoon sun. Boaz is happy. And here’s this unreasonable adult trying to screw up a little boy’s good time. And mine.

Who invites a three year-old boy over to swim during a sweltering summer day expecting him to stay in a designated section of the pool?

But, my friend—who was on every other occasion excellent with children—saw things from an entirely different perspective: I was rude, disrespectful, and overstepping a boundary. This was her house and she felt responsible. She was being protective; I was being reckless. Nobody wants a kid drowning in her pool.

But when you’re a parent, the force of love is so powerful—so *feral*—that there is no other perspective.

Nobody was going to destroy Boaz’s moment of chlorinated-pool bliss.

Minutes later, after dragging Boaz kicking and screaming out of the pool, he stalked furiously through the house, his bathing suit dripping all over the kitchen floor and carpeted living area in deliciously devilish revenge. He followed a trail of puzzle pieces and Legos and Transformer figurines and climbed the stairs leading to a children’s playroom where he promptly began wreaking havoc on a Thomas the Tank Engine train set and a deck of Uno cards that he scattered around the room like confetti on New Year’s Eve.

When it was time to go, my friend peered sternly down at Boaz:

“Boaz, can you pick everything up?” She firmly requested.

Boaz looked at her askance. He kept on playing.

“Boaz, I need you to listen to me—”

“He probably doesn’t understand,” I told her. “I’ll clean up.” I knelt down and began to pick up cards.

“I don’t want you to have to clean up,” she said. “I want him to do it.”
“He’s three. You can’t expect a three year old to clean up a room on his own.”
“I’ve known plenty of three year-olds who have cleaned up rooms.”
“Well, every kid is *different*.”



At his four-year check-up in August 2010, Bo’s pediatrician noticed something slightly off about the way he reacted when she went to administer his flu vaccine, specifically the way he went to kick her in the face when she leaned forward to adhere the Bandaid to his skinny white thigh.

“Looks like he might have a bit of sensory integration dysfunction,” she said in such an off-the-cuff, nonchalant manner it was as though she’d been diagnosing kids with this all day. “I’ll input a referral for an appointment with an occupational therapist.”

“Huh,” I said, only partially understanding what all that entailed. “Interesting. You know, that makes sense.”

“Yea,” she said, punching information into the computer. “It’s the new diagnosis.”

Which made me feel kind of good, because when you’ve got a so-called problem child, diagnoses can come as a relief.

Seven or eight hearing, eyesight, language, and behavioral assessments later—and I am not overstating here—Boaz was diagnosed with an auditory processing disorder and sensory integration dysfunction. To fully comprehend what this means you’ll need to study the 200 pages of literature that I received (and to be honest, have not yet completely read). But the basic gist is that there is name for Bo’s behavior—several of them actually, and many overlapping each other—and they mainly have to do with his vestibular system, the sensory system that controls his sense of balance and spatial orientation. When a kid’s vestibular system isn’t properly regulated, it can create a delay in certain developmental areas, like speech and the ability to process the meaning of certain words. It also accounts for Boaz’s “sensory-seeking” behavior, and why he has a difficult time sitting still, focusing on anything for more than a minute or two at a time, and why certain sounds send him reeling. It also explains his insatiable desire for roughhousing and the need to slam certain books against the wall and dump boxes of wooden blocks out on the floor, furiously chucking them across the room.

It also explains why Boaz is one of the most fascinating, funniest, most intelligent, kindest, most compassionate and most lovable individuals that I have ever known.



Boaz just started his fourth year of preschool. At the time we made the decision to hold him back, all parties involved believed that Boaz could benefit from an additional year of crayons and macaroni art before heading off to kindergarten. What this means is that he will have spent as much time in preschool as most people do college, a fact my father, who was reading at age three, skipped kindergarten and went straight to



first grade when he was five, finds darkly amusing.

In addition to his ongoing speech therapy, Boaz has also been working with an occupational therapist for the past year and has made significant strides in the way of building mental focus and improving his level of language comprehension. (Boaz's special education teachers are worth their weight in gold; they should be getting paid far more than they are.) He speaks eloquently and has an active imagination, and can often be found pouncing on the couch, wielding a pretend sword and pretending he's a swashbuckler manning a pirate ship on the high seas. Either that, or he's a character in the Japanese animated cartoon Pokémon, aiming an imagination weapon at his pretend predatory enemy.

There might come a time where Boaz meets the criteria for a medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), typical of boys with auditory processing and sensory integration disorders we are told. But doctors typically like to wait until a child is at least six before reaching that conclusion and determining the most effective course of action. I come from a family where the diagnosis of ADHD is prevalent (but who doesn't these days, and what does *that* mean?), and Boaz certainly may possess aspects of the disorder even now. But am I rushing to put Boaz on a pill so that he'll sit still through *Caps for Sale* during afternoon story time? Definitely not. Not yet anyway.

See the problem is that Boaz's behavior is consistent with lots of developmental and neurological disorders. For as many appointments with experts in the field, there are as many names for what *may* be going on with him (autism spectrum, bi-polar disorder, disorderly conduct), a different disorder each day. Disorder du Jour. Ah, the trial and error of diagnoses!

Did we do the right thing keeping Boaz back a year in school? Is he getting what he needs? Is he bored? Is he sick and tired of observations and assessments and sitting in waiting rooms while I fill out forms that I've already filled out a hundred other times? (Because I sure am.)

In any case, where we are right now, if things go accordingly, Boaz will get his driver's license when he's a sophomore in high school. Sometimes, I admit, I have this squeamish vision of Boaz turning into one of the burnouts from my graduating high school class, the kids that wore plaid flannel and got straight D's, skipped class to smoke cigarettes and sip 12-ounce cans of beer wrapped in brown paper bags in the parking lot and failed at every extra-curricular activity except the one that involved making wood birdhouses.

But then I also see him doing something pretty remarkable with his life, like inventing video games or going to a top film school or becoming a large animal veterinarian with a stable of horses like the ones he loves to ride.

And that tiny glimpse into the future tells me that Boaz is going to be OK.

About the Author

Malina Saval is the author of *The Secret Lives of Boys: Inside the Raw Emotional World*

of *Male Teens*. Her essays and articles have been featured in the Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly, Variety, Heeb, Forward, Flaunt, Glamour and the Jerusalem Post. She received her undergraduate degree from Cornell University and her MFA from University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. She can be reached at <http://www.MalinaSaval.com>.

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Book Reviews



Roy F. Baumeister, *IS THERE ANYTHING GOOD ABOUT MEN?* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Roy F. Baumeister is Francis Eppes Eminent Scholar and Director of the Social Psychology Area in the Department of Psychology at Florida State University. In 2007, at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, in San Francisco, Professor Baumeister presented an invited address with the same title as his most recent book. The address has been made available by the author at <http://www.psy.fsu.edu/~baumeistertice/goodaboutmen.htm>. It presents an overview of what is developed further in the present volume and serves as a good introduction to it.

In the acknowledgements to *Is There Anything Good About Men?*, Professor Baumeister notes that among his colleagues “quite a few advised me not to write this book. They thought that saying anything favorable about men is taboo and could seriously damage my career.” (p. vii). This comment is telling, for why should it occur to anyone that speaking well about males might be harmful to one’s academic life and reputation? In fact, to do so in academe today generally generates one of two sorts of responses: (1) an immediate side-stepping of the discussion at hand about men to the reiteration of claims about how poorly women are doing in the Western world overall and how “out of balance” matters stand for women in academe in particular, or (2) dismissive looks of disdain.

I wonder whether anyone left Professor Baumeister's address. More important, I wonder how many members of the American Psychological Association decided not to attend his presentation merely on the basis of its title.

Of the two responses mentioned, the first is notable insofar as it represents a tactic among some academics to dismiss the importance of talking about the situation for boys and men, in academe and at large. There continue to be ample discussions of how girls and women are doing, and these are well-attended and enthusiastically received. They are *de rigueur* for nearly any conference in the social sciences and no one would be tolerated who interrupted a speaker explaining how more must be done, for example, for young women in college. The second response is alarming, since dismissal of any topic in academe is tantamount to declaring that intellectual life in the university is over. Might I like to renew the argument for the validity of phrenology? If I raised the topic, I should not be interrupted by someone saying that brain science is worth talking about instead. And what if someone were to scoff at me while presenting, leave the room, or decide in advance not to attend my session? They might miss a provocative presentation that provided me, say, with an opportunity to compare the success of Gall's "science" with that of Freud's "science." Unless they had attended my presentation, they would not have heard that the "whole climate of opinion" psychoanalysis created might have had originated in what people like to believe and that such tendencies are much like those that drew the interest of so many to the central idea of phrenology. My point is that obstructing and dismissing should not be part of the world of academe. They are, however, handy tools for propagandists and zealots, many of whom now mask as scholars and teachers in academe.

I suggest to all that they have a look inside Professor Baumeister's new book, which has much the same style of his address. Witty and friendly, it is a book that offers an explanation of "why men have dominated culture and ruled the world" (p. 4), echoing Steven Goldberg in his *Why Men Rule* (1999). It is not that "men were naturally superior to women" or that "men must somehow be working together to keep women down ... and to oppress women" (p. 4). Against the "men are smarter than women" or "men are wicked conspirators against women" proposed explanations is one founded on "some basic likes and dislikes" found in men and women, respectively, and the different ways each sex treats the other (p. 4). Acknowledging that "culture grew out of the way men related to each other, more than out of women's relationships" (p. 4), a datum established two decades ago by anthropologist David Gilmore in *Manhood in the Making* (1991), Professor Baumeister's book is fundamentally "about how culture works," not about preferences within a given culture (Chapters 7 and 9; see especially p. 138).

The author exhorts: "Gender Warriors Please Go Home" (p. 6), a subheading of the opening chapter. In this chapter on his "odd, unseasonal question" about men, he makes the fundamental point that "most women don't really see men as the enemy, except as taught by some highly politicized Women's Studies classes" and that "likewise, most men don't see women as the enemy" (p. 6). He is surely correct about most women outside of academe. Professor Baumeister adds: "The feminist view of what male society is all about is wildly off the mark" (p. 7). Having read this sentence, one must wish the author well and hope he is safe. It is not long ago that an author such



as Esther Vilar was threatened with bodily harm for speaking out against feminists by some who read her book *The Manipulated Man* (1971). Forty years ago may seem to be a long time, but if such behavior by presumably high-brow readers was possible then, perhaps our author is right to worry about his career now. Or perhaps we are now even more an academe in which ignoring all but what we want to hear is more likely going to be the tactic used to discredit Professor Baumeister's book. I note in passing that 'ignore' is the root of the word 'ignorance' and witness to the prevalence of the tendency throughout academe to ignore that with which one disagrees on ideological ground. In fact, a talk in favor of the scientific merits of phrenology is more likely to be attended than one on what is good about men, assuming that most academics educated since 1990 have heard of phrenology. But they have heard about patriarchy.

After studying the sections on "feminism" and "the imaginary feminist" (who will appear throughout Professor Baumeister's book) (pp. 8-10), as well as the remainder of the introductory chapter, the reader will go on to be acquainted in detail, in the second chapter, with the two explanations to which the author's own is given in counterpoint: that "men really are better AND worse than women" (p. 38). This claim represents the starting point for "the theory we've never tried" (pp. 38-39) which is at the heart of Professor Baumeister's study. Here the reader might reflect back on the subtitle of the volume: "How Cultures Flourish by Exploiting Men." The "trade-off theory of gender," which the author proposes, states that men and women are "different but equal" (p. 38) and that "being better at one thing is linked to being worse at something else" (p. 40), since, obviously, no one is good at everything (or is that true for certain women?).

Professor Baumeister takes seriously certain claims of evolutionary psychology and biology, including that of innate biological differences. It would be a shame if any reader of this review were to move on after reading the words 'evolution' and 'biology', not even having taken a look at the link to Professor Baumeister's address. If you are still with me and have not looked at the address, please do so now. It provides all that I could by way of details about why the "theory we've never tried" is feasible. I will bring only three points to the prospective reader's attention because they seem essential to me.

First, men *do* include the best among human beings, but they also include the *worst*. This has to do with biology and is seen in the greater presence of men as compared to women at the extremes of the so-called normal distribution: more geniuses and more mentally defective human beings among all males. The second is the relative paucity of representation in the gene pool of men who have lived. We are more "woman" than "man," and not only embryologically (as I like to point out to my students after I ask them: "By the way, why do men have nipples?"). This is because of the expendability of males in the order of things (see Chapter 8) as well as the limited chances for *most males* to have had access to females in the drama of reproduction (see Chapters 4 and 10). Finally, there is Professor Baumeister's point about preferences as having to do with motivation and therefore with what might draw an individual to one field of activity rather than another—for example, to engineering rather than one of the social sciences or humanities (see Chapter 3).

For the rest, I recommend this book because of the good humor in which it is written. If Professor Baumeister is against anything or anybody (which I doubt), it is those who would ignore some serious issues about the currently precarious situation of boys and men and might in so doing fail to estimate accurately the cost of disregarding what is good about men in 21st century culture.

Miles Groth, PhD, Wagner College, USA

Paul Lonardo, *STRIKE IX: THE STORY OF A BIG EAST COLLEGE FORCED TO ELIMINATE ITS BASEBALL PROGRAM AND THE TEAM THAT REFUSED TO LOSE*, Concord: Infinity Publishing (2009).



American males are expected to be good sports. In the United States boys routinely undergo non-consensual genital cutting (although subjecting girls to any form of circumcision is illegal in this country); young men are required to register for selective military service (although young women are not); and men are persistently underrepresented in higher education classrooms (although, as the American Association of University Women reports, women have earned the majority of bachelor degrees since 1982, and they now also earn most graduate degrees). American men are, moreover, often disadvantaged by parenting and gender-equality laws, and their average life expectancy is lower than women's (currently, 75.3 years versus 80.4, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). The fact that most American males currently accept these disparities is a testament to their customary stoic response to trying circumstances.

Men are, however, overrepresented on the playing fields of the United States; consequently, male athletic teams supported by many American educational institutions are subject to legal remedies governed by Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which states that "[n]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance," with expedient exemptions granted to single-sex schools and voluntary youth organizations such as the Y.M.C.A. While the Education Amendments Act is supposed to affect all aspects of higher education, it is generally applied in cases where women are underrepresented in athletics. Usually, the prescribed remediation adversely affects men's teams. Title IX compliance often involves the elimination of men's teams rather than the addition of women's teams. Scarce resources have made gender equality for athletes a zero-sum game. Paul Lonardo's *Strike IX* documents the final season of Providence College's baseball team when college administrators had decided that achieving gender equality in sports would entail the loss of men students' opportunities to play baseball, golf, and tennis at this majority-women-student school.

At Providence College, conforming to federal gender-equality quotas and providing the same resources for students of both sexes trumped students' need for gender equity and the provision of appropriate supports for both sexes to excel. Imposed standards of gender equality, rather than real indicators of different male vs. female students'



involvement in sports, were the deciding factor; in other words, as Lonardo astutely remarks, the test for assessing compliance with the law “fails to take into account differing levels of interest with regard to the gender of athletes.” Some women’s special-interest groups responded to this implementation of Title IX disingenuously (the Women’s Sports Foundation asserted it “is not in favor of reducing athletic opportunities for men as the preferred method of achieving Title IX compliance” but rather, as the Foundation’s position suggests, “reducing excess expenditures”) and dogmatically (a spokeswoman for the National Women’s Law Center expressed her desire, “to bring immediate law suits against as many universities as possible to force them to comply with the law”). Women allies at the College, however, clearly supported the baseball players. The women’s field hockey, soccer, and tennis teams threatened to boycott their games in solidarity with the cut men’s teams, and the women’s volleyball team wore Providence College Friars baseball uniform jerseys during their warm-up before their first game. Swimmer Michelle Hackmer spoke for many when she remarked: “Sure, we want women athletes to be treated fairly, but at this expense? I don’t think this is what Title IX was supposed to be about.”

Strike IX describes a critical consequence of Title IX: the elimination of an opportunity for men to experience appropriate embodied learning. Lonardo provides edifying statistical records of the players’ and the team’s performance, but the men’s story is what really counts. Rather than transfer to other institutions that would gladly have allowed athletes of their caliber to play, most team members dedicated themselves to playing the best possible season at Providence College. Though they initially reacted to their loss of funding angrily and recklessly (deciding, “to get fucked up, loud, and laid”), these men soon channeled their energies toward achieving excellence. Their “official rally cry became, “THERE’S ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO DO... WIN THE WHOLE %@!()& THING.” (Lonardo quips: “It really did say %@!()&. This is a Catholic school after all.”) The Providence Friars did not win the whole thing; however, they won the respect of the college baseball community. During the final inning against the victorious Florida State team, the Florida fans joined the Providence fans, “in saluting the team with a rousing standing ovation”—a celebration of sportsmanship at its best.

Lonardo includes brief biographical updates that detail the respective fates of several players, and one might argue that their success after school demonstrates the minimal impact of Title IX on these men. This reasoning fails to grasp the greater lesson of *Strike IX*. Men deserve gender equity as well as gender equality. Men should not have to settle for being good sports in the face of institutional disparities. Title IX should guarantee men “the benefits of” both “educational program and activity,” and that should include some remedy for the under-representation of men, as well as the lack of appropriate support for men, in higher education.

American men are, however, organizing. Five months after the publication of this book, a suit was filed against Columbia University demanding gender equity and equality for men in the allocation of resources. Although that suit failed, it will certainly not be the last legal attempt at social justice for men. Concerning their education men are increasingly refusing to lose.

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