

Book Reviews



Glen Poole, *Equality for Men*, Illustrated by Jacqui Clark, Equality4Men, 2013.

A cursory internet search of the phrase *equality for men* provides predictably mixed results: most either defensively state a case for men's rights or dismissively ridicule the idea. One prominent exception is the eponymous web page, equality4men.com. This site is described as "the global campaign to transform the way the world works for men and boys," and it offers a locus for accessing male-relevant information and resources. Central to this admirable effort is Glen Poole, the author of the book reviewed here. Available for purchase as a paperback or for download as an e-book from the above-mentioned web page, *Equality for Men* offers the general reader a useful introduction to male issues, presented in clearly written prose without any inflammatory rhetoric.

The work is presented in five parts, an introduction and four chapters, respectively treating discrete male-relevant topics ("Understanding Equality," "The Facts about Equality for Men," "Why are Men and Boys Unequal?" and "How Do We End Men's Inequality?"); each part offers concise, incisive information referenced from scholarly and popular sources. The book's greatest strength lies in its polite, reasonable tone and approach: for example, the discussion of male disadvantage and women's agency in violence against men is evidence based and presented with neither rage nor apology. The cause and effect relationship between the neglect and abuse of males and their subsequent negative outcomes—their marginalization from the education system, from prosperity, from family life, for example—and their disposability (evident in males' disproportionately high mortality rates and their

involvement with crime) is effectively argued and persuasively supported.

In addition, the material reality of men's important economic impact on society and the unfortunate gambit that results from the circumstances in which they contribute is convincingly described and questioned. Poole notes that "male workers" pay "72% of income tax" and that fathers contribute "two thirds of family earnings"; however, this contribution comes at a significant cost in terms of male workplace fatalities—"96% of the people who die at work are men as are the majority of the people who die from work-related causes each year" (85). These fatalities, along with disproportionate male unemployment and exclusion from family life result from tacit male disposability. Poole astutely frames the pervasive neglect of male disadvantage as a question of tolerance, asserting, "We are, it seems, collectively more tolerant of men and boys experiencing harm" (86), and one of the triumphs of this book is how convincingly the author demonstrates that male disadvantage results from "sexism against men" evident in normalized, gynocentric "lazy assumptions" about men (92).

Some readers might be put off by the abundant-white-space format of the book, conventionally more appropriate to technical writing rather than scholarly argument. The format, however, is well suited to a general audience who might lose patience with academic protocols and prose. Along with the cute graphics, the sparse formatting belies the careful research and clear thinking that informs this book: the extensive footnoting offers useful reference to the reader who wishes to read more deeply.

In sum, *Equality for Men* offers the general reader an accessible, reasonable, researched introduction to male issues with neither apology nor negativity. In writing this book, Glen Poole has contributed most effectively to the momentous twenty-first-century conversation about males and their important issues.

Dennis Gouws

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