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**Table of Contents**

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**PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION**

*Dennis S Gouws*

i–iii

**REFEREED ARTICLES**

**Acquainted with the night: Mass shootings and “Toxic Masculinity”**

*Kyle Glover*

1–20

**The falsity of identity politics (PC): Negative attitude is to males who are different, in policing male sexual access by gate-keeping group membership**

*Steven Moxon*

21–50

**Where have all the boys gone? How the systematic labeling of young males is affecting school performance, attendance, and graduation rates in America**

*Jeanne M Stolzer*

51–69

**ANALYSIS AND OPINION**

**Family court reform, suicide and “Repeated Social Defeat” for men**

*John Davis*

70–88

**The three enemigos: Destructive myths about males**

*Miles Groth*

89–102

**The relevance of International Men’s Day**

*Jerome Teelucksingh*

103–107

**PHOTO FEATURE**

**Sorrows**

*Jan Andersen*

108–115

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# NEW MALE STUDIES – AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

## VOLUME 8, ISSUE 2 – 2019

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### PREFACE

Volume eight, issue two of *New Male Studies - An International Journal* offers its readers six articles and a selection of photographs intended to enhance our understanding of *maleness*, of boys' and men's embodied experience.

The three refereed articles in this issue examine misunderstood maleness. K. C. Glover's "Acquainted with the night: Mass shootings and 'Toxic Masculinity'" seeks to confute the idea that 'toxic masculinity' is to blame for mass shootings. His contrasting of gender-feminist, sketchy interpretations of masculinity with Gilmore's "more nuanced take" on *masculinity* convinces the reader that the latter's definition effectively describes "the uniquely masculine way of nurturing others." In addition, the reader is urged not to "rely on mythological explanations such as mental illness or toxic masculinity," but rather to "look to our already-crumbled institutions, outmoded by the ever-accelerating pace of change and our contemptuous treatment of boys to understand why many are dropping out of society or even opting out of life entirely."

In the second refereed article, "The falsity of identity politics (PC): negative attitude is to males who are different, in policing male sexual access by gate-keeping group membership," Steve Moxon argues, "Identity politics is extreme misrepresentation of social and interpersonal reality" because the evidence suggests that "philogyny and misandry extend to apply across all victim categories, trumping race or sexual orientation." Of particular interest is his point that "supposed homophobia" serves "to gate-keep male full admission to the group, serving to police male access, maximising reproductive efficiency, not to deal with out-group threat, and not to oppress (least of all females)."

J. M. Stolzer's, "Where have all the boys gone? How the systematic labeling of young males is affecting school performance, attendance, and graduation rates in America," explores "the various corollaries related to the deteriorating performance of males in the American education system," challenges "the existing structures that perpetuate the systematic failure of males in the academic setting," and discusses "specific strategies aimed at improving the declining status of males in the education system." Her suggested strategies offer effective ways to attend to the plight of males in our gynocentric education environments.

Two of the three shorter pieces treat the consequences of misunderstood maleness. John Davis's "Family court reform, suicide and "Repeated Social Defeat" for men," observes that feminist-dominated family courts "have become gynocentric tools for divorcing spouses to abuse men." He then describes the "repeated social defeat and its devastating consequences" that males experience "because of their poor treatment in family court." In his "The three enemies: Destructive myths about males," Miles Groth examines how "the myth of gender non-difference, the myth of men's power, and the myth of the affectively impoverished male pervade much of the West." He argues that "these myths excuse how males are treated" and that "absent inhibiting and encouraging forces, males are as capable of identifying and speaking what they feel," as are females. The final short article, Jerome Teelucksingh's "The relevance of International Men's Day, "describes how this November 19<sup>th</sup> celebration "has moved from the fringe to the mainstream of the men's rights movement." While maintaining that "in the future, IMD will continue being serious and uncompromising, " he suggests that "this movement must also be seen as exciting and interesting to reach the younger generation and those young at heart."

Jan Andersen has contributed six photographs to this issue; he has titled them "Sorrows." His photographs manage to capture the vulnerability of young males while celebrating their dignity—an effective rejoinder to the toxic-masculinity trend that pervades so many media at the moment.

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It should be noted that the opinions expressed by the authors herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Team. The papers published here are offered in a spirit of open, evidence-based dialogue regarding gender, relationships and issues related to male experience. The Editorial Team thanks the article reviewers for generously contributing their time and their insights.



Dennis Gouws  
**Editor in Chief**

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## ACQUAINTED WITH THE NIGHT: MASS SHOOTINGS AND “TOXIC MASCULINITY”<sup>1</sup>

*K.C Glover*



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### ABSTRACT

*Besides the political debates around gun control and mental healthcare, there has also arisen a climate of opinion that seeks to place the responsibility for mass shootings on masculinity or, specifically, “toxic masculinity.” This paper seeks to confute the idea that “toxic masculinity” or masculinity is to blame for these heinous acts of violence. It will also address the motivations informing shooter aggression in the United States—a more accurate description of the problem than gun violence—and how the changing nature of the family has impacted boys. It is hoped that this will give a clearer picture of the issue than simply blaming males.*

**Keywords:** boys, males, mass shootings, shooter aggression, toxic masculinity

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<sup>1</sup> **Author’s note:** The following paper was adapted from a presentation given on May 17, 2019 at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology’s Cultural Impact Conference on the mental health implications of gun violence and mass shootings. Several presenters addressed the role of “toxic masculinity” in the supposed proliferation of gun violence in the United States. While the original presentation sought to confute the concept of “toxic masculinity” the paper broadened in aspect to address several oft-repeated myths surrounding mass shootings.

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## INTRODUCTION

For a brief period, I lived in a small town in Southern Australia. There I made friends with a group of engineers who worked at the local steelworks. When they learned I was American, one of the blokes, Chris, jokingly asked me, “when you were born, did they put your gun in the crib or do they keep it locked up until you can walk?” Guns are seemingly synonymous with America, symbolized by the cultural figure of the gun-toting cowboy. Nearly every day we see some news story involving acts of aggression using guns. By now we are also familiar with the common culprit in these shootings: young men. The most extreme of these public events, the mass shooting, is part of the reason we have gathered here today.

Besides the political debates around gun control and mental healthcare, there has also arisen a climate of opinion that seeks to place the responsibility for these shootings on masculinity or, specifically, “toxic masculinity.” This paper seeks to confute the idea that “toxic masculinity” or *masculinity* is to blame for these heinous acts of violence. It will also address the scope of gun violence in the United States and how the changing nature of the family has impacted boys. It is hoped that this will give a clearer picture of the issue than simply blaming males.

For the sake of clarity, I think we should speak of the issue not as “gun violence” but as “shooter aggression.” If we want to understand the phenomenon we should be as clear in speaking about it as possible. Hence this exercise in semantics. We are chiefly interested in why these shootings are happening, so we must understand the motivations of the shooters. Aggression entails a deliberate act, something which a gun is not capable of as it is essentially a tool. Like a knife or a drug, a gun is only dangerous through the use of its wielder. It is the shooter who commits the act of aggression, not the gun which in its action as a mechanism is violent, though certainly the gun may enable him to make a public spectacle of his aggression.

## THE SCOPE OF THE ISSUE

Though, as Mark Twain said, there are “lies, damned lies, and statistics” it might do us well to examine some trends in violent crime to better grasp the scope of the issue we are here discussing. Is it really so that shooter aggression has increased in recent years? A look at the numbers seems to tell a different story.

Through all the endless barrage of media stories about violent crime in the United States it would seem that its citizens are becoming increasingly aggressive. However, it is apparent that only our awareness of violent events has increased, perhaps aided by the now inescapable exposure to news via the Internet. According to Cohn et al. (2013) of the Pew Research Center firearm homicides have decreased by nearly half since their peak in 1993. When the Pew Research Center polled Americans in 2013 they found fifty-six percent believed that the incidence of shootings had increased since the 1990s with only twelve percent saying that it had gone down. While shootings have decreased dramatically most Americans seem to believe that they have increased.

This of course does not mean that shootings are no longer an issue in the United States. The victims of shootings are predominantly male, who make up eighty-four percent of all victims. Fifty-five percent of victims are black despite making up only thirteen percent of the population of the United States. The majority of victims (nearly seventy percent) are between the ages of eighteen and forty. If we were to picture the most common victim of shooting aggression it is a young, black male. Many of these young men die as the result of gang-related or other crime-related shootings. Their deaths rarely capture as much attention than the mass public shooting, though here in Chicago the death toll is staggering and has garnered some national attention. These acts, with only one target, rarely seem to disturb us as much as the mass shooting. It may be the chaotic nature of mass shootings, where victims are often killed indiscriminately<sup>2</sup>, that garners our attention more so than a feud between two people.

While the demographics of shootings in general are easier to determine, mass shootings are more difficult to quantify. One of the difficulties in determining the scope of mass shootings is that they are defined differently by different sources. Whereas some sources may define a mass shooting as when four or more people are hit by bullets, others will consider it a mass shooting only if four or more people are killed by the shooter. In the former case the accidental misfiring

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<sup>2</sup> Contrary to popular belief mass school shooters rarely seek out particular victims, such as those who bullied them, and they are just as likely to be a bully as to have been bullied (Langman, 2015/2016). Some mass public shootings are ideologically based, such as Dylan Roof shooting up a Charleston church in the name of white supremacy, while others seem to be random, such as Stephen Paddock in Las Vegas or James Huberty in San Ysidro.

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of a weapon at a shooting range which injures several people could technically be considered a mass shooting whereas in the latter this would not count. The former standard would seem to leave more room for interpretation and may be responsible for certain members of the media making claims about there being a mass shooting in the United States every day.

Those who use a stricter standard such as Krouse and Richardson (2015) of the Congressional Research Service define mass shootings as “as a multiple homicide incident in which four or more victims are murdered with firearms, within one event, and in one or more locations in close proximity.” This standard seems to give a clearer picture of how many mass shootings are actually occurring as well as how many people are killed during the shootings. The CRS further divides mass shootings into the categories of mass public shooting, familicides, and other-felony related. The mass public shooting is usually what grabs the most attention in terms of media coverage as well as eliciting the most horror among the public, but it is also the least frequent kind of mass shooting. Mass public shootings constitute about four out of the twenty-one mass shootings that occur per year in the United States. Most mass shootings occur in private homes or are related to other crimes. Even smaller still are the number of mass school shootings.

As to whether mass shootings are on the rise in the United States the data are fairly clear: there is a somewhat slight increase. Criminologist James Alan Fox using data from the FBI found that the amount of mass shootings per year has remained at a similar rate since the 1970s. From year to year there are slight fluctuations and spikes in incidence are generally attributable to copycat shooters and coincidence (Fox, 2012). The FBI data does not support the idea that mass shootings are on the rise in the United States though data from the CRS and criminologist Grant Duwe<sup>3</sup> shows that there has been a slight increase in the amount of victims though these numbers also fluctuate from year to year. While shootings have decreased dramatically since the 1990s, mass shootings have remained relatively stable in number since the 1970s.

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<sup>3</sup> Duwe (2007) has written a comprehensive history of mass murder in the United States and contributed his data to the Congressional Research Service.



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As for school shootings there has also been a dramatic decrease in children killed in schools by firearms. Fox and Fridel (2018) found that four times as many children were killed in schools by shooters during the 1990s. As the general rate of firearm-related homicides decreased so did the rate of children killed in schools. Over the past twenty-five years ten children a year died from shootings in schools. Columbine-style attacks in schools are very rare (though, of course, we hope they'd never happen) with eight<sup>4</sup> of these events occurring since 1996. As with mass shootings there is no increase in the incidence of school shootings (deaths by firearms in schools not mass school shootings) and they have in fact decreased in incidence.

The statistics seem to bear out that there is no epidemic of mass shootings in the United States. But still we are fascinated by the subject. Shootings in general have declined dramatically while mass shootings have remained somewhat consistent in incidence since the 1970s. Yet a majority of Americans are quite certain that shooter aggression has increased and that the incidence of mass shootings is on the rise. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider why it is that many Americans believe this to be so, it is an interesting topic unto its own. While the mass public shooting rightly horrifies us, you have a much greater chance of being attacked by a shark than of being a victim of a mass shooting. But much like we know the chances of being attacked by a shark are very small, we still may feel some trepidation as we swim in the ocean if our imagination should drift to that fearsome beast. Greater still may be that fear if the beast is instead a man. And who today are we told to fear more than man?

## **TOXIC MASCULINITY**

In the wake of the mass shooting in Las Vegas in 2017, the deadliest in the history of the United States, people responded much as they usually do. Some offered their hopes and prayers, others called for better gun control, still others for better mental health care. However, there was also a somewhat new response calling for the examination of the gender of the shooters. Perhaps for the first time the shooting was seen as an example of toxic masculinity. The Cornell professor Kate Manne was quick to attribute the shooter's berating his girlfriend in public to toxic

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<sup>4</sup> This was written before the recent school shooting in the Denver, Colorado. <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/05/10/stem-school-shooting-colorado-timeline/>

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masculinity and then the shooting to the same phenomenon. The comedian Michael Ian Black penned a popular op-ed for the *New York Times* in the wake of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018 to say that “boys are broken.” The culprit: masculinity.

Toxic masculinity has come to be an explanation for everything from sexual assault to global warming (Zahn, 2019). However, toxic masculinity remains ill-defined. To hear its use in popular culture is to get the impression that it means any behavior done by men and boys that is deemed not preferable. It is contrasted with a healthy masculinity that is also ill-defined. The term requires some definition before it can be understood why it is used to explain mass shootings.

The origin of toxic masculinity was with the mythopoetic men’s movement, specifically with Shepherd Bliss (1987) who used the term to denote the darker side of masculinity. Specifically, this meant the industrial man divorced from home and nature. For Bliss healthy masculinity is one that is Romantic in the sense of being connected to nature and the “deep masculine.” The mythopoetic men’s movement sought to get men to connect with their lost feelings and the archetypes of deep masculinity in order to heal themselves from the damage done to them by industrialized, secular life.

Toxic masculinity was later adopted by male feminists such as Michael Kimmel to also denote the dark side of masculinity, though the similarities to the mythopoetic men’s movement end there. The male feminists accuse the mythopoetic group of being “essentialists” for believing there is an inborn nature to males and females. In the hands of the male feminists, toxic masculinity is transformed in meaning. Removed from its “essentialist” and poetic context in mythopoetics, it is appropriated by male feminists into their social constructivist system, most notably that of Raewyn Connell who is perhaps the most influential male feminist, and seen to be an expression of “hegemonic masculinity.”

In Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) Gramscian cultural Marxist analysis hegemonic masculinity is defined as a practice that legitimizes powerful men’s dominant position in society and the subordination of the common male population, women, and other marginalized ways of being a man. If one is familiar with Karl Marx’s ideas you may notice that Connell has replaced the bourgeoisies with “powerful men” and the proletariat with the “common male population,

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women, and other marginalized men.” In place of a class analysis of society, they present a gendered analysis of society. Toxic masculinity in this context changes from a psychological to a sociological explanation of men and boy’s behavior. Namely it is what is colloquially referred to as “the patriarchy” both in academic and popular feminism.

The term appears in Aronson and Kimmel (2004), first in reference to the culture of men’s prisons and their culture of rape and violence. Kimmel’s (2008; 2013) later work expands this idea to include adolescent and young men as well as most white men. Toxic masculinity then can explain why an inmate would rape another inmate, as well as why a frat boy would binge drink and hookup with coeds. Though Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) stressed hegemonic masculinity as a practice of powerful men, Kimmel seems to inflate the definition to include most men. In order to be good men, men must become more like male feminists and allies of feminism as they dismantle the power structures that have granted them privilege.

However, it isn’t only prison rape and mass shootings that fall under the purview of toxic masculinity. Kupers (2005) further defined it as “the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia and wanton violence.” Not only is it behavior but also “socially regressive male traits.” The very character of males is called into question by toxic masculinity. There is also a curious shift from gender (masculine) to sex (male) in this definition. This sort of sleight of hand seems to say that it isn’t only the societal role but the very organism of males that is flawed. While being critical of essentialism, the male feminists seem to employ it when opportune.

Another issue in understanding toxic masculinity is that often it is difficult to define masculinity itself. Gilmore (1990) summarized the masculine role in society as that of the “Impregnator-Protector-Provider.” Most societies around the world have required men to take this role in order to stave off societal entropy. A man must procreate, take care of his wife and children, and protect them from danger. This imperative role usually meant that men put themselves at risk and so men must become accustomed to their own expendability. This role as well as certain embodied ways of being male which entail vulnerability (Groth, 2019) lead to a certain posturing that involves stymying emotional expression and hiding vulnerabilities.

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These qualities of emotional inexpressiveness are seen by male feminists as a sign of toxic or hegemonic masculinity. However, Gilmore (1990) offers a more nuanced take on masculinity and the following quote bears reproduction in its entirety:

*Men nurture their society by shedding their blood, their sweat, and their semen, by bringing home food for both child and mother, by producing children, and by dying if necessary in faraway places to provide a safe haven for their people. This, too, is nurturing in the sense of endowing or increasing. However, the necessary personal qualities for this male contribution are paradoxically the exact opposite of what we Westerners normally consider the nurturing personality. To support his family, the man has to be distant, away hunting or fighting wars; to be tender, he must be tough enough to fend off enemies. To be generous, he must be selfish enough to amass goods, often by defeating other men; to be gentle, he must first be strong, even ruthless in confronting enemies; to love he must be aggressive enough to court, seduce, and 'win' a wife.*

Compare this with Kuper's (2005) definition of toxic masculinity. Whereas these behaviors would seem to be the product of a hegemonic patriarch exercising his power of others, Gilmore is able to see that it is in fact the uniquely masculine way of nurturing others. By lumping these behaviors together with prison rape and mass shootings, male feminists are denigrating masculinity and maleness.

While Kimmel and his ilk may say that there is a healthy form of masculinity apart from toxic masculinity, it often comes off as their saying that men must act like feminist women. Though they accuse the mythopoetic men's movement of being essentialists they themselves seem to be opportunistic essentialists. When it comes to deconstructing hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy, gender is a construct, however when it comes to offering a new way for men to act it often sounds like the way a stereotypical woman acts. For the male feminist, women are inherently good and men are either inherently or constructed to be evil depending upon when it is opportune to claim either one. However, idealizations often seem to contain thinly-veiled hatred and we might consider the number of male feminists who have been accused of harming or harassing women (Bovy, 2018). Kimmel can count himself among that group (Flaherty, 2018).

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So what is toxic masculinity? In short, it is misandry, a caricatured version of masculinity meant to paint men as violent goons and instill fear and hatred of them in the general populace. By now this hatred has become firmly embedded in the culture of the United States (Nathanson and Young, 2001; 2006; 2010).<sup>5</sup> While both the male feminists and Gilmore find masculinity to be socially constructed, the male feminists posit that it was created conspiratorially to oppress others while Gilmore shows the environmental and existential conditions out of which masculinity was necessitated for the preservation of society. The male feminist viewpoint is similar to Soviet propaganda used to turn peasants against the kulaks, while Gilmore offers us a chance to understand masculinity and manhood.

So does masculinity have anything to do with mass shootings? Most of the mass shooters are male so it cannot be merely coincidence. One aspect of masculinity that Gilmore (1990) points out may shed some light on the connection between the two. Masculinity is difficult to achieve and it seems that it must necessarily be so because it requires of males that they continue to perform the role in order to preserve society. The generally placid Fox Indians referred to masculinity in their language as “the Big Impossible” seemingly in reference to it being nearly unobtainable. Males striving for manhood is a central pillar of society. But some males fail at this, and it may be greatly shameful. As Langman (2017) has shown in his comprehensive studies of school shooters, nearly all of them experienced some sort of shame in regards to their masculinity. Put another way, I think they had difficulty obtaining “the Big Impossible.” Their violent outbursts are not born out of a malignant masculinity but instead a sure sign of the failure to transition into manhood.

However, we must resist looking at a single factor and using it to explain a complicated phenomenon. Otherwise, we’d be no better than the armchair social critics and pop psychologists who wield toxic masculinity much like Alexander the Great did his blade when faced with the Gordian knot. But we are psychologists and should know better. In order to do so we should look at the actual shooters and try to understand them.

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<sup>5</sup> The emptiness that many young men feel today may be the result of emptiness brought about by the effect of misandry on the ability of young men to form a uniquely masculine identity. See Nathanson and Young, 2012.

## THE FAMILIES OF MASS SHOOTERS

One of the only consistent factors among school shooters and mass shooters is that they usually come from a broken home. Langman (2009/2016) found that eighty-two percent of school shooters came from a broken home defined as containing “instability, or dysfunction includ[ing] parental absence, separation, divorce, infidelity, parental alcoholism or drug addiction, criminal behavior, domestic violence, and child abuse.” This would seem to give the lie to the idea that most shooters come from well-to-do middle-class homes. Many shooters are severely traumatized or show symptoms of psychosis and much of the abuse they face begins within their families.

Perhaps one of the defining features of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries is the disintegration of the nuclear family. Groth (2019) found this to be the result of certain social changes within the past fifty years that have made the nuclear family an anachronism. Especially important in this regard are that both parents must now work in order to support a family, taking the mother out of the home, complimenting how the Industrial Revolution took the father out of the home in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many children now also grow up without a father, and their mother must work full-time in order to support them. Day cares and schools, barely able to educate children, must now also serve as surrogate parents to children.

What now exists is a “sibling society” (Bly, 1997) where children raise themselves or one another. Exposure to media through television and the internet sends children strange messages about the world of adults, who seem to be fatuous or imbeciles. I think also of the many people my age who have more vivid memories of the Nickelodeon cartoons of their youth than their own families, or those a bit younger who are still obsessed with the cartoon *SpongeBob SquarePants*, about a wholesome though idiotic sea sponge who probably imparted more life lessons to them than their own parents. Never learning to discern the real from the virtual novelty in which they are awash, children slouch towards adulthood unprepared for its struggles.

As to what will replace the desiccated husk of the nuclear family it is difficult to say. Currently its structure stands but it is like scaffolding without the rest of the building – a skeletal imitation of a home. For now, children, including the boys who will become these shooters, grow within these families of which even the so-called normal ones are a strange

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imitation. Already boys will go to great lengths to hide their vulnerabilities. Add to it that many of them are abused or from homes full of dysfunction (though what now can we say is a functional family?) and we may be closer to understanding from where some of the sudden, violent rage of our shooters comes.

The primary consideration for boys in the nearly gone nuclear family is the disappearance of the father. Primarily this has resulted in a prolonged adolescence for boys where they do not make the transition into manhood. This perpetual boy has become an all-too-familiar sight – sitting alone in front of a computer screen or television, perhaps with a college degree though he has moved home with vague plans for leaving. Instead of meeting friends he talks to them through a gaming headset, instead of meeting women he swipes on their picture on his smartphone in the hopes they'll hookup. That is if he doesn't wind up in the criminal justice system filled to the rafters with young men.

Some boys will grow up with fathers in their homes. Many of the shooters actually do have fathers, though many of them are abusive. Still some others come from families that fit the picture of normality. In all this normality the father may be there but is he *there*? Has he rejected his son's overtures for a relationship? Has he buried himself in work to the point where he only sees his family as he wishes them goodnight? Is he emotionally unavailable or afraid to connect with his son? These are all important questions to ask even if we are presented with the picture of the family as "normal." A Fabergé egg may look like an egg but if you were to crack it open you would find it empty. The shooter we look at next comes from one of these normal families.

### **JAMES HOLMES: A STUDY OF SUPPOSED MADNESS**

James Holmes was born in San Diego, California on December 13, 1987. His sister, Chris, was born in the same month in 1992. In 1995 the family moved to Salinas, California but then returned to San Diego a few years later to be closer to the mother's family. James had to make new friends each time the family moved and was unable to connect with old friends when he returned to San Diego in the sixth grade. The family noted that he began to become introverted after the move. He began to spend much of his time playing massively multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPGs) where he spoke with people online, though his communication with people face-to-face was diminishing.

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I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that middle school is a tough time for many children and that Holmes may have been experiencing the difficulties that come with those years, though they may have been exacerbated by the disruption in his friend groups due to his family's moving. This seems to be a logical conclusion as when Holmes went to high school his parents reported that he seemed much happier as he focused on his studies and developed close friendships with four or five friends. If Holmes was psychotic at this point in his life, as various psychiatric reports suggest, no one seemingly knew it.

While in college at the University of California at Riverside Holmes stayed in contact with his family. He stated that his relationship with his family was good and that he had a sibling rivalry with his sister though they got along after a tumultuous beginning. He characterized his parents' marriage as "excellent" and that there was no history of abuse. Holmes fits into Peter Langman's (2009/2016) shooter typology as a "psychotic shooter" in that there is no indication of abuse or trauma and seemingly comes from a good family. Holmes himself, in admitting that his family was generally placid apart from his sibling rivalry, seems to back this up.

Langman (2010) describes the experience of the mass shooter as alternating between what he terms "existential rage" and "existential anguish." Existential rage refers not to general anger but to rage against the conditions of existence, against their lives and the world. Existential anguish refers not to depression but to a deep despair in the face of existence. Langman points out that most school shooters seem to oscillate between these two states of existential distress. Holmes fits this description as well, as he reported from the age of ten that he had a great rage within him that manifested as fantasies of destroying the world and also anguish in that he was suicidal and attempted to commit suicide at least once in his life. As we will see later on Holmes first attempted to deal with these existential quandaries through scientific and mathematical ventures, only to turn to violence when these avenues were fruitless.

While Langman's work is excellent, especially as it comes to uncovering the motivations behind what he terms psychopathic and traumatized shooters, I think his work has fallen short in trying to understand the psychotic shooter. While he does offer a multifactorial analysis of shooters including their home environment, community, genetics, psychological, biological, etc., often the story he tells of the psychotic shooters is that they were from a good home and were twisted by a pernicious mental malady. I think we can go a step further in the understanding of



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Holmes if we adopt a different method.

Is Holmes a psychotic shooter, driven to shoot up that Colorado movie theater by an insidious and unnoticed disease of the mind? The psychiatrist in charge of assessing Holmes' sanity during his trial, Jeffrey L. Metzner, seems to give a conflicting report. While acknowledging that Holmes more than likely has schizoaffective disorder of the bipolar type and had undiagnosed schizotypal personality disorder throughout his youth and that without these conditions he never would have committed the shooting, Metzner (2013) cannot declare him legally insane as throughout the evaluation Holmes proved to be able to differentiate between right and wrong and meticulously planned the shooting. After the shooting he even asked the police whether he had killed any small children, which he had, and expressed remorse for doing so. Metzner's conclusion is somewhat confused: he committed the shooting because he was psychotic and yet he cannot be declared insane. He was out of control due to an illness and yet knew what he was doing. This does not add up.

Metzner (2013) makes many references to Holmes' delusional thinking and awkwardness in social interactions as signs of psychosis, but I think that it becomes clear when looking at his journal as well as his life circumstances that what he did was not an act of a madman but instead something which makes horrifying sense. For although schizophrenia and other forms of psychosis are said to be either genetic or biological in origin, these theories are still unproven.<sup>6</sup> Nearly half a century ago the psychiatrist R.D. Laing used a method known as social phenomenology to look into the families of those diagnosed with schizophrenia. He found that what most saw as a biological or psychological disturbance, was really a sort of disturbed communication. Eventually he would expand his idea, no longer looking solely at the family and how it creates these disturbed communications but to the larger society. To understand Holmes and to not merely designate his disturbed thinking as delusions we need to use this method.

Metzner (2013) reports that Holmes first received psychological services as an eight-year old when he went to family sessions due to his not getting along with his younger sister. He was

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<sup>6</sup> A widely promoted study (Carey, 2016) was reported to have found the genetic basis behind schizophrenia. The headlines left out that the study was done on mice. I've never met a schizophrenic mouse.

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said to be “irritable and not wanting to engage” with her. This was in 1996, a year after the family had moved to Salinas, California. When the family moved to San Diego, Holmes once again went into family treatment as he was having difficulty with the move. Here his “diagnoses were listed as adjustment disorder with mixed disturbance of emotions/conduct and adjustment disorder, depressed mood.” Holmes himself reports that from around the age of ten he was filled with incredible rage which involved fantasies of destroying the world.

In Colorado, a few months before the shooting, Holmes attended sessions with a psychiatrist who mostly prescribed him medication but did occasionally talk to him about his troubles. However, Holmes felt he could not tell his psychiatrist about everything he was thinking because he knew there would be consequences for telling her that he was planning on carrying out the shootings. Once again, we see that Holmes is savvy enough to understand the limits of confidentiality and knows he must hide his intentions. So much for *Tarasoff* preventing harm to others. Everything he could not tell his psychiatrist Holmes wrote in a journal which gives us really remarkable insight into his thinking.

Though it could be seen as the scribbblings of a madman, I think there are several aspects of the journal that make sense when put in their proper context. Holmes stated that the question he is trying to answer in his journal is a question that had troubled him since he was ten years old (interestingly also the time when he became full of rage): to, as Metzner put it, understand “the meaning of life and death.” The first page of his journal contains, apart from a strange symbol he called “ultrareception,” two questions – “What is the meaning of life?” and “What is the meaning of death?” In order to answer these questions, he takes a route through mathematics.

Metzner (2013) attributed Holmes’ psychosis to his delusional belief in “human capital” or that humans have a mathematical value which can be added to and subtracted from by various acts, mostly by adding meaning to their life. Holmes believed that if you kill other people, you take away their value (meaning) and add it to your own. On the surface this seems to be quite mad. However, I ask you to consider this in light of our responses to these shootings. The victims are rarely given any spotlight apart from brief pseudo-sentimental montages on the news. The

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shooter is nearly always the one in the spotlight. Holmes put mathematically what we explicitly understand in the United States – fame is a kind of ultimate meaning.<sup>7</sup> He added this fame and meaning to himself by subtracting the life and meaning from other people.

But why put this mathematically? Is it because he is delusional? Holmes was a very good student throughout high school and his undergraduate education. He studied in the sciences and was dejected when he wasn't accepted into the top neuroscience programs in the country for graduate school. He later struggled in a neuroscience program in Colorado which seemed to coincide with his more intensive focus on killing others. His father had a PhD in statistics and worked for software companies. Mathematics runs in the family.

Also consider what we do as psychological researchers. In quantitative research we are asked to quantify feelings such as with the Beck Depression Inventory or assign someone an IQ number which ostensibly measures their intelligence. In social psychological research we quantify people into groups and subgroups and then make overarching claims about their behavior. Living, breathing people are reduced to data for research. This dehumanized way of looking at humanity, perhaps call it mathematized, is considered a perfectly sane way of trying to understand who people are and what they do. Is what Holmes did in trying mathematically to formulate a meaning to life much different than what psychologists do in their labs?

Holmes stated that he was interested in neuroscience because he wanted to understand why he was different. He wanted to study the brain because he thought he would find the reason for his suffering and rage within its neuronal connections. But Holmes used this knowledge to dehumanize himself further and to become even more mystified to his suffering. From his journal in regards to his mental state: “Anxiety and depression both serotonergic system anyway though.” In another place he writes “Despite my biological shortcomings I have fought and fought. Always defending against pre-determination and the fallibility of man.” He follows the brain disease notion of mental illness to its logical conclusion – hopelessness.

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<sup>7</sup> Langman (2017) has pointed out that many school shooters look to previous shooters as role models, especially in how they obtain fame after their shooting. Other mass public shooters such as the Weis Market shooter also spoke of their admiration for the Columbine shooters.

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Holmes was also given the SSRI Zoloft for the first time in March 2012, four months before the shooting. After taking Zoloft he began to exhibit behaviors uncommon to him. Normally socially awkward, he began to text one of his female classmates about how he liked her short shorts and created dating profiles, including on a site for swingers. He told Metzner that when he went into treatment with his psychiatrist in Colorado “he lost the fear.” Specifically, he lost the fear of consequences for killing others. Metzner called this a “dysphoric mania.” Suddenly a subdued and socially awkward man was hitting on a female classmate and using dating sites as well as recording in his journals that he was experiencing mania. The signs seem to point towards Zoloft disinhibiting him, which for someone with more modest fantasies would not be an issue, but for someone with fantasies of mass murder is certainly dangerous.

Most school and mass shooters are not on psychotropic medication of any kind, though they may have previously taken medication. Langman (2016) argued that psychotropic medication has little to do with school shootings and in many cases the shooter had no history of their use or improved while on medication. In his argument against blaming medication Langman points out that Eric Harris of Columbine did not experience a manic episode as a result of his using the SSRI Luvox, but he does not take into account the possibility of SSRIs disinhibiting their users (Breggin, 1991; 2008 and Breggin & Breggin, 1994) and instead blames it on mental illness. Szasz (1961/2010) has convincingly argued that mental illness is a myth, a pseudo-scientific concept used to disguise personal and societal conflicts as medical issues. There is far more evidence for psychiatric medication having negative consequences for its users (Whitaker, 2010) than for mental illness causing violent behavior. In the case of Holmes, it seems that his recent use of Zoloft was at least a contributing factor. The psychiatrist William H. Reid interviewed Holmes before his trial and concluded that Zoloft had nothing to do with the shooting. He details this in his book *A Dark Night in Aurora: Inside James Holmes and the Colorado Mass Shootings* (2018). However, Robert Whitaker and Lisa Cosgrove (2015) have written extensively about how psychiatrists protect their guild interests and profits by

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consistently misrepresenting the effectiveness and safety of psychotropic medication.<sup>8</sup>

What to say of masculinity in all of this? I have tried to show that toxic masculinity is not a satisfactory way of understanding why mass shootings happen and that it may be better understood as a failure of obtaining manhood. Langman (2010) also notes that nearly all of the mass shooters he surveyed did not fit the typical picture of masculinity: most were small and scrawny or had birth defects that made them extremely self-conscious of their physicality. Others were unable to have success with women or struggled in school and work. These are not the actions of powerful men carrying out acts of oppression but of impotent and desperately despairing males lost in the twilight lands of unreachable manhood.

However, Holmes was successful in school and even while being socially awkward had a close group of friends in high school and a girlfriend in graduate school. While not getting into a top graduate school he got into a respectable institution for neuroscience, though for the first time in his life he experienced academic struggles there. His relationship was also deteriorating at the same time. Was the shooting then to get back at his better classmates or his ex-girlfriend like other school shooters? No, he didn't shoot up his school but chose a movie theater instead; a place where people go to watch celebrities, the ultimate in fame in America, and opened fire to take the value from the movie patrons to add to his own life.

### **PSYCHOSIS OR “SOCIOSIS”?**

Apart from Holmes' behavior during and around the time of the shooting he was not that different from many young men today. He experienced rivalry with his younger sister and was upset about moving to different towns. He did well in school and played videogames. His existential rage and anguish should be familiar to anyone who has been confronted with some of life's enduring and unanswerable questions. The core of his supposed delusional beliefs are not so strange when considered in light of the modern scientific emphasis on making all things quantifiable. We don't know enough about his family or how he experienced society. Was he, like so many boys, in a family that is only one in name and not in content? Was he, like so many

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<sup>8</sup> A brief overview from Whitaker (2017) can be found here: <https://www.madinamerica.com/2017/09/thou-shall-not-criticize-our-drugs/>.

boys, faced with a society that had already deemed him an irredeemable, violent brute?

But we cannot feel sorry for Holmes. His decision to kill those people in the movie theater was his and his alone. No matter how tortured the soul, the killing of innocent people cannot be excused. However, if we want to understand mass shooters it will do no good to simply label them as evil and then go about feeling superior in our righteousness, nor can we rely on mythological explanations such as mental illness or toxic masculinity. We must look to our already-crumbled institutions, outmoded by the ever-accelerating pace of change and our contemptuous treatment of boys to understand why many are dropping out of society or even opting out of life entirely. For those few who make their dreadful rage so public for us to see, we can either continue to stare on incredulously as each macabre headline scrolls by or learn to be truly there for those consumed by darkness.

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**THE FALSITY OF IDENTITY POLITICS (PC): NEGATIVE  
ATTITUDE IS TOWARDS MALES WHO ARE DIFFERENT, IN POLICING  
SEXUAL ACCESS BY GATE-KEEPING GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

*Steve Moxon*



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**ABSTRACT**

*Identity politics (often dubbed political correctness: PC) victim categories (protected characteristics) are shown to be false. Negative attitude is specifically towards males, and evoked by any form of significant difference. Previous findings that misogyny has no scientific basis, with the evidence instead of philogyny and misandry, extend to apply across all victim categories, trumping race or sexual orientation. This is revealed in the predominance of males as hate crime victims, the harsher attitude towards apparently more masculine subsets of sexual minority and race, and experimentally. Supposed homophobia is revealed to be a far wider phenomenon, encompassing all victim categories, manifest culturally in male initiation and scientifically evidenced across fields. It functions to gate-keep male full admission to the group, serving to police male sexual access, maximising reproductive efficiency, not to deal with out-group threat, nor to oppress (least of all females). Identity politics is extreme misrepresentation of social and inter-personal reality.*

**Keywords:** identity politics, negative attitude, male, protected characteristic, hate crime

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## INTRODUCTION

Following a first ever review of misogyny, showing that there is no scientific basis of a generic negative attitude towards females, and that instead there is misandry and *philogyny* (Moxon, 2018), this review is of how these findings impact on identity politics (or *PC: political correctness*, from the modes of enforcing ideological conformity). Negative attitude is presumed to be unwitting and/or intentional unwarranted prejudice, with the core victim category -- *protected characteristic* -- being target sex (or *gender*; henceforward simply *sex*). The findings re misogyny therefore should be apparent in identity politics categories, with males, being half the population, accounting for by far the greatest proportion of individuals impacted by negative attitudes. Individuals seen in terms of the other principal identity politics categories (target sexual orientation and race) would be expected to be less evident through their much lower proportion of the population. Furthermore, target sex (sexism) cannot but interact with target race (racism) and sexual orientation (*homophobia*, more properly, *homonegativity*), dubbed *intersectionality* in the ideology and research literature. Potentially, protected characteristics could cancel each other out, act synergistically, or, as with sex, not attract negative attitude as straight-forwardly as is supposed, either in manner and/or direction. This would be expected given the political rather than evidential basis of the ideology.

## BACKGROUND

Identity politics originated in historically crude political expediency that over time has become *the* contemporary mythology, in being now all-encompassing and deep-seated. The wellspring is antipathy towards the mass of ordinary people by a politically-minded intellectual elite resentful over the failure of Marxist politics to be widely accepted and needing to salve cognitive dissonance and save face. A full exposition is available (Moxon, 2014); here follows an introduction with a narrower pertinent focus.

The concept of a generic misogyny stems from Engels' non-scientific claim that the family was created by capitalism, extended by European (later U.S. emigré) Marxist intellectuals circa 1930 in a non-scientific reasoning that capitalism somehow is psychogenic in *repressing* (the non-scientific Freudian term) *the workers* from engaging in revolutionary activity. As supposed agents of change, prepared to engage in violence, the workers had been envisaged as generically male, but as a conduit for supposed oppression to female intimates, men no longer could be

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considered the *vanguard* of revolution. Henceforward this had to be women. Within the U.S. Ivy League and then U.S. universities generally, over decades these ideas melded with post-modernism—the other way the intelligentsia dealt with the failure of their political theory, by retreat into a radical relativistic philosophy to deny the legitimacy of any and every system of thought, science included.

The parallel notion of generic oppression by *whites* of *blacks* didn't emerge until the seeming-nascent revolution of U.S. civil rights in effect was co-opted by the Left in 1968. The political utility of this was a more credible alternative than just women to replace the workers of old as a revolutionary vanguard, in that African-Americans were more obviously oppressed than women. However, unlike women, who, however mistakenly, are easily envisaged as akin to a class, the oppression was of only one racial type in a particular, extreme historical context. To be of real political utility, this needed to be generalisable: expanded to encompass ethnic minority generically -- to move to a universal principle of *white oppresses non-white*. However, Asian Americans experience significantly better education, work, and income outcomes in comparison even to whites, and outside the U.S. there are highly varied relationships of host community to an ethnic minority. Paralleling the embrace by U.S. Left intelligentsia of civil rights, at the same time (1969) another seeming proto-revolutionary movement of an oppressed group (male homosexuals) ripe for co-option emerged in the U.S. with the Stonewall riots. Again, for political utility this movement was expanded, to add lesbians, despite there being no historical, legal or other oppression of female homosexuals.

Retrospective justification of such incoherence requires theory to be built in a reverse manner to science. Inconsistencies indicating a false hypothesis are accommodated, couched in opaque jargon and convoluted reasoning. Theory of invariable applicability of *male-oppresses-female*, *white-oppresses-ethnic-minority* and *heterosexual-oppresses-homosexual* dynamics creates an expectation of their always being in operation. Through hegemonic groupthink, strong confirmation bias ensures feeding by data presented in ways that appear to support the overall model even when diametrically contradicting it (being readily misconstrued as *truth inversion*). Over time, the various *x-oppresses-y* notions become self-fulfilling prophecies, despite moving ever further away from any accurate, reasonable account of reality.

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## A USEFUL OVERVIEW IS PROVIDED BY HATE CRIME STATISTICS

The negative attitudes supposed in identity politics are intended to be captured in the domains of so-called *hate crime*, as is confirmed by the U.K. Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) (2019), deeming the domains of hate crime protected characteristics to include any display of hostility or prejudice, implicit or explicit. Despite the explicit connection to identity politics, the principal protected characteristic of sex is omitted from hate crime. The addition of misogyny had been proposed in the U.K. but rejected by the CPS, in its *Hate Crime Annual Report 2017-2018*, as an “ineffective approach” (p.19), but no explanation is offered. Even the raw data is in line with the inversion of expectation re negative attitude and sex, as found in Moxon (2018): hate crime victims are 68% male, 28% female, according to DEMOS (Walters & Krasodomski-Jones, 2018) -- more than 2:1. This is echoed in the CPS *Hate Crime Data Reports*, which for 2016-2017 showed totals of 6,452 male and 3,731 female victims, and for 2017-2018, 6,003 male and 3,566 female victims. Buried in the data are breakdowns by sex of victim for each hate crime domain, in each of which there are (far) more male than female victims, with the exception of the *transphobic* domain, where the sex differential is reversed through male-to-female *transsexuals* (mis-)recorded as being female (*trans-women*), notwithstanding that they remain clearly male in appearance (see below). The fully across-category excess of male victims of hate crime demonstrates that in the *intersection* of sex with other protected characteristics, sex trumps all. *Intersectionality* does not hold.

Despite the clear data, there is no mention within the text of the large sex differential in victimhood, either overall or in respect of any domain, ostensibly because of the proportion of cases (about a quarter to a third) where no sex is recorded. Yet in this portion of the data the profound skew would be expected to not merely continue but intensify, because of a key demand characteristic of *female* but not *male* being a protected characteristic in the politics that the concept of hate crime was set up to serve. The authors claim the data is “not robust enough to calculate proportions by gender accurately”, but this appears political opacity. The failure persists in the 2017-2018 *Report*, despite a decreased proportion of cases where sex is not reported. This misleading by omission is cemented in a Home Office review (Hambly, Rixom, Singh & Wedlake-James, 2018). No mention is made (even in footnotes) of the sex of victims; only that of perpetrators, who, being majority male, can hide a lack of expected male-to-female victimisation.

This data issue is compounded by hate crime data being non-scientific in that survey respondents not only are self-selecting, but in *hate crime* being defined by no criteria, nothing can be putative about a report, as the claim in itself is all the confirmation required. Furthermore, there are the well-known demand characteristics associated with formal reporting to police and deeming an incident a crime. Consequently, data regarding hate crime even more than usual for survey data is liable to suffer from both male under- and female over-reporting: whereas for males, displaying any vulnerability is sexually unattractive and results in loss of status, further reducing sexual attractiveness; for females, it evokes protection, enhancing sexual attractiveness.

The reporting differential according to sex of victim has not been researched in respect of hate crime, but regarding violent assaults, in marked contrast to women, “men victimized by strangers most often do nothing” (Kaukinen, 2002). If even violence does not prompt males to report to authorities, then it is likely the same for any sort of hate crime act. The finding is strongly echoed in those for crime generally, with male comparative under-reporting the principal predictor of the likelihood or not of reporting a crime (Avdiya & Giever, 2012). It’s the most striking feature of domestic (intimate partner) violence, impacting the raw data by an order of magnitude or more, even in mere survey—notwithstanding the most strenuous efforts to remove all demand characteristics, still men under-report (for a review, see Moxon, 2014). In health-care, men are only half as likely as women to seek assistance (Wang, Hunt & Nazareth, 2013). Male relative reluctance generally to seek help is found whenever it is investigated (Vogel & Heath, 2016; Möller-Leimkühler, 2002; Yousaf, Grunfeld & Hunter, 2015). Rasmussen, Hjelmeland & Dieserud (2018) find major barriers even prior to suicide: a feeling of total defeat, the imperative not to show weakness, and fear of (revealing) mental disorder; all concerning the shame of falling short of standards (losing status). With the very large majority of male over female victims of hate crime recorded across domains, combined with the very large corrective that would need to be applied to produce an accurate estimation of the sex differential, it is apparent that males overwhelmingly if not exclusively are the victims of hate crime, undermining hate crime data as offering support to identity politics related theory.

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## DOMAINS REFLECT DEMOGRAPHY, BUT WHAT ABOUT SEX?

Hate crime reports would be expected in their domains roughly to reflect the demography of the corresponding protected characteristics, and so they do. With sex not included as a domain, the great majority of reports are in respect of the domain of race, and not only in the U. S. but also in the U. K.: almost nine out of every ten (84%); followed by sexual orientation (8%) (Walters and Krasodomski-Jones, 2018). This more than tenfold difference corresponds to the proportion of the U. K. population of an ethnic minority (circa 20% on 2011 census data) vis-a-vis the prevalence of homosexuality (roughly 2% as the mean of reliable surveys). The remaining hate crime domains are insignificant in being each a mere 1% of reports. That of transsexuality actually is a proportion of reports far above prevalence, whereas the others appear not to reflect demographics but the absence in the domain of any hate; a recognised issue (Mason-Bish, 2018) undermining the concept of hate crime. The disabled and the elderly therefore are not here discussed.

As sex, through demographics, would be the most prevalent domain by far, its impact cannot be hidden. How sex interacts with other protected characteristics is the chief question. The main intersections are of sex with race and sex with sexual orientation. If, as according to identity politics notions, sex and race are mutually compounding, then black females would greatly outnumber black males in the hate crime data. Instead, the putative effect is not merely absent but in reverse: double the number of male-to-female victims in the race domain. That's in line with the sex differential overall in hate crime, as expected from the race domain accounting for the great bulk of all 'hate crime' cases. The 2017-2018 CPS figures for the race domain are 5,032 males, 2,816 females; plus 3,299 where sex was not recorded, that for reasons above-discussed would be expected to be even more in the male direction. The 2016-2017 figures are similar: 5,368 males 2,850 females (and 3,636 cases where sex was not recorded). An estimate apportioning the *gender-not-recorded* cases would increase male victim preponderance to at least three to one.

In respect of sexual orientation, again identity politics and intersectionality prediction is not only nullified but reversed. The 2017-2018 CPS figures for the homophobic domain are 630 males and 441 females (plus 311 where sex was not recorded). The data for *transphobia* is 41 male (transwomen), 25 female (transmen), and 19 where no sex is given. And again, the 2016-2017 data

is similar: regarding homophobia, 668 males, 434 females and 318 non-sexed; and re transphobia, 33 males (transwomen), 20 females (transmen), and 31 non-sexed. The sex differential is substantial, albeit, without adjustment to apportion the non-sexed reports, less than two to one. That the skew towards male victimisation is less than for race likely is through the female fluidity of sexual orientation notably absent in men (Kinnish, Strassberg & Turner, 2005). Female bisexuality in some respects may be near ubiquitous. With prevalence effectively far higher for females than for males, there would be much greater scope for female (mis)construal of hate crime victimisation. The lower sex differential of the raw data in comparison to that for race is also in part through what in effect is sex miscategorisation additional to that regarding transsexuality, as seen in unpacking sexual orientation, for which reason this is here done first ahead of dealing with race.

### **HOMOPHOBIA IS TOWARDS MALES**

Scientific investigation of negative attitude in respect of sexual orientation confirms the picture from hate crime data that its most striking aspect is of its being far more towards males than to females, which last may be mostly data noise and/or artefactual. The sex-difference applies to bisexuality as well as homosexuality, and not least transsexuality. With perpetration being overwhelmingly male, it must be suspected that the whole phenomenon at issue is male intra-sexual. Note that albeit transsexuality is not a sexual orientation, it is grouped thus in hate crime reporting and data analysis, so is dealt with at this juncture. Negative attitude across all forms of sexual minority is far more towards males (Herek, 2009), and specifically in respect of homosexuality, an abundance of studies show that attitudes indeed are more negative towards gays than to lesbians, and substantially so (Kuyper, Sommer & Butt, 2018; Sakallı-Uğurlu, Uğurlu & ve Eryılmaz, 2019; Ellis, Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2003; Schellenberg, Hirt & Searset, 1999; Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Nierman, Thompson, Bryan & Mahaffey, 2007; van den Akker, van der Ploeg & Scheepers, 2013; Wellman & McCoy, 2014; Oliver & Hyde, 1993). This sex differential is irrespective of methodology, not least in using a new, more refined measure (Monto & Supinski, 2014). Breen & Karpinsky (2013) unusually find no negativity, but nevertheless find a profound sex differential, with positivity only towards lesbians. Van Leeuwen, Miton, Firat & Boyer (2016) point out that the negative attitude disproportionately in the male direction often is in respect of “tenor, content, and intensity”, with gays and not lesbians being those who face violence and

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notable crime. Where there is detection of more negativity towards lesbians, it is by females (Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006). Neuroscientific study (Dickter, Forestell & Mulder, 2015) reveals that visual processing of a lesbian target is the same as if heterosexual, whereas gays are regarded as akin to out-group members.

The research reflects the completely contrasting way that male and female homosexuality have been treated in law, which must mirror longstanding opprobrium for male homosexuality, whereas female homosexuality has not been regarded as a problem. It must be suspected that the difficulty this poses for the identity politics model of female victimhood underpins why most studies hide the sex differential by aggregating data across sex. A more general confounding of data occurs in defining down criteria for what constitutes homophobia. Trivial putative forms of harassment and misinterpretation of what is innocuous and, indeed, well-meaning, can be elided with clear harassment and assault, further masking the sex differential.

What little negative attitude is experienced by lesbians is against the minority who are masculinised (*butch* or *stud*), as opposed to feminised (*femmes*), or neither (*androgynous* or *unisex*) (Cohen, Hall & Tuttle, 2009). It's in respect of the extent to which they are perceived as male-like, by females and males alike. This nuance, though long apparent, as recorded in journalism, anecdote, and also survey (Kearl, 2014), is examined in no other scientific study, presumably because findings are anticipated to contradict intersectional compounding of negative attitudes in respect of female and sexual orientation protected characteristics—and for femme lesbians more so than butch, inasmuch as the latter are assumed to benefit from the supposed *privilege* attached to any perception of being male. [There is an attempt to address this in the intersectional invisibility hypothesis, discussed below in the context of race.] Its basis, Lick & Johnson (2014) find, is “gender-atypical” facial features, rendering masculinised lesbians “unattractive”. This is through actual masculinisation, by abnormal increased early exposure to androgens in butch and not femme lesbians (Brown et al., 2002), causing higher waist-to-hip ratios, greater saliva testosterone levels, less desire to give birth, and more childhood sex-atypical behavior (Singh et al., 1999); this last also being found by Zheng & Zheng (2016). With femmes effectively indistinguishable physically and in demeanour from heterosexual females, then unlike their butch counterparts they would have no apparent non-heterosexual orientation to be targeted with negative attitude. Likewise, for lesbians who are neither markedly feminised



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nor masculinised. Classing together lesbians of all types obscures that receipt of negative attitude is by a subset only. The inclusion of reports of hate crime by masculinised lesbians in effect artefactually reduces the sex differential in the hate crime domain of sexual orientation, contributing to why it seems not as large as that for the race domain.

Corresponding to the different types of lesbians, gays can be categorised according to sexual role and attendant demeanour and behaviours into *tops*, *bottoms*, and *versatiles*. However, whereas it's a minority masculinised subset of lesbians liable to attract negative attitude, gays thus liable are *all* gays, especially subsets of gays making up the majority: those who are effeminate (Glick, Gangl, Gibb, Klumpner & Weinberg, 2007; Blashill & Powlisha, 2012; Ayres & Luedeman, 2013). Tops, in being overtly and exaggeratedly masculine in demeanour and appearance, appear to possess mate value in male terms (that is, they are superficially sexually attractive as if they were heterosexual males). In consequence they tend to be seen comparatively as less markedly incongruous, and, therefore, although they too attract negative attitude, it is not to the same degree as for bottoms and versatiles. By contrast, bottoms are feminised and may play up the role (*campness*), in what may even appear a taunting manner, inviting negative attitude. So may do versatiles, in that comparatively they too are conspicuously feminised (Ayres & Luedeman, 2013), even if less and less consistently than are bottoms. The lesbian counterparts of versatiles (unisex or androgynous) by contrast don't stand out from heterosexual females and are effectively invisible. The mirror image contrast here between lesbians and gays still further reveals the proximal basis of the pronounced sex differential in negative attitude skewed towards male rather than female homosexuals being victims.

Bisexuals are a special case in that males and females have the same sexual orientation, leaving sex the only factor distinguishing them. However, by intersectionality reasoning, a female bisexual would attract a strongly negative attitude as a result of having two protected characteristics, whereas a male bisexual supposedly would benefit from male privilege to cancel out or at least partly offset the single protected characteristic. Contradicting this, Dodge et al. (2016) find "attitudes generally are more positive toward bisexual women than bisexual men". Herek (2002) found this to be true for male subjects, though that females don't favour bisexuals of one sex more than the other (and rate bisexuals actually less favourably than homosexuals) is probably because of the confounding factor that for women bisexuals provoke the need for

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closure (Burke et al., 2017). That little research has been conducted on attitudes towards bisexuals likely is partly through definitional problems, and difficulty recruiting male bisexuals through their rarity—male bisexuality may not exist, given that in some studies a bisexual arousal pattern is not apparent in putative bisexual males.

The pattern of negativity towards males but not (or much less so) to females is also evident for transsexuals, in that those born male attract most negativity. Wang-Jones, Hauson, Ferdman, Hatstrup & Lowman (2018) conducted several analyses and find that “overall people showed more implicit bias towards transwomen than to transmen,” corroborating plenty of prior evidence (Gerhardstein & Anderson, 2010; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Wang-Jones, Alhassoon, Hatstrup, Ferdman & Lowman *et al*, 2017; and Witten & Eyler, 1999), confirmed by Nagoshi, Cloud, Lindley, Nagoshi & Lothamer (2019). [To reiterate, birth-males confusingly are denoted transwomen, meaning *transitioning to women*; transmen are birth-females.] Their further analyses revealed that this bias is also evident in lesbian and bisexual women subjects. Rudin et al. (2016) conclude that male-born transsexuals face a stark work-place negativity termed *penis panic*. As is well attested, male-to-female transsexuals are perceived as trying but failing to be women whilst remaining detectably male in appearance and demeanour, because of the irreversible impact of testosterone on bones & cartilage, vocal pitch and speech patterns, that subsequent transitioning by feminising hormones cannot eradicate. That this is readily apparent, further undermining intersectionality, may account for why the different perception of transwomen compared to transmen is still awaiting a first study. Instead of acknowledging that negative attitudes in respect of sexual orientation are much less towards females and much more towards males, research focuses on the politically expected greater male exhibition of negative attitudes. As hate crime data reveals, this is overwhelmingly real and indisputable, but here too, expectation based on intersectionality is thwarted. Negativity is largely same-sex. Lesbians not only experience far less than gays, but much of any they receive is from females (Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006). Ready report of exhibition as sex-separate data combines with only aggregate measures across sex of receipt, facilitating false inference of male perpetration towards females.

Summarising across non-heterosexual orientations, those who evoke negative attitude, in order of its severity, are, first, gays, in their being male and seemingly markedly *different*

(especially those who exhibit feminisation), and specifically butch lesbians, in their being markedly masculinised, therefore also seeming notably different, albeit female. Next come male bisexuals, who are also seen as significantly different, and (pointing up difference) unpredictable in being so fickle, as it were, in orientation. Third, in receipt of negative attitude most of all, are birth-male transsexuals, in their being male and maximally different in trying actually to become the opposite sex whilst remaining detectably male. Crudely stated, the issue is that being male and *different* attracts negative attitude in proportion to the impression of the extent of difference.

### **HOMOPHOBIA IS A MISNOMER FOR A WIDER PHENOMENON**

The standard notion of not simply homonegativity but that males somehow *fear* homosexuals comes from the long outdated, comprehensively discredited (eg, Webster, 1995) non-science of Freudian psychoanalysis, and from where sprang the pejorative term *homophobia*, latterly *homohysteria*, and the use in this context of the expression *ego defence*. The supposition is the biology-denying modern mythological assertion the male is merely a *gender role*, that as such is held to be fragile and malleable in somehow being threatened by non-heterosexual orientation, notwithstanding its very low prevalence. This has arisen out of the extension of Marxist ideology (outlined in *Background*, above).

Disgust, not fear, is the response to male homosexuals (Morrison, Kiss, Bishop & Morrison, 2019; Wang, Yang, Huang, Sai & Gong, 2019) confirming multiple earlier research (Cunningham, Forestell & Dickter, 2013; Terrizzi, Shook & Ventis, 2010; Dasgupta, DeSteno, Williams & Hunsinger, 2009; Inbar, Pizarro, Knobe & Bloom, 2009; Tapias, Glaser, Keltner, Vasquez, & Wickens, 2006). Studies also confirm male-specificity: that it doesn't apply to lesbians (Inbar, Pizarro & Bloom, 2012; Herek, 1988). Fear is a response to immediate danger, whereas disgust is to avoid contamination. They are dissociable psychologically, having very different neural correlates (Xu et al., 2015). The supposed feeling of personal threat to a sense of masculinity taken to be the basis of fearing male homosexuality, is shown to be false: the evoked disgust is an expression of a general antipathy to those seen as threatening sex-related morality (Crawford, Inbar & Maloney, 2014), and not through homosexuals being envisaged as low-status out-group members. The morality evoked is not restricted to the sexual and is in the domains of authority and, especially, sanctity (Wang et al., 2019). The sense of contamination is far wider

than some narrow challenge to personal sexual identity, but to group cohesion. This accords with what is apparent in the negative attitude in respect of sexual orientation: in its being deployed against males according to the extent to which they are different in significant ways. It appears to concern a mechanism of *policing* (as the term is used in biology) males within the social group. Non-heterosexual orientations seem to be a subset of indications of difference from group-supporting attitudes or behaviours requiring policing.

That homophobia (homonegativity) per se is more ostensible than real, being part of a much wider phenomenon, has been long apparent. Rofes (1995) found that homophobic terms are used exclusively against boys, without reference to homosexuality, and become well-established long before sexual maturity, peaking in early secondary school years. Kite & Whitley (1996) find that although men are far more negative to male homosexuals than are women, they nevertheless view gay civil rights positively. It cannot be homosexuality per se, then, that evokes men's negative attitude to gay men. Reigeluth & Addis (2016) find a much broader policing, functioning to enforce masculine norms, elevate and preserve status, and enhance friendship. More distally it's to clamp down on potential defection from the group (van Leeuwen, Miton, Firat & Boyer, 2016). The authors find that women no less than men see gays in this way. Homosexuality seems to be emblematic of failing to demonstrate/signal group allegiance; a wider imperative apparent in Plummer's (1999, 2001, 2005) research of the policing of boys:

*... if they are immature, weak, wimpy, woosy, overly-emotional, pacifists; if they don't participate in tough team sports or don't belong to a peer-group; if they are loners, aloof, elitist or different; if they are conscientious in class or conform too closely to adult expectations; and depending on their mannerisms, appearance and style of dress. ... Rather than signifying a boundary between masculine and feminine or between one masculine form and another, in the minds of boys and young men, homophobia patrols an intra-gender divide between successful collective masculinity and male otherness. ... it sanctions and polices stereotypical standards of masculinity and it proscribes immaturity and peer group betrayal too. Homophobia seems to arise from a more general preoccupation that boys should not deviate from the quest to become physically mature, peer-oriented, powerful, sexually potent men. (Plummer, 2001, p. 6)*

Plummer deems it "a wider taboo" (p. 4). The negative attitude denoted *anti-gay* is a misnomer, then. Anti-gay rhetoric is not concerned with policing homosexuality per se. It appears to be the use of exaggerated derogatory terms to impress on the target the risk of being

censured and the need to respond on pain of possible exclusion. This echoes PC misuse of the term *homophobic* (and *racist*, *sexist*, etc): smearing to test compliance, detect recalcitrance and oblige self-censorship; though PC is always exclusionary (a pathological extension?), rendering people en-mass permanently out-group with no scope for redemption.

Social deviance research is pertinent. Specifically, male in-group deviants are punished in a particular manner: exclusion from society and incapacitating practices, these being attempts to control future behaviour, not from restorative or retributive motives (Fousiani, Yzerbyt, Kteily & Demoulin, 2019). Once deemed a deviant, the label sticks, even if the deviance comes to be viewed as less unacceptable (Chan, Louis, & Jetten, 2010). Earlier work had established the *black sheep effect*, where an in-group member posing a threat to group identity is treated far more negatively than is someone from an out-group (Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988; Marques, Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1988). Congruent with and underpinning all these findings is that central to in-group identification is not competence or sociability but trustworthiness (Leach, Ellemers & Barreto, 2007)—a robust conclusion from a number of studies using a variety of direct and indirect methods.

The in-group male targets in such research are in the *minimal group* condition, which in verging on no group membership at all is akin to being on the threshold of membership of a group proper, as is the prospective new entrant to the adult male group. Males deemed eligible to join the hierarchy need to be those amenable to living within its confines and not liable to try to circumvent it, because male hierarchy is vital to the functioning of the group in determining male sexual access, requiring lower status males to acquiesce to very restricted mating opportunities. The benefits of hierarchy membership presumably are usually sufficient to dissuade dissent; however, a prerequisite is sufficient socio-sexual orientation, hence gate-keeping membership, and in these terms.

## **GATE-KEEPING BY MALE INITIATION RITES**

The reality of gate-keeping admission to male full adulthood is evident cross-culturally in pain-endurance initiation rites. These are much more common for males than for females (Edwards, 1992). Still extant in many traditional and even modern societies, they are inferred to have been universal ancestrally. Often central to them is male genital modification (mutilation)—*circumcision*, which, through denuding sexual sensitivity, reduces propensity to

engage in sex, impacting specifically extra-pair sex, functioning to control young males by lowering their competitiveness with high-status males for young females (Moxon, 2017). Research into initiation is outdated, sparse, and Freudian psychobabble or cultural-anthropological gender politics. Fresh thinking surfaced with a hypothesis that solidarity was required to produce warriors (Ember & Ember, 2010), though this seems to be an assumption for want of biologically based theory of male sociality. At last, a comprehensive cross-cultural review of theories was published in 2017. Schlegel & Barry conclude, “they are a form of adult male control over adolescent boys and unmarried (sub-adult) youths”. This is in line with illuminating accounts of the exclusionary experience of failed or non-initiate Xhosa males of South Africa provided by Froneman & Kapp (2017) and Magodyo (2013); the former in a traditional society, the latter among urban dwellers:

*Significant stigma is attached both to failed initiates and uninitiated people. Boys have to be successfully initiated to marry, inherit property or participate in cultural activities such as offering sacrifices and community discussions. If they are not circumcised, they are given left-over food at celebrations, are not allowed to socialise in taverns with other men, are not allowed to use the family name to introduce themselves, and are sometimes forcefully taken away from their girlfriends. Uninitiated men have less autonomy and must often obey others. They are accused first in the event of theft because ‘only boys steal’ and are often subjected to public humiliation and name-calling. They are seen to be cowards, who do not respect their culture and would incur the wrath of the ancestors for not complying with cultural expectations. (Froneman & Kapp, p.1)*

*Of particular importance is how uninitiated men face social degradation, are ostracized and ridiculed (Bottoman, 2006; Mavundla, Netswera, Toth, Bottoman & Tenge et al., 2010; Tenge, 2006). Marginalization of uninitiated Xhosa males comes about through rejection and lack of respect (Mavundla et al., 2010). These men are rejected by the community at large by being excluded from community events, and by their (already initiated) peers and women, who maintain that they prefer to form relationships with men. Furthermore, this rejection also exists at the family level, as an uncircumcised male is thought to bring shame to the family (Bottoman, 2006; Tenge, 2006). Such individuals are not afforded respect and are continuously subjected to ridicule through associations with immaturity and inferiority, by being referred to as boys or dogs (Mavundla et al., 2010). (Magodyo, p.29).*

These descriptions hardly could better reveal the function of passporting a prospective sexual participant to group membership.

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## COGNITIVE POLICING OF MALE DEVIANTS BY *CHEATER DETECTION*

Gate-keeping appears to require specific psychological mechanism keenly to recognise potential deviants. Experiments ruling out alternative explanation uncover cognitive adaptations for detecting violations of rules relating to maintaining coalitions, submitting to authority and providing aid, thereby to expose unhelpful individuals, traitors, and rebels (Sivan, Curry & Van Lissa, 2018). This is a form of *cheater detection* mechanism, that in functioning in social but not in other contexts is demonstrably specific adaptation rather than general cognitive facility. Cummins (1996, 2005, 2019) proposes and finds evidence for *violation detection* cognition to police low-ranking males in a dominance hierarchy. Equally, or as actually its main function, this could be employed for assessing the suitability of males to join the hierarchy in the first place. *Cheater detection* is implicit already even in early childhood (Cummins, 1996c), and not regarding mere outward compliance but truth and intent (Harris & Nuñez, 1996; Cummins, 1996b). What is being assessed is in a wide sense morality, through deontic reasoning: regarding obligations, permissions and prohibitions. These are just what apply to individuals by virtue of membership of a hierarchy, depending on rank. This mode of cognition is activated more in respect of low-status individuals (Cummins, 1999a), specifically males of low status (Oda, 1997); and in particular by other low-status males (Fiddick & Cummins, 2001). Furthermore, males of low status and deemed to *cheat* are perceived as unattractive (Mehl & Buchner, 2008; Bell & Buchner, 2009). Note for *low status* could be substituted *nil status*, as would be those yet to be admitted into the group as fully adult. More recently, van Lier Revlin & De Neys (2013) and Bonnefon, Hopfensitz & De Neys (2013) have reaffirmed the phenomenon, with their work in turn endorsed by Cummins (2013). Bonnefon's team notably find that males are seen as less trustworthy than females.

With converging lines of evidence showing *homophobia* or *homonegativity* a misnomer, the next question is if this new conceptualisation accounts for negative attitude in respect of the principal hate crime domain (the second-most important protected characteristic after sex) of race.

## RACE TOO IS TRUMPED BY SEX

Many academic studies show that discrimination against blacks is mostly against males (eg, Seaton et al., 2008; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Veenstra (2013)

examined self-reports of experiences of both major instances of discrimination and chronic, routine discrimination, concluding that “high levels of both kinds of discrimination reported by men in general are at odds with the additive and intersectionality-inspired perspectives which accord women the gender identity most vulnerable to discrimination”. Experiments by Perszyk, Lei, Bodenhausen, Richeson & Waxmanet (2019) reveal implicit attitudes by using young children (four-year-olds) to exclude the possibility of socialisation. Negative attitudes were found most towards black boys, followed by white boys, then black girls. Clearly, not race but sex is operative here; it is maleness, not blackness attracting negative attitude (race perhaps focusing the impact of sex). This effect previously was found in preference for own-race over other-race faces only when the faces shown are male; this in infants aged just three months (Ziv, 2012), in line with older studies. Together, the research indicates an implicit, evolved basis of negative attitudes being towards male rather than black targets; with race an intensifier. Note that in the Perszyk study, most subjects were white or near-white, leaving *black* a proxy for difference. This fits with the fungibility of the perception of race: neuroscientific experiment by Gwinn & Brooks (2013) demonstrates that race indeed is cognised as a continuum, not as discrete entities of African, Asian, et cetera.

In explanation, Veenstra (2013) proffers the subordinate male target hypothesis, as had Sidanius & Pratto (1999), its originators. The proposal is that negative attitude is a male-male inter-group arbitrary-set phenomenon, in line with the understanding that race is just one possible in-group marker among a non-limited range of possible others. There is the rival out-group male target hypothesis, cited by Navarrete, McDonald, Molina & Sidanius (2010). However, these between-group models do not fit with in-group / out-group dynamics being founded in affinity with the in-group, not hostility towards the out-group (Yamagashi & Mifune, 2009; Balliet, Wu & de Dreu, 2014). Out-group discrimination requires conflict and competition between groups (Abbink & Harris, 2019). Out-group male threat is held to be through a fear response to dangerous stimuli, as shown by its resistance to extinction, but this appears conceptually mistaken (Dang, Xiao & Mao, 2015; Koenig et al., 2017). This evolutionary rationale for specific cognition to serve out-group negativity is anyway questionable. Human female exogamy entails ancestrally the main contact males had with out-group males would have been the pair-bond partners of in-group females, through whom they themselves may well secure out-group females as pair-bond partners. This reciprocal exogamy is considered a foundation of



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human sociality (Chapais, 2008), binding together smaller groups that thereby become a subset of larger ones, hence the tribe, subsuming bands, so that almost all males likely to be encountered would not pose a threat. Males beyond the tribe, though indeed threatening, would have been very infrequently encountered. Even if, nonetheless, here was a selection pressure to drive cognitive adaptation, there is no conceivable cognitive facility to distinguish at a distance stranger within-tribe males from extra-tribe males; hence the universal cultural device of in-group markings.

A much more usual context and problem driving cognitive adaptation is that already outlined to explain negative attitude in respect of sexual orientation: assessing natal-group young males for worthiness of being granted full group membership as an adult male, plus monitoring males denied membership. These last would remain minimally within the social milieu, having nowhere else to go (the corollary of female exogamy is male philopatry, so a male could not expect to be accepted into another group, and surviving alone would be near to impossible). Tolerated in effect as adult children, they would be co-resident outcasts. Note that gate-keeping admission to the group is a scenario that is neither between- nor within-group, though more akin to the former, so data interpreted in terms of out-group is likely congruent with a gate-keeping model. For example, neural activity indicating greater attentional bias to racial targets presumed to indicate out-group status (e.g. Dickter & Bartholow, 2007), instead may indicate gate-keeping prospective in-group members.

Assessment for possible group membership, to be fairly certain that the male individual will abide by the rules of male sociality, requires a judgemental orientation. Setting a low threshold for any form of seeming transgression, entailing some *false negatives*, and setting a high threshold for appropriate behaviour, thereby rejecting some *true positives*, creates the evident anti-male prejudice, which would have co-evolved with the emotion of disgust proximally to drive it, together manifesting in negative attitude.

## **INTERSECTIONAL INVISIBILITY IS ITSELF INVISIBLE**

The evidence contradicting the notion of race-sex intersectionality has prompted an extension of that hypothesis that in certain circumstances intersectionality does not occur. The intersectional invisibility hypothesis (Purdie-Greenaway & Eibach, 2008) posits a default perception of individuals as possessing no more than one protected characteristic, with the other

characteristics in combination with it being implicitly presumed to be the supposed privileged alternatives. These individuals are termed *prototypical*. Those with two (or more) protected characteristics are termed *non-prototypical*, and seen as incongruous. Although they then supposedly do not attract negative attitude, they are purported to experience another form of disadvantage in being in a special way socially invisible. Thus, the category *female* is held to entail a default perception of *white* females; white heterosexual females only, indeed. These are prototypical females. Similarly, the category *black* by cognitive default constitutes specifically black (and heterosexual) *males* only: prototypical blacks. This perception is held to be through ideological androcentricism or ethnocentricism respectively. This is highly implausible. There surely is long evolved profound cognition relating to the sexes, both male- and female-centred, as it were; and to grouping and the sense of an out-group, with either white or non-white as in-group and among a plethora of potential in-group markers.

*Ethnocentrism* is shown to be a misnomer by simulation experiments (Hales & Edmonds, 2019) demonstrating that it is simply in-grouping, and may happen to be based on ethnic markers, but not on these alone, or necessarily in the main, or at all; instead on any sort of a marker of group identity, which can be fluid. Bizumic (2012) reviewed a plethora of hypotheses but could not decide between them, other than that the phenomenon is a function of the group rather than the individual. The absence of androcentrism in implicit cognition is shown in there being no difference in response times to identify faces according to whether they are male or female (Stroessner, 1996), and no statistically significant difference in the accuracy of recall of statements made by men as against those made by women (Schug, Alt & Klauer, 2015). A recent literature review (Bailey, LaFrance & Dovidio, 2018) is from the near-tautological premise of a supposed power imbalance the authors outline is manifest in various ways males are considered typical humans. They come to no conclusion as to why this produces androcentricity, though they proffer that plausibly it stems from men being considered agentic. The corollary that females are seen as exceptional humans, specifically through their sex, is conceded, as is that females evoke positive attitudes whereas males do not. Would this not be *gynocentrism*? *Androcentrism* is a strange interpretation of a view of males as the ordinary humans with females the special ones. Experiments purporting to demonstrate androcentrism (for example and notably, Hamilton, 1991; Merritt & Kok, 1995) merely contrive to prompt the conjuring in imagination of a male rather than a female, and do not exclude evoking accurate stereotyping of

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males as the more agentic sex in the wider community or civic arena—as would be expected to be evoked in the context of a university psychology laboratory—where they compete for status as the passport to sexual access. The social invisibility occasioned by non-prototypicality is held to manifest as “the struggle to be recognised and represented”, but women have a four- to five-fold same-sex in-group preference for females (Goodwin & Rudman, 2004), they are included in the all-inclusive symbolic nature of male groups (Maddux & Brewer, 2005), and they attract the sexual interest of males. Nothing about ‘intersectional invisibility’ appears to be a fit with social reality.

No empirical work has been done by Purdie-Greenaway & Eibach. Their paper is speculation, with no explanation of the predictive failures of intersectionality. Intersectional invisibility in any case doesn’t explain attitudes to different sorts of prototypical individuals: why there is no negativity towards white females, yet especial negativity to black males. Both would be expected to be in receipt of untrammelled negative attitudes in respect of their single protected characteristic. That there have been few if any tests of intersectional invisibility is complained of by Williams (2018), who conducted three: to examine if perception of non-prototypicality does in fact lead to invisibility; to try to identify potential mechanisms for this; and to see if invisibility produces marginalization. Williams concluded, “ultimately the findings presented in these studies do little to show empirical support for the intersectional invisibility model” (p. 88). Sesko & Biernat (2010) purport to test it, yet produce no evidence withstanding scrutiny, either that black women are ignored or suffer any disadvantage in consequence. Their finding that whites have difficulty distinguishing between and remembering black faces is to be expected (relative unfamiliarity), and that utterances by black women are more likely to be misattributed to others (actually to whites rather than to black men) reveals a perceived interchangeability, contradicting the notion that *white* and *men* are privileged characteristics. The authors concede invisibility confers the “advantage ... that black women may be less likely to be targets of discrimination” (p. 357). Where, then, is the disadvantage in and the social invisibility suffered by black women?

A more concrete disadvantage of intersectional invisibility is posited by Goff, Thomas & Jackson (2008): sexual unattractiveness. They attribute this to black women being seen as more masculine, but this is a conceptual error (see next section). In any case, with *male* considered

privileged, then would not masculine women be thought to attract less negative attitude? As for the notion of prototypicality, Ghavami & Peplau (2013) failed to find evidence (only “mixed” results) for the notion that it is a white man who is envisaged when thinking of a male. The authors comment on the apparent greater complexity of intersectionality theory than has previously been considered, which is to point to its being non-parsimonious, and, thereby, likely false.

### **RACE CAN PROMPT THE SALIENCE OF SEX AND DIFFERENCE**

Problems for intersectional invisibility continue when widening out race beyond simply *black* denoting *African* to encompass Asians, as only to be expected given the arbitrary extension of the identity politics *race* category from originally being only African-Americans. That Asians do not evoke negative attitudes as much as blacks is well known; found, for example, by Phills et al. (2018). Whereas expectation of intersectional invisibility of prejudice to black males but not females is borne out by their data, Phills *et al* obtained “inconsistent” results for Asian males, that they interpret as further complication of intersectionality. Again, though, it’s non-parsimony—an implausible hypothesis. Liu & Wong (2018) examine additive, multiplicative (interactive), cumulative disadvantage, and subordinate male target hypotheses, and in finding little evidence for any, opt for their *intersectional fusion syndrome* of uniqueness of particular intersections that cannot be gauged from the components; qualitatively different according to sex, with seven stereotypes unique to Asian men. This is description, not explanation. The authors concede nothing in their model can be operationalised into a measure. It’s not scientific hypothesis.

The relative lack of negative attitude towards Asians is attributed by Galinsky, Hall & Cuddy (2013) and Johnson, Freeman & Pauker (2012) to being perceived more female, turning *intersection* from *prototypical* to *non-prototypical*, thereby to invoke intersectional invisibility. However, clear evidence against inherent sex of race is provided by Kim, Johnson & Johnson (2015): three- and ten-month-old infants don’t perceive Asian or white faces as more female, nor African faces more male. There is no evidence of biological masculinisation; no continuum with Asians an intersex: sexing is implicitly binary -- this being hard-wired (Bayless et al., 2019), and the first cognitive process on encountering another individual (Kimchi, Xu & Dulac, 2007). Johnson et al.’s experiments use computer generated inter-sex faces to create ambiguity, forcing

a choice, as revealed by slower, more uncertain sex categorisation, captured in response-time or error data. Yet mis-categorisation occurs very rarely; hence it is likely artefactual. Galinsky et al.'s research is of various measures or proxies of sexual attraction (mate value), which requires sexing in the first instance. The best interpretation of the data from both research teams is that racial groups differ in perceived mate value, and may also prompt greater or lesser salience of sex. Mate value is succinctly expressed in degree of maleness or femaleness as shorthand for sexing plus sexual desirability, operationalised thus by the experimenter and subjects alike. It is not that individuals are viewed as more or less *gendered*. Asian males have small body frames, light muscularity, delicate-featured faces, and reputed meek demeanour; ancestrally indicating low genetic quality, and consequently sexually unattractive. Asians are more neotenised (paedomorphic) than other racial groups (e.g. Bromhall, 2003; Montagu, 1989), appearing relatively non-adult, failing to evoke sex as salient. The converse is true of African males. Confounding with sexual attractiveness would explain Schug, Alt & Klauer's (2015) results (above).

### **CONCLUSION: NEGATIVE ATTITUDES ARE TOWARDS MALES WHO ARE DIFFERENT**

With nothing concerning race here supporting either intersectionality or intersectional invisibility, race appears in effect to be an extension of sex as inverted from how it is envisaged in identity politics, not to females but to males being targets of negative attitude. Seemingly, it sharpens the focus on sex, rendering sex more salient. The operative factor in the intersection of race with sex apparently is not race per se, but *difference*. That is, race is a proxy for *difference*. This would be expected, as even social scientists acknowledge, perception of race is as an arbitrary-set. It accords with the other protected characteristic of sexual orientation likewise denoting *difference*. The negative attitude that identity politics is held to explain instead would be accounted for by targets being simply male and distinguished by whatever significant difference(s) from the norm they happen to exhibit, whatever the realm. Beyond its being wider than sexual mores, *difference* may be a general attitude or a range of specific indicators of non-adherence to adult male social rules; very likely it's both (information redundancy). Research is required.

Identity politics is revealed to be misconceived, as soon as interpretation widens out from being reflexively in its own terms (non-circularly), providing a window on an important facet of

sociality and psychology that identity politics had served to obscure: the policing of male sexual access by gate-keeping male full-adult group membership. In misidentifying targets and direction of negative attitude, identity politics itself has been a principal source of the very sort of disadvantage and oppression supposedly it was devised to counter. Even worse, it disadvantages people in general: the majority, not a minority; but as this was the basis of identity politics, it hardly would have any other outcome.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



**Steve Moxon** is an English independent (non-affiliated) cross-disciplinary researcher/writer of science review papers and books outlining original theory on the biological roots of human sociality, behaviour and psychology, with a special interest in the sexes-sex-difference/dichotomy. Regularly journal-published for the past decade, his topics include dominance hierarchy (and associated reproductive suppression), pair-bonding, partner violence, competitiveness, stress response mechanism, the origin of the sexual divide, and why culture is biology. Throughout is a necessary bottom-up approach, excluding all ideology: an avowed stance against 'PC' ('identity politics'), especially its core of feminism; all being non-, indeed anti-science. Steve also researches/writes about mythologies (ancient and contemporary), these being another window on understanding humanity; and is a songwriter, singer & guitarist. He resides in the Pennine hills north of Sheffield, Yorkshire, where he grew up, feels at home, and can walk or cycle through the stunning countryside of steep-sided wooded valleys and gritstone edges.

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**WHERE HAVE ALL THE BOYS GONE?  
HOW THE SYSTEMATIC LABELING OF YOUNG MALES IS AFFECTING  
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, ATTENDANCE, AND GRADUATION RATES  
IN AMERICA**

*Jeanne. M. Stolzer*



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**ABSTRACT**

*Two decades of data indicate that females outperform males in the American education system. Moreover, more recent data indicate an unprecedented shift has occurred in American higher education: women, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, are significantly more likely to enroll in college, to graduate from college, and to earn degrees—including advanced degrees. Few scholars are analyzing why this unprecedented shift has occurred. This paper will explore the various corollaries related to the deteriorating performance of males in the American education system and will challenge the existing structures that perpetuate the systematic failure of males in the academic setting. In addition, specific strategies aimed at improving the declining status of males in the education system will be discussed.*

**Keywords:** boys in school, males in education, failure of boys in school, gender differences in school performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Data from the last two decades has indicated that a monumental shift has occurred in the American education system. Beginning at age three, females outperform males on a wide range of standardized tests. Females receive better grades throughout elementary school, middle school, high school, and college, and are significantly more likely to outperform males on SAT and ACT tests (Hoff Sommers, 2015; United States Department of Education, 2018). Interestingly, data collected over the last two decades has confirmed that males are disproportionately labeled with learning and/or psychiatric disorders as the vast majority of children and adolescents in the American public-school system who have been labeled as “learning disabled” or “behaviorally disordered” are male (Stolzer, 2008). Furthermore, males are significantly more likely than their female cohorts to retake a grade, to be suspended from school, and to drop out of school (Peter & Horn, 2006; United States Department of Education, 2018.)

For the first time in American history, females are more likely to enroll in college and to graduate with a degree, including advanced degrees such as Ph.D.’s, law degrees and medical degrees (Rosin, 2012; United States Department of Education, 2018). According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) by 27 years of age, 32% of women had received their bachelor’s degree, compared with 24% of men. 70% of women had either attended some college or received a bachelor’s degree compared to 61% of men, and women are more significantly more likely to finish their college degree. In addition, significantly more women have graduated with advanced degrees from American Universities.

In order fully to understand these shifting education demographics, one must closely examine the changes that have occurred in the education setting. One of the most noteworthy changes in the American education system is our collective acceptance of feministic doctrine over the past 20-30 years. One of feminism’s major postulates that has been accepted by the masses is that gender is merely a social construct that can be recalibrated at will (Hoff Sommers, 2015). Rather than recognizing and celebrating the difference in males and females, this postulate simply refuses to acknowledge that differences exist. According to orthodox feminist doctrine, human beings are born as “blank slates”, lumps of clay if you will, with no innate predisposition that can be attributed to gender (Bartkey, 1990; Stolzer, 2012). This refusal to acknowledge distinct male and female differences has resulted in the demasculinization of males



in the American education system and has led to millions of young males being labeled as learning and/or behaviorally disordered simply because they do not follow traditional female trajectories (Stolzer, 2012).

Conventional feminist ideology is cleverly summed up in a quotation by Bartkey (1990): “human beings are born bisexual in our patriarchal society, and then, through social conditioning, are transformed into male and female gender personalities” (pg. 50). According to this widely disseminated worldview, males and females are essentially the same, yet develop differently as a result of specific socialization processes and pressure to conform to culturally dictated gender scripts. This reductionistic paradigm completely negates the decades of scientific literature that confirms that gender differences are innate, quantifiable, and can be seen across historical time (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Buss, 2004; Gurian, 2011).

In direct opposition to feminist theory, evolutionary biology insists that males and females have followed divergent developmental trajectories since the beginning of the hominid species (Bear, Connors, & Paradiso, 1996; Buss 2004). However, over the last two decades, there has been a concerted effort in the public-school system to demand that young males follow traditional female trajectories—behaviorally, socially, cognitively, and emotionally. For those boys who cannot or will not follow these newly mandated scripts, there are often times consequences, including, but not limited to behavioral and/or learning disability labels that will remain for the young male for the rest of his life (Breeding, 2002; Stolzer, 2016).

## **CORROLARIES RELATED TO DECLINING MALE PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL**

In order to comprehend fully why American males are lagging behind their female cohorts in higher education, one must first examine the processes that are occurring during childhood and adolescence in the American educational setting. From the founding of America until the late 1970s, psychiatric disorders in child and adolescent populations were extremely rare (Baughman, 2006). Furthermore, the term “learning disability” was unheard of in America until 1990 when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed by congress. As a direct result of this law, millions of American boys have been officially labeled as “learning disordered” and/or “behaviorally disordered” (Stolzer, 2012). In addition, public school personnel now have an economic incentive to label as many children as possible with behavioral and/or learning disorders as the more children are labeled, the more money the individual school

receives (Baughman, 2006; Stolzer, 2012) Of course, since the inception of compulsory schooling in America, there have been children who struggled academically in school. However, children did not perceive themselves as “learning disabled” because that label did not exist—nor did individual schools have an economic incentive to label children.

In addition to millions of American boys being labeled as “learning disordered”, an unprecedented number of boys have been diagnosed with a plethora of psychiatric disorders. ADHD, Conduct Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Oppositional Defiance Disorder are commonly diagnosed in young males across America (Breggin, 2014). ADHD is by far the most commonly diagnosed psychiatric illness in young males in America as published data has indicated that approximately 10-11 million American boys have been diagnosed with this disorder (Baughman, 2006; Breggin, 2014). Interestingly, data indicates that the vast majority of referrals for psychiatric diagnoses in young males come directly from the United States Public School System (Baughman, 2006). Currently, teachers and other school personnel routinely refer “problem” children for psychiatric evaluation, as children who do not sit still, are rambunctious, do not pay attention, are messy, are defiant, and/or do not follow directions are oftentimes assumed to have a psychiatric disorder (Phillips, 2006; Stolzer, 2016).

It is important to note that that teachers are not now, nor have they ever been, trained as psychiatrists, psychologists, or neurologists, yet they are the very people who are responsible for the majority of psychiatric referrals in child and adolescent populations (Baughman, 2006; Stolzer, 2010). According to the United States Department of Education (2018), 80-85% of students who have been diagnosed as “learning disabled” are male and 80-90% of students who have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder (i.e., ADHD, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, Conduct Disorder, etc.) are male.

From the very beginning of the American education system, the school’s role has been to teach children reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, over the last 20-25 years, schools have taken on the unprecedented role of brokers for the pharmaceutical industry by referring millions of children (and the majority of these children are male) for psychiatric evaluation (Baughman, 2006; Stolzer, 2010). The federal government has joined this effort by increasing mental health funding to schools, including providing 130 million dollars to train teachers to recognize subjective and unsubstantiated signs of mental illness in children and adolescents attending

public schools in America (Citizen's Commission on Human Rights-CCHR, 2015). Meanwhile, sales of psychiatric drugs have skyrocketed across America, with profits reaching 40 billion dollars a year (CCHR, 2015). Data indicates that young males are disproportionately diagnosed with mental illness, and the standard method of treating those diagnosed with a mental illness in daily doses of dangerous and addictive psychiatric drugs (Baughman, 2006; Stolzer, 2008).

Across cultures and across historical time, childhood and adolescence were collectively understood to be quantitatively different than other life stages and it was universally understood that childhood and adolescence were fraught with behaviors that would be defined as maladaptive in adult populations (Stolzer, 2012). Children by their very nature are distinct from adults. They run, jump, and climb. They have short attention spans, they often overreact, and they are messy and inattentive. They are moody and disorganized, and they exasperate adults with their energy, defiance, lack of focus, and exuberance. Throughout human existence, these and other child and adolescent behaviors were defined as normative life stages that would pass with time and maturity. However, over the last two decades, these, and other normative child behaviors have been operationally defined as valid indicators of a psychiatric illness (Breggin, 2001; Stolzer, 2012).

## **EFFECTS OF PSYCHOSTIMULANT DRUGS**

While the United States has witnessed a meteoric rise in psychiatric drug prescriptions in child and adolescent populations, very little attention is paid to the effects of these drugs (Baughman, 2006). According to the published literature, children and adolescents prescribed Methylphenidate (the most commonly used prescribed drug to treat symptoms of ADHD) have higher rates of depression, are more socially isolated, have lower self-esteem, and have a more negative self-perception than those not taking daily doses of Methylphenidate. Furthermore, data indicates that children prescribed Methylphenidate do not do as well academically as their non-drugged peers. Children prescribed Methylphenidate are found to perform at a below-age level by a factor of 10.5 times when compared to same age peers who were not prescribed drugs. Data also indicates that children and adolescents do not demonstrate a significant improvement in attention or externalizing behaviors when taking drugs to control ADHD symptoms (Government of Western Australia, 2009).

Although ADHD is the most commonly diagnosed mental illness in young males in America, no empirical evidence exists to substantiate that this condition has a biological or neurological cause (Breggin, 2014; Whitley, 2010). Certainly, running, jumping, climbing, fidgeting, inattention, messy work, and failure to pay attention exist in child populations—particularly in young males – of this there can be no doubt. However, to define these behaviors as pathological is a relatively recent phenomenon. (Jensen et al., 1997; Breggin, 2014). Breggin (2014) asserts that symptoms of ADHD are oftentimes triggered by boring classrooms, poorly disciplined classrooms, lack of grade level educational skills, problems at home, poverty, insomnia, and/or chronic illness.

Psycho-stimulant drugs are most often prescribed for young males diagnosed with ADHD and include amphetamines (Adderall or Dexedrine), or Methylphenidate (Ritalin or Concerta). These classifications of drugs are highly addictive and are required to carry a “black box” warning label as scientific evidence has demonstrated that these drugs produce serious and potentially life threatening effects (Breggin, 2014). Some of the effects of Amphetamine and Methylphenidate include insomnia, seizures, nervousness, agitation, confusion, visual disturbances, disorientation, aggression, personality changes, apathy, social isolation, depression and suicidal thoughts and actions (Novartis, 2015; Stolzer, 2013).

Amphetamines and Methylphenidate also cause a wide range of psychotic behavior, including mania, paranoia, and violent feelings toward others. In addition, these drugs have been found to induce a lack of empathy towards others, lack of impulse control, heightened reactions to stress, acute anxiety and abnormal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Physicians’ Desk Reference Manual (PDR), 2009; Stolzer, 2016). Published Scientific data documents that methylphenidate and amphetamines significantly suppress growth in human populations – including brain growth. These drugs also alter specific hormone production which has been shown to be particularly dangerous in young males due to the increased testosterone and androgen production associated with puberty (Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Stolzer, 2013). Numerous studies have confirmed that stimulants such as amphetamines and methylphenidate cause TICS (i.e., uncontrollable muscle movements), obsessive-compulsive behaviors, compulsive meaningless behaviors, apathy, indifference, a reduction in spontaneous behaviors, and a decrease in creativity and self-motivation (Arakawa, 1994; Breggin, 2014). In addition, these

drugs have been found to produce “persistent biochemical abnormalities in the brain” (Breggin, 2014, pg. 232). Other researchers have documented widespread brain damage in adults who had been diagnosed with ADHD and treated with amphetamines and/or methylphenidate during childhood (Proal et al., 2011). According to the published literature, the long term effects of ADHD drugs are unknown in child and adolescent population and the safety of long-term use (i.e., longer than 2 weeks) is unknown at this time. In addition, the mode of therapeutic action is also unknown (Breggin, 2014; Novatis, 2015). Numerous studies conducted over the last 30 years have found that not only are these drugs dangerous and addictive, they are also ineffective (Baughman, 2006; Breggin, 2014, Government of Western Australia, 2009).

### **NEGATIVE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF LABELS**

A review of the literature indicated when children are told by adults that they are “learning disordered” or suffer from a “psychiatric illness”, the children begin to believe they are abnormal and that they have little control over their feelings and/or behaviors (Breggin, 2014). Labels can cause a myriad of alterations in self-perception, decrease personal responsibility, and negatively affect the internalized self-efficiency of the child (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1982) hypothesized that children and adolescents who view the self as highly efficacious think, feel, and act differently than those with low self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is critically important as it is the engine that drives motivation, belief in self, task completion, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Bandura, 1986). Breggin postulated that once the label is affixed, the child no longer views themselves as responsible for their actions, or as capable of controlling outcomes in the social, emotional, or academic setting (2014). Bandura (1997) was adamant that self-efficacy is directly tied to a person’s belief in the self to overcome obstacles and to face challenges with optimism: “A person’s level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what a person *believes* than on what is objectively true” (p. 2). Bandura’s (1997) assertion clearly implies that belief in the self is critical in the pursuit of goals and aspirations and that to create fissures in belief in the self can disrupt not only the initial pursuit of a given goal, but can also negatively affect later outcomes.

Bandura stated unequivocally that schools have the power to alter student performance and to influence self-esteem. Teacher’s beliefs about a particular student impact student motivation, beliefs regarding competency, and academic success (1993). Children by their very

nature are especially vulnerable to suggestion from adults. Beliefs about what grade they can achieve, what goals they should attempt, and cognitive capabilities are often times influenced by parents, teachers, and other significant adults (Bandura, 1997). Numerous studies have indicated that children are heavily influenced by adult perceptions (Bandura, 1997). Carrying a “mental illness” label or a “learning disability” label can affect not only the child’s belief about ability, but can also impact motivation and determination (Bandura, 1997; Breggin, 2014). “Perceived self-efficacy influences the level of goal challenge people set for themselves, the amount of effort they mobilize, and their persistence in the face of difficulties” (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992, p. 665).

According to Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs are the nucleus of human aspirations and performance (1997). It is not enough for individuals to acquire knowledge or skills; they must first and foremost believe that they can achieve what they set their mind to and that they have the ability to reach their goals (Artino, 2012). The meteoric rise of psychiatric illness and learning disabilities in young males over the last 20-25 years has clearly impacted not only school performance, attendance, and graduation rates, but has also impacted young male’s motivation, effort, perseverance, and belief in the self (Breggin, 2014; Hoff Sommers, 2015).

Self-efficacy theory assumes that individuals acquire information regarding the self from four primary sources: 1. Actual performance 2. Observations made by others 3. Verbal and non-verbal persuasion and 4. Personal physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). With regard to actual performance, data indicates that young males are significantly outperformed by their female cohorts on a variety of measures including, but not limited to grades, advanced placement tests, SAT and ACT scores, and college enrollment, attendance, and graduation rates (United States Department of Education, 2018). Self-efficacy is also negatively impacted by official and non-official perceptions of significant others (i.e., school personal and parents) who both affirm and support the labeling of young males in the American education system. These labels affect the child on both the micro and macro levels, including the child’s perception of the self, self-determination, aspiration, and locus of control (Bandura, 1997; Breggin, 2014). Verbally, and non-verbally, throughout childhood and adolescence, many young males are reminded throughout the day that they are “disordered” and therefore are incapable of forming a secure and stable self-efficacious mind set.

Lastly, according to Bandura (1997), the child's personal physiological and affective states are mechanisms that influence self-efficacy. Numerous researchers have reported that psychiatric drugs produce chronic biochemical abnormalities in the brain, including growth suppression and brain atrophy (Breggin, 2014; Stolzer 2016). Certainly, psychiatric drugs directly influence physiological and affective states as the literature documents these drugs cause a wide range of serious effects including apathy, disorganization, indifference, decreases in creativity and spontaneous behaviors, irritability, nervousness, confusion, aggression, disorientation, personality changes, social isolation, depression, abnormal thoughts, lack of empathy, violent feelings towards others, lack of impulse control, and suicidal ideation (Breggin, 2014; Novartis, 2015; Stolzer, 2013).

Self-efficacy, at its core, influences every sphere of human consciousness, and determines what a human being believes they can achieve (Bandura, 1982). During childhood and adolescence, research indicates that the school functions as one of the primary shapers of an individual child's internalized self-concept (Bandura, 1997). Labeling children with learning and/or psychiatric disorders profoundly effects child outcomes and clearly impedes the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). The child that believes he is "learning disabled" thinks and behaves differently than the child who believes he is academically capable. He is likely to rationalize that academics are not important, thus he avoids academic pursuit, and disengages from other children who value academics (Bandura, 1997).

The child who believes that they suffer from a psychiatric illness and require daily doses of psychiatric drugs are led to believe by the adults in their lives that they cannot control their thoughts, feelings, or actions, and that they cannot function as a normal human being without psychiatric drugs. Psychiatric diagnoses in child and adolescent populations discourage personal responsibility, decreases motivation, and chemically alter the functioning of the human brain (Breggin, 2014). In spite of the millions of boys who have been diagnosed with a mental illness, there are no long-term studies which indicate the psychiatric drugs increase academic goals and aspirations (Breggin, 2014; Whitley, 2010). While the labeling of boys with psychiatric and/or learning disorders continues to dramatically increase across America, the number of young males enrolling in college and earning degrees continues to decrease. Clearly, the systematic labeling of young males is related to the declining rates of males in higher education. Once the label is affixed,

significant adults in the child's life begin to view the child as "disordered", and the child then internalizes this "disordered" label. As the child grows, the perception of the self as "disordered" intensifies, and academic aspirations are significantly decreased (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1997).

## **GENDER DIFFERENCES**

Although the data have been available for decades, very few scholars are asking *why* are the vast majority of American children and adolescents who have been labeled as "learning disabled" or as "psychiatrically disordered" male? Since the overwhelming majority of referrals for these types of diagnoses come directly from the United States public school system, it is a distinct possibility that teachers (and other school personnel) are not being educated properly in the area of gender differences (Baughman, 2006; Stolzer, 2012). Decades of scientific data reveals that males and females follow divergent neurological, hormonal, behavioral, and cognitive trajectories (Buss, 2004). However, this confirmed scientific data is often times ignored in teacher colleges across America and has been systematically replaced by more politically correct feminist doctrine (Stolzer, 2012). According to this widely accepted doctrine, the girl way of learning, behaving, and responding has become the "gold standard" in the classroom and boys that do not follow this "gold standard" are often times perceived by teachers to be either learning and/or psychiatrically disordered (Stolzer, 2010; Tyre, 2008).

Since the 1970's, feministic theory has infiltrated the halls of higher education. The prevailing ideology taught in the colleges of education across the United States insist that gender is merely a social construct that can be shaped and molded at will (Hoff Sommers, 2015; Stolzer, 2012). This reductionistic world view, although politically correct, refuses to acknowledge the decades of the empirical, quantifiable data which demonstrates unequivocally that males and females are different hormonally, neurologically, and emotionally (Stolzer, 2012; White, 2005). There is also substantial scientific evidence indicating that males and females learn, process, encode, and synthesize in distinct ways (Gurian, 2011). While feminist theory continues to dominate in teacher's colleges across America, the fields of neurobiology, evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology are conveniently ignored (Stolzer, 2012). According to Moir & Jessel (1990), continuing to insist that males and females are the same in aptitude, predilection,



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disposition, aptitude, behavior, and/or learning styles is nothing more than a blatant scientific fallacy.

There are distinct and quantifiable differences that can be detected in males and females across cultures and across the lifespan. Beginning with fetal development, males are significantly more active in utero and remain so throughout childhood and adolescence. In addition, during early childhood, males speak later and use less complex sentence structures than their female cohorts (Fogel, 2010). During infancy, males prefer mechanical or structural toys, while females prefer soft cuddly toys. Infant males are more active; more easily angered, less bothered by loud noise, and are less able to recognize emotional nuances in others (Gurian, 2011). From Kindergarten through grade three, males are more aggressive, dominant, competitive, and territorial. Rough and tumble play is the norm here, and involves high levels of bodily contact and various other forms of rigorous play activity. Boys in this age group typically use dolls as weapons and are more likely to prefer male play partners. Furthermore, boys in this age range are significantly more likely than their female cohorts to be diagnosed as speech delayed, learning disordered, and behaviorally disordered (Gurian, 2011; United States Department of Education, 2018). Young males are more likely to express emotions through actions and are less sensitive to social and personal context. They also have significantly lower levels of attention span and empathy when compared to female children. In addition, males take longer to attain reading mastery, but are better than females at pre-mathematical concepts and general math (Gurian, 2011).

During middle childhood, males exhibit more hormonal fluctuations than females and are highly aggressive. They are better at directionality (i.e., map reading, and deciphering directions). By middle school, there is a 20-fold increase in testosterone which has been associated with aggression, territorialness, combativeness, and competition. Throughout childhood and adolescence, males are more likely to be in special education classes, to be labeled with a learning and/or a psychiatric disorder, and to retake a grade (Gurian, 2011; Stolzer, 2012). By high school, pursuit of power becomes a universal male trait. Males are significantly more likely than females to report that aggression solves problems and they are significantly more likely to commit suicide. They graduate from high school at lower rates than females, have lower academic aspirations, lower GPAs and are more likely to drop out of school (Gurian, 2011).

Neurologically, major differences exist with regard to male and female development. While it is certain that outliers exist, the fact remains that the brains of males and females are quantifiably distinct (Bear, Connors & Pardiso, 1996; Donaldson & Young, 2008). Neurological data indicates that the amygdala, which is part of the limbic system controlling emotional processing (especially anger and aggression), is significantly larger in males. The arcuate fasciculus which controls activity levels is larger and engaged more rapidly in males and the prefrontal lobes, which have been shown to impact impulsivity control, are not fully developed in males until 21-24 years of age (Donaldson & Young, 2008; Stolzer, 2012). In addition, the “Fight or Flight” system is more rapidly engaged in males, which accounts for males responding more often with aggression when they feel threatened or under stress (Gurian, 2011; Bear, et al, 1996).

Scientifically speaking, both males and females produce all of the known human hormones, yet the levels of hormones produced vary dramatically depending on gender (Buss, 2004; Gurian, 2011). The female’s dominant hormone is estrogen and the male’s is testosterone. “These distinct hormones affect all of the neurological systems, and in doing so, create the vast gender differences that have been documented across cultures and across mammalian species (Stolzer, 2012, p. 86). According to decades of scientific data, testosterone significantly increases aggression, territorialness, competitiveness, dominance posturing, defiance, self-reliance, sex drive and self-assertion (Buss, 2004; Jensen, et al, 1997). Testosterone has also been found to increase risk taking behaviors, activity levels, and physical reflexes (Arnold, 2009). Furthermore, according to Auyeung & Baron-Cohen, testosterone levels have also been found to influence the rough and tumble play that is seen universally in young males (2009).

The fact of the matter is that males and females are distinctly different - hormonally, socially, neurologically, emotionally, and cognitively. Mounting scientific evidence dispels the politically correct ideology permeating American schools which states that gender is socially constructed. Evolutionary neurologists have demonstrated time and time again that regardless of socialization processes, brains differ by gender due to distinct primordial processes, including evolutionary adaptations (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Buss, 2004; Jensen, et al., 1997). Interestingly, the United States Department of Education continues to claim they are promoting “gender education” while at the same time, systematically ignoring the

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decades of scientific data which demonstrates empirical and quantifiable neurologically based gender differences (Hoff Sommers, 2015).

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

What is glaringly clear at this time is the need to address the boy crisis in the American education system. Boys account for 80-90% of special education students, are on average a year and a half behind their female cohorts in reading and writing, and have significantly lower academic aspirations than females. Females receive better grades from Kindergarten through College and are more likely to be placed in advanced classes regardless of socioeconomic status (Hoff Sommers, 2015). In addition, males' enrollment and graduation rates at American Universities continues to plummet, and the Department of Education predicts that this trend will continue unabated in the future if nothing is done to correct this unprecedented disparity. (Hoff Sommers, 2015; United States Department of Education, 2018).

The time has come to address the boy crisis in America collectively and systematically. Scholars from various fields have suggested the following solutions:

- Insist that teacher education programs require thorough and scientifically validated instruction on brain research, neuropsychology, and evolutionary theory, in addition to the feministic theories that dominate current-day teacher colleges (Stolzer, 2008).
- Require continuing education credits to ensure that all school employees understand and respect typical boy-typed behavioral and learning predilections (Stolzer, 2012).
- Demand that diversity training in the American education system includes empirically based gender differences (Baughman, 2006).
- Provide boys with tension relieving strategies in schools (Gurian, 2011).
- Recruit more male teachers- Kindergarten through 12th grade (Gurian, 2011; Tyre, 2008).
- Implement and encourage healthy competition in schools (Hoff Sommers, 2015).
- Allow reading materials that include high action, male dominated, adventure based stories (Hoff Sommers, 2015).
- Offer gender segregated classrooms (Gurian, 2011).
- Demand that regardless of inclement weather, children have access to unstructured outdoor activity throughout the school day (Hoff Sommers, 2015).

- Significantly reduce sedentary learning activities; increase high activity, large motor learning opportunities (Stolzer, 2008).
- Increase the number of recesses per day (Gurian, 2011).
- Require daily physical education classes (Stolzer, 2008).
- Abolish policies that ban rough and tumble play (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002).
- Ban federal policies that provide additional monies to schools based on the number of learning and/or psychiatrically disordered children enrolled (Stolzer, 2008).
- Call for widespread public service announcements and initiatives that raise public awareness about the academic, emotional, social, and physical needs of American boys (Hoff Sommers, 2015).
- Refuse to allow boys to be labeled as “learning disordered” or “psychiatrically disordered”; instead, demand educational policies that meet the complex cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs of boys (Stolzer, 2008).
- Work towards fixing the education system so that it meets the multifarious needs of boys instead of concentrating on how to “fix” boys so that they conform to the present day education system (Tyre, 2008).
- Identify teachers that understand and respect the unique social, cognitive, physical, and psychological needs of boys; base classroom assignments on goodness of fit rather than random selection (Tyre, 2008).
- Expect and encourages high activity levels in the classroom (Gurian, 2011).
- Discontinue boring and tedious seatwork in the educational setting (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002).
- Include as part of public school curriculum gender tailored learning strategies that are based on the most current neurobiological data (Gurian, 2011; Tyre, 2008).
- Challenge the “disordered American boy” hypothesis and instead concentrate efforts on overhauling the disordered public school environment (i.e., extended seat work, lack of physical activity, financial incentive to label children, lack of physical education and recess, and lack of teacher education in the area of biologically based gender differences) (Stolzer, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

There is clear and incontrovertible evidence which demonstrates that boys in the American education system are immersed in an unprecedented crisis. Females are significantly out performing males at every level of the American education system, and if current projections are correct, this trend will continue to worsen over the coming decades (Hoff Sommers, 2015; United States Department of Education, 2018). Socially and emotionally, males are faring much worse than their female cohorts in the American education system. The labeling of young males with learning and/or psychiatric disorders has reached epidemic proportions with data indicating that one in five American children and adolescents have been labeled as “learning disordered” or “psychiatrically disordered” and the majority of this “disordered” children are male (Breggin, 2014; Stolzer, 2012). With regard to academic performance, females outperform males at every level of the education system—from kindergarten through graduate school (Rosin, 2012).

The unprecedented failure of boys in the American education system over the last twenty years should come as no surprise, as education scholars have been warning the public of the deleterious effects associated with the de-masculinization of males in the education system since the early 1900's. Froebel's (1904) ground breaking work insisted that forcing a child to conform to artificial environments that were at odds with his bioevolutionary heritage would cause severe developmental disruptions and impede academic performance. Furthermore, Froebel castigated his contemporaries for perceiving children as mere lumps of clay that could be molded at will. Froebel insisted that for education institutions to be successful, the institution must enact policies that respect innate gender differences. These policies, according to Froebel, must be characterized by unobtrusive, attentive, protective educators who understand childhood and its unmitigated complexities. Policies that are, at their core, dictating, circumscribing, and interposing are inclined to fail. Writing over one hundred years ago, Froebel predicted that the American education system would fail miserably if it continued to interfere with bioevolutionary based behavior patterns. Froebel also insisted that educational institutions that are apathetic to our evolutionary heritage and the laws of nature are bound to produce individuals who are cognitively and psychologically impaired (1904).

If we are sincere in our efforts to address the current boy crisis in the American education system, a call to action is required. Enough of labeling boys as “learning disabled” and crushing self-efficacy before it has a chance to blossom. Policies must be enacted that respect and celebrate the young male’s unique and complex learning trajectories. He is not “disabled”: he is a boy that thinks, learns, responds and acts differently than his female cohorts. The time has come to demand that schools are restructured to meet the needs of boys instead of continuing to try to restructure the boy to fit in with politically correct curriculum. Enough of labeling boys with psychiatric illnesses that just a generation ago were unheard of. Fidgeting, running, jumping, climbing, not paying attention and messy work as valid indicators of a psychiatric illness? This is absurd. This is not mental illness – this is boyhood. Enough of drugging millions of American boys with dangerous and addictive psychiatric drugs so that they can conform to the endless hours of monotonous and boring seatwork that permeates the education system in America.

Boyhood has not changed at all over the course of evolutionary time (Buss, 2004). It is the bio-evolutionary heritage of the young male to be extremely active, inattentive to that which does not interest him, defiant, messy, aggressive and attuned to the physicality of the natural world (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Stolzer, 2010). Young males across all cultures and across all mammalian species are highly active, nonconforming, spontaneous, restless, impetuous, inquisitive, constantly on the go, and are continually engaging in activities that befuddle adults (Stolzer, 2010). What has been unequivocally altered is our perception of boyhood and what constitutes normal-range boy behavior, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the American education system (Stolzer, 2010). American boys are systematically and routinely referred for psychiatric evaluation at the request of public school personnel. As a direct result of these referrals, millions of American boys have been diagnosed with a plethora of psychiatric illnesses and are required to take daily doses of dangerous and addictive psychiatric drugs. For the first time in recorded history, we, as a nation, have collectively agreed that ancient, bio-evolutionary-based boy behavior patterns are valid and reliable indicators of a psychiatric illness. If we are to reverse the boy crisis in the American education system, the neo-psychiatric model that is rampant in schools across America must be dismantled and replaced by a paradigm based on bioevolutionary science.

Our collective and unadulterated acceptance of the medicalization of boyhood has blinded us to the fact that we as adults are responsible for the failure of boys in the American education system (Stolzer, 2010). We enact and maintain policies that strip young males of their bioevolutionary heritage and self-efficacy. We insist that the maleness itself is pathological and that the cure to maleness can be found in official labels and psychiatric drugs. Even the prestigious American Psychological Association (2018) is on record stating that masculinity is harmful. The time has come for compendious change at both the micro and macro levels of the American education system. We must begin to demand change that includes the implementation of policies that focus on the cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and academic needs of our boys. Let us begin today. Our boys are counting on us.

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### Author profile



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## FAMILY COURT REFORM, SUICIDE, AND “REPEATED SOCIAL DEFEAT” FOR MEN

*John Davis*



### **ABSTRACT**

*Fifty years of feminism in Western culture has set men up to fail in our family court systems. Feminism has been, since its inception, a political device for dividing men and women. Family courts have become gynocentric tools for divorcing spouses to abuse men. Mainstream commentators increasingly understand that the family court systems in Western countries are now normalized, and weaponized, government tools for carrying out a war on men. Because of their poor treatment in family court, men often experience repeated social defeat and its devastating consequences.*

**Keywords:** family court, feminism, males, men, repeated social defeat

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## INTRODUCTION

In the fifty years that feminism has dominated our mainstream media and institutions, we have re-defined our civilization's social contract between men and women. As we progressed into the industrial age, and more recently into the electronic age, the gender contract between men and women needed to change to adopt to modern roles for men and women. In the past fifty years, however, we have modified that contract in favor of women, yet we have almost completely neglected the needs to revise the gender social contract for men. This is especially true in our family court system in Western countries. If feminism was truly about equality, men and women would now be equal in our civilization. Equality does not exist, however, because contemporary feminism is not based upon a realistic, or fair view of men and women in the modern age.

Feminism's gains, over the past fifty years, have been at the expense of men, and based upon early, and false, medieval stereotypes of men. These stereotypes pervade family court legislation and carry over into our court systems. The thrust of feminism's political and social power has been based upon demonizing men in order to justify social and political privileges for women, while, at the same time, imposing traditional burdens on men. In addition, feminism has been increasing those social burdens on men to the point at which men are now the victims of passive-aggressive neglect, in our culture, and men are now frequently victims of actual aggression against them in our culture and all of its institutions.

Feminism has been able to achieve this imbalance by relentlessly demonizing men; a negative impression of men now saturates many of our institutions. Feminism is designed to create privileges for women in our culture, while at the same time absolving them from responsibilities. Under feminism, strict responsibilities are imposed on men, and men are denied any status that could appear to be a privilege even if that status is designed to balance men's extra responsibilities in our culture, or to protect men from abuses based on their gender. Under traditional gender roles, men and women had gender-specific privileges to balance the specialized burdens and responsibilities that each gender had in our culture.

This balance of rights and responsibilities comprised a social contract between men and women that has served humanity for well over 5,000 years. That social contract needed occasional adjustments as man's consciousness and mastery of his surroundings advanced. The

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Industrial Revolution, for instance, freed men from much manual labor, and enabled women to have paid jobs that they could perform without men's physical strength. During that period, feminists sought women's admission to many other institutions that men had created, including education and government. Most of our institutions were created by men, in male spaces, working in their leisure time to create orderly means of improving humanity's resources.

Government, over the millennia, for example, was always inextricably intertwined with military service. As a result, government's role had been mostly limited to providing for the common defense of communities of both men and women. Women never sought to participate in military service while military protection fostered them at the expense of men's lives. It was only in the 20th Century, with massive benefits and professional salaries in the military, and mechanized and computerized warfare, that women now sought military service. Under the U.S. Militia act of 1787, men were permitted to vote in exchange for their military service, so that they had a vote in the federal politicians who would risk the men's very lives for the common defense. Feminism has re-written this social contract to falsely claim that women did not participate in the military because of men's oppression.

This imbalance and shaming of men continue today, as feminism spuriously claims, for example, that women deserve equal pay with men regardless of the circumstances of their employment. Feminists seek this equal pay while men are still sustaining 92.5% of on-the-job fatalities (Perry, 2018). Instead of feminists seeking equal risks in the workplace to justify equal pay, feminists are seeking equal pay simply by falsely shaming men for gender roles in the past. This relentless shaming of men, and false claim that men and civilization oppressed women, has led our modern culture to rig all of our institutions in a manner in which men are set up to lose in any financial, legal, emotional or sensual relationship with women. The result is that men are now encountering what neuroscientists call Repeated Social Defeat (RSD).

A thorough discussion of the neuroscientific concept of Repeated Social Defeat is beyond the scope of this article. In very simple terms, RSD occurs when an animal (or human) is placed into situations, repeatedly, in which failure is inevitable. Here is a simplified example: if two laboratory mice are placed in a cage, and required to compete for food or other rewards, if the researchers rig the rewards so that only one of the subjects usually gets the reward, then

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the subject who frequently loses the rigged game will develop anxiety, brain inflammation from the stress of losing, and ultimately severe treatment-resistant depression (Golden, Covington, Burton, & Russo, 2011). Neuroscientists use rodents in these murine-studies experiments, and draw inferences about humans because the central nervous systems of rodents are remarkably similar to humans. They are not conclusively applicable to human behavior and human reactions to events; they are, however, more often than not, predictive of the results that would be obtained if we conducted the experiments on humans.

Feminism's relentless shaming, and attacks on men, have persuaded our culture to rig its institutions so that men socially fail on a repeated basis. This is especially true of family courts.

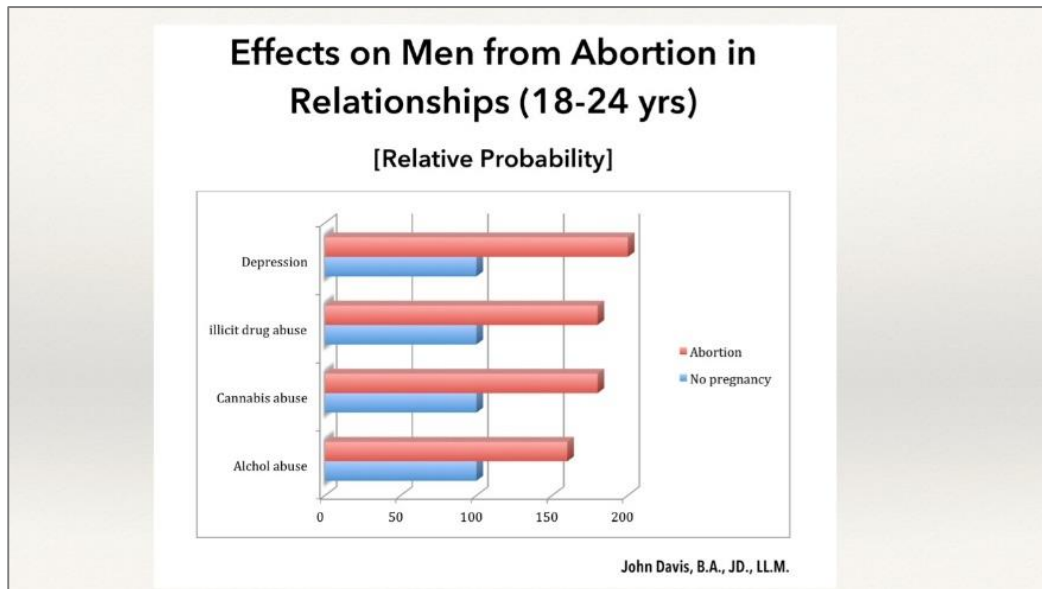
### **FAMILY COURTS: A RIGGED INSTITUTION**

Member of the Australian Parliament (MP), Pauline Hanson, has succeeded in convening an inquiry into the system of family courts in Australia. MP Hanson is the first independent woman elected to hold a position in the House of Representatives in Australia. Unlike most Australian politicians, MP Hanson has recognized the plight of men encountering repeated social defeat in our Western family courts. Ms. Hanson has succeeded in raising awareness of the high rate of suicides in Australia among men, many of which result from unfair treatment of men under the current rigged system of family courts and law. Although her inquiry is focused on Australian problems, the inquiry is the first of its kind in the world and has far-reaching support and implications. MP Hanson's One Nation party's family law and child support policy (2018) states that "support must be given to both parents through a fairer family law and child support system. Many parents are denied access to their children, with many committing suicide. Children have a right to have both parents involved in their life if the parents are deemed to be fit and able."

The systems of family courts and family law in our Western developed nations is saturated with medieval superstitions about the best interests of the child and the role that parents, especially Fathers, should have in the nurturing and development of children. Although women may be limited victims of an outdated and oppressive family law system, men are the overwhelming majority of the victims of costly, unfair, incompetent and oppressive family courts. As Senator Hanson notes in her official policy statement, many men are committing suicide as a result of being forced out of their families by an antiquated and

oppressive system that is biased against men. This antiquated and oppressive system of family courts is, literally, designed to insure breakups of families, alienation of men from their children, and official abuse of husbands and fathers.

Our system of family laws in Western culture is based in 19th century French and British laws. These laws were designed to keep families together, and spread throughout Western cultures through the pervasive influence of both the Napoleonic and British empires. In the 1970s and 1980s, Western governments began a campaign to dismantle the family laws that encouraged men and women to marry and stay married. This campaign was aimed at relieving the hardships of marriage, family and raising children. That same campaign, however, eliminated many of the legal safeguards that the 19th century had imposed on family laws to encourage the health and vitality of marriage for both men, women, and their children. For example, our cultures used to have laws against alienation of affection, holding a party outside of marriage responsible for his or her role in its dissolution. As our cultures strove to make divorce a pre-approved formality, to encourage hypergamy (women disposing of their partners, and acquiring more wealthy husbands) for financial gain, our cultures eliminated laws against alienation of affection. This freed wives and judges to exploit men in ways that are devastating and which often have serious (even fatal) consequences for men.

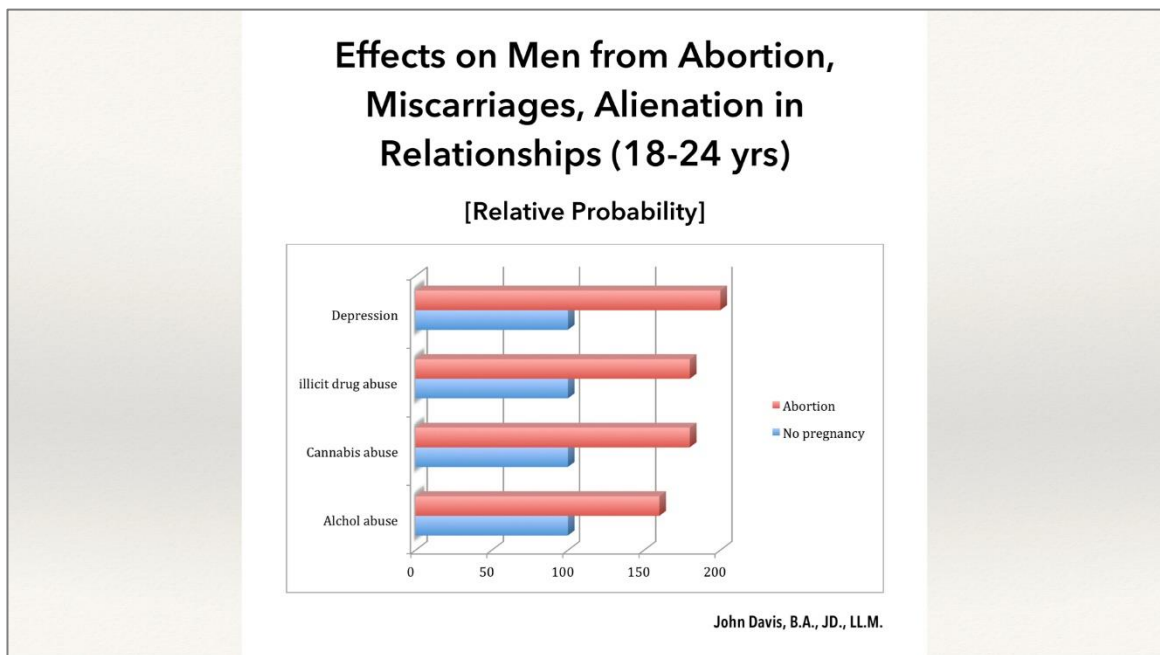


**Figure 1 .** The effects on men from abortion.

(See Dingle, K. D., Clavarino, A., Alati, R., & Williams, G. (2011) for an explanation of the graph data.)

We know from a study done in Australia, that when a man loses a baby to abortion, his risk for treatment-resistant depression, substance abuse, and other health problems dramatically increases for men (Figure 1).

Although this Australian study did not examine the effects of losing a child in the family law courts, or to an abusive spouse who withholds visitation for the father to continue the wife’s abuse of the father beyond divorce, we can hypothesize that the same injuries occur to men as a result of the family court system being rigged against them when it deprives fathers of their children, and children of their fathers (Figure 2).



**Figure 2 .** The effects on men from abortion, miscarriages, and alienation on men.

(See Dingle, K. D., Clavarino, A., Alati, R., & Williams, G. (2011) for an explanation of the graph data.)

This hypothesis is worth considering since a man who loses a child to family court abuse is likely to encounter the same neurological injuries as abortion loss when family courts, and an abusive ex-spouse, aggressively alienate him from his children.

The RSD that men encounter in the male-abusive family court system, because of extreme ideologies such as feminism, is often aggravated with another phenomenon which Senator Hanson is investigating: the phenomenon of false accusations against men in the family court system. In the United States, government studies have shown that divorcing

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spouses accuse the other spouse of domestic violence, child sexual abuse, or spousal sexual abuse in about 6% of cases (Kearns, 2018). In those 6% of cases, government studies have found that about 80% of the accusations are false. Those same studies also show that about 90% of the false accusations are made by a divorcing wife against the father. False stereotypes about men and fathers, promoted by feminist ideology, is so pervasive in our institutions, that bitter ex-wives find it easy to make the false accusations against fathers. Bitter ex-wives also find that they face little or no repercussions for falsely accusing fathers. This lack of accountability for false accusations against fathers promotes and encourages false accusations in family courts.

In the vocabulary of divorce attorneys, the tactic of a woman falsely accusing a man of some salacious abuse is known as the silver bullet. A woman falsely accusing a man in a divorce proceeding of sexual assault, child sexual abuse, domestic violence, or some other salacious conduct, almost immediately deprives the father of custody of his children. In the U.S. as well as Australia, courts freely hand out temporary restraining orders against the father to ensure the Father becomes homeless, and deprive the Father of contact with his children.

Using false accusations against the father is a form of kidnapping, known broadly as parental alienation. It not only deprives the father, immediately, of his contact and affection of his children, but often imposes massive legal costs on the Father to regain contact with his children, and for the children to regain the father's protection from an abusive mother. It can, and usually does, take years for the father to disprove the false accusations against him. In the meantime, the mother is able to harass the father with endless court hearings, while the mother brainwashes the children to hate the father. The mother also uses these delays and harassment tactics to increase her bonding with the children so that it takes years for the father to re-establish his bonds, with his own children, after he is able to finally disprove the allegations against him and regain visitation or custody.

When an abusive wife uses the silver bullet, the burden is on the father to prove he is innocent. This is not a law, and actually is contrary to law, but judges disregard the laws protecting due process for the father and the children because of false stereotypes that persist as a result of extreme feminist ideology. These false stereotypes are common among family court judges and persist, relentlessly, to empower the family courts as engines of abuse against



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fathers and husbands. These false stereotypes are most commonly held by male judges in the family courts, however, they also exist among many female judges. Feminists refer to this phenomenon of male judges (especially those male judges with daughters) as the chivalry hypothesis. The chivalry hypothesis includes the findings, in feminist reports, that male judges with daughters, and male judges in general (as well as female judges), tend to apply false and harsh stereotypes to the men who are accused in the court system. The false stereotypes against men and fathers are relentlessly promoted by the mass media, women's groups, feminist organizations, and feminist-driven family court advocates. The government funds the wide and intense dissemination of these false stereotypes by massive funding of one-sided violence against women programs.

On the issue of violence against women, men's groups, such as Domestic Violence Awareness Australia (2018), have pointed out that women in Australia, for instance, are more violent towards men, women and children than men (Figure 3). In terms of murders in domestic violence, in general, women are also more violent towards men and children than men (Figure 4).

Yet, all of our Western institutions, including in Australia, relentlessly portray the fiction that men are violent towards women, and that women are always innocent victims of men's violence. The relentless bombardment of mass media messages against fathers and men, and the rigged institutions that are driven by these false stereotypes, sets men up for repeated social defeat in any interactions with women, and the government system of family assistance. For example, in Australia, government assistance programs on domestic violence are rigged to portray men only as perpetrators, and never as victims. The Violence against Women, "Let's Stop It at the Start" (2019) campaign materials are so one-sided in favor of women as victims, and men solely as perpetrators, that they qualify as propaganda

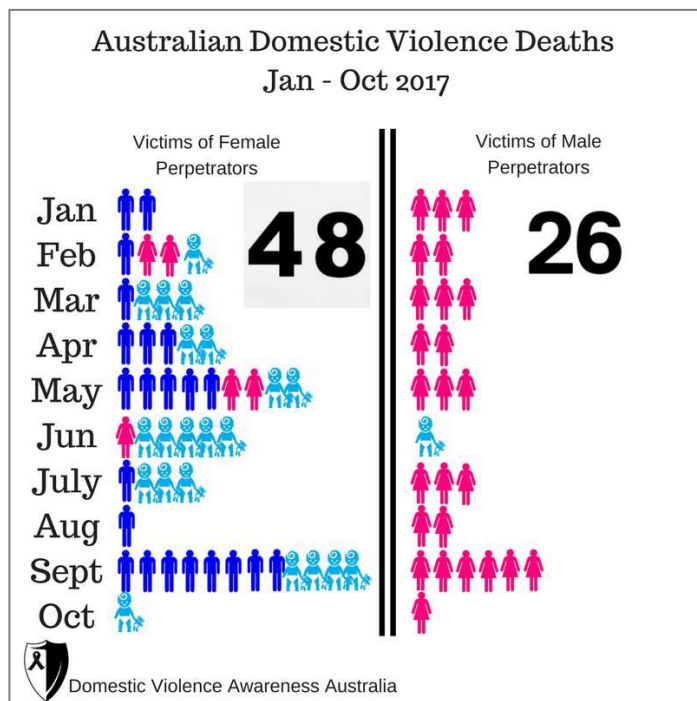


Figure 3 . Australian domestic violence deaths, January - October, 2017.

(See <https://www.dvaa.com.au/true-statistics> for more information.)

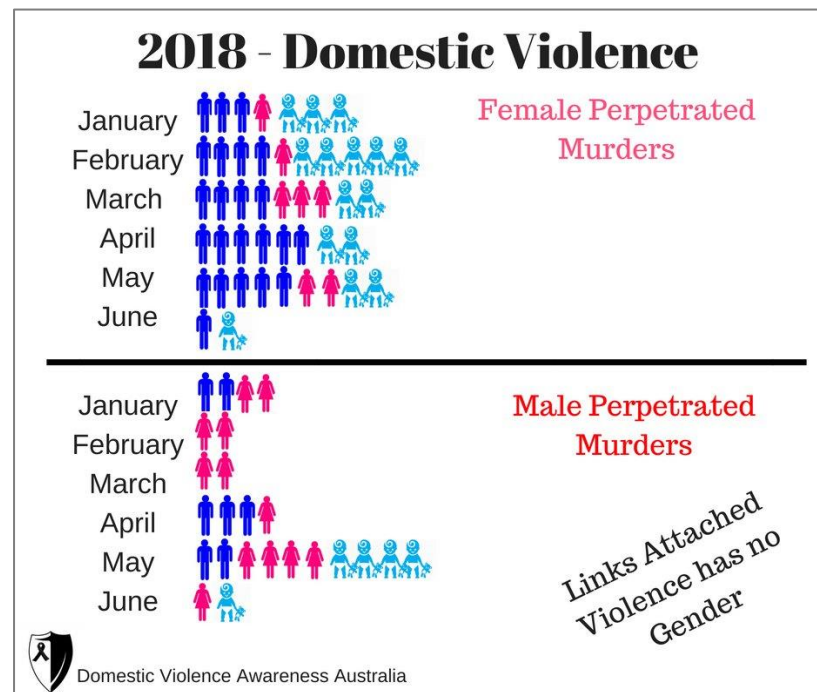


Figure 4. 2018 domestic violence.

(See <https://www.dvaa.com.au/true-statistics> for more information.)

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This type of misandry saturates the family system in Australia (as with the misandry that saturates family institutions in other countries); there is a high probability that any man who even so much as has a relationship with a woman in Australia will encounter repeated social defeat in any interactions with women or institutions. This repeated social defeat is often deadly to men.

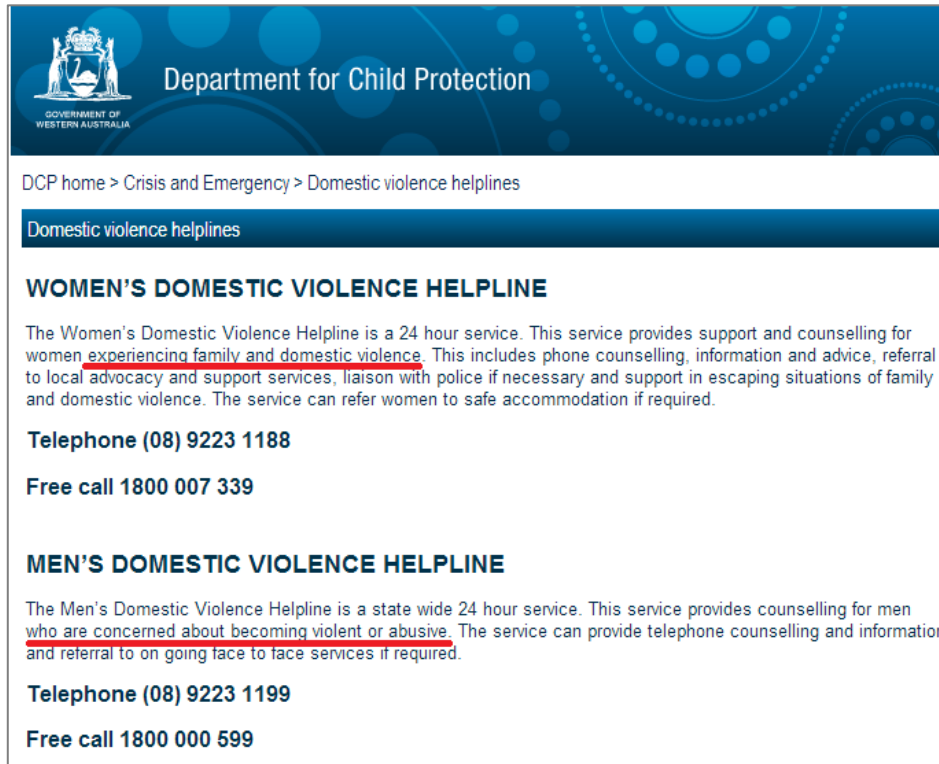
## **REPEATED SOCIAL DEFEAT AND MALE SUICIDE**

We are only now beginning to understand how gender imbalances in our institutions cause more than a few men to commit suicide. In addition to causing men to suicide, rigging our institutions so that men encounter repeated social defeat also imposes treatment resistant depression on countless millions of men, with resulting high costs to our economies, and untold suffering among those men. Many people question how men can be abused by the system when men are not the victims of direct violence by the system. Arguably, arresting men based on false accusations of domestic violence is, itself, a form of violence against men.

Our cultures and our governments also passive-aggressively abuse men by neglecting men in addressing domestic violence, sexual abuse and alienation from their children. Governments have spent billions on programs pertaining to the family; however, those heavily funded programs are designed to exclude men as victims of domestic violence by women, or sexual violence by women, or the severe violence inflicted on men by depriving them of their children.

In Australia, for instance, the government provides tens of millions of dollars in support for women who are victims of domestic violence, but that support expressly excludes men except to treat men as perpetrators of domestic violence.

The resources below from Western Australia are typical of Australia's approach to family concerns thus far (Figure 5). This suggests the government provides counseling, support and legal assistance to women who accuse men of domestic violence; however, men are offered help only if they admit that they are domestic abusers and deny that they are victims. These services were recently updated (2019) to acknowledge that males and females might perpetrate as well as experience domestic violence.



Department for Child Protection  
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DCP home > Crisis and Emergency > Domestic violence helplines

Domestic violence helplines

**WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE**

The Women's Domestic Violence Helpline is a 24 hour service. This service provides support and counselling for women experiencing family and domestic violence. This includes phone counselling, information and advice, referral to local advocacy and support services, liaison with police if necessary and support in escaping situations of family and domestic violence. The service can refer women to safe accommodation if required.

**Telephone (08) 9223 1188**

**Free call 1800 007 339**

**MEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE**

The Men's Domestic Violence Helpline is a state wide 24 hour service. This service provides counselling for men who are concerned about becoming violent or abusive. The service can provide telephone counselling and information and referral to on going face to face services if required.

**Telephone (08) 9223 1199**

**Free call 1800 000 599**

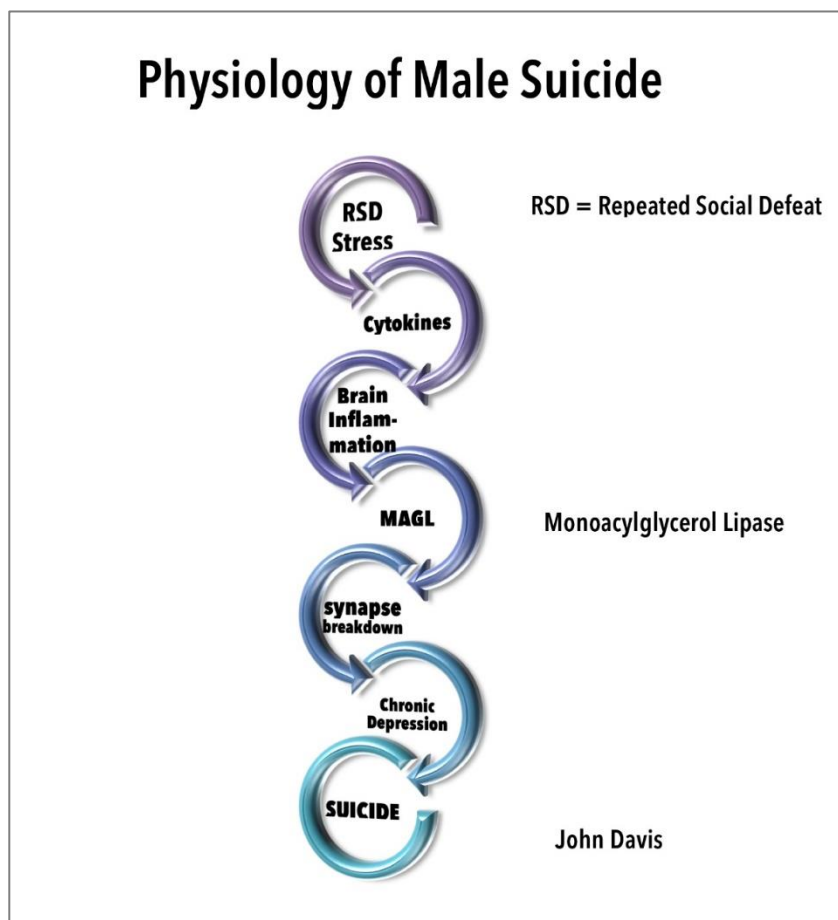
**Figure 5.** Domestic Violence Helpline promotional material by the Government of Western Australia.

In a typical family court abuse scenario, women accuse men, routinely (and falsely) of domestic violence. The court issues an abusive restraining order, with little or no scrutiny, against the man, and without any fair hearing. This immediately creates extraordinary stress on the man by evicting him from his home, isolating him from his children, imposing burdensome legal expenses on the man, and interfering with his daily routines and abilities to make a living.

The resulting stress to men begins a process that continues, in most cases, for years, in which the man is subjected to relentless stress. Men are biologically equipped to deal with acute (short term) spikes in stress. However, when that stress is prolonged, over a long period of time (months or years) it physically harms the man because no one is equipped to handle long-term stress without physical consequences. The stress continues with events in family court as a man is frequently required to prove his innocence against false accusations by an abusive wife. After the initial restraining order, most of which are issued on false accusations, abusive spouses will often falsely accuse the man of sexual violence or domestic violence in order to use the court to kidnap the man's children and alienate the man from them. The

resulting alienation from the support and affection of his children leads to further prolonged stress and depression. The man will continue to encounter social defeat in the family court process, one after the other, as he tries to prove his innocence in a court that is heavily pressured to believe the false accusations against the man.

The image below (Figure 6) illustrates how repeated social defeat in the family court system physically injures the man. In very simple terms, here is what happens, physically, to the man when he is subjected to careless, repeated and abusive defeats in the family court system.



**Figure 6.** Physiology of Male Suicide

The repeated social defeats cause the man’s body to respond to the stress with sustained secretions of adrenaline, cortisol, and other physical reactions to the stress (cytokines). These normal bodily secretions, when sustained over long periods of time, cause brain inflammation (Bullmore, 2018). This is true in all people, but since men’s bodies are designed to secrete

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cytokines more than women, to cope with stress, the effect is much more serious in men than women. The body responds to the brain inflammation with (among many other responses) heavy secretions of a substance known as MAGL (mono acylglycerol lipase). MAGL destroys the important chemicals in the brain that are necessary for a man's healthy functioning of his brain. Depression results from the physical assault on the man's brain, and if the sustained stress continues, ultimately creates what neuroscientists call treatment-resistant depression.

Treatment resistant depression is a form of depression which is resistant to anti-depressants and other forms of medication for depression. It is also non-responsive to most forms of cognitive therapy. Recent studies show that when treating men for treatment resistant depression, anti-depressants, alone, are rarely effective unless the physician also treats the underlying brain inflammation. Few professionals treating depression in men, however, have been informed of these recent advancements in neuroscience and psychiatry.

Men's biological response to depression is genetically different than women's response (Seney et al., 2018) (Figure 7). Because our culture has a mistaken stereotype of depression (we think of it only as sadness) men's symptoms of depression are often overlooked, misdiagnosed, and punished in family courts as well as in most aspects of our society. Men's depression often results in episodes of anger and aggressiveness, as well as biologically compelled substance abuse. This illustration lists the genetically programmed responses that men exhibit in response to prolonged stress and treatment resistant depression:

Our family court system, and our criminal court systems, often treat these symptoms of depression in men as domestic violence or abuse, when, in fact, the rigged family court systems are often causing these biological reactions in men. The family courts are causing these reactions in men by rigging the system against men, and imposing serious injury on men by the courts' active and passive-aggressive abuse of men.

It is important to understand that not all men will become suicidal victims of these family court abuses; however, most (if not all) men are susceptible to stress from repeated social defeat in family court abuses. Whether they succumb to clinical depression and suicide depends on many variables such as age, physical health, physical limitations, race (some racial genetic characteristics make some men more susceptible to depression than others), economic

well-being, and many other variables. It is also important to note that just one instance of family court abuses harming a man is one too many. There is no excuse for these family court abuses and every man forced into the system of family courts is likely to encounter one or more of the court system's abuses.

**Men's Depression is Different from Women's**

**Different Effects of Depression in Men:**

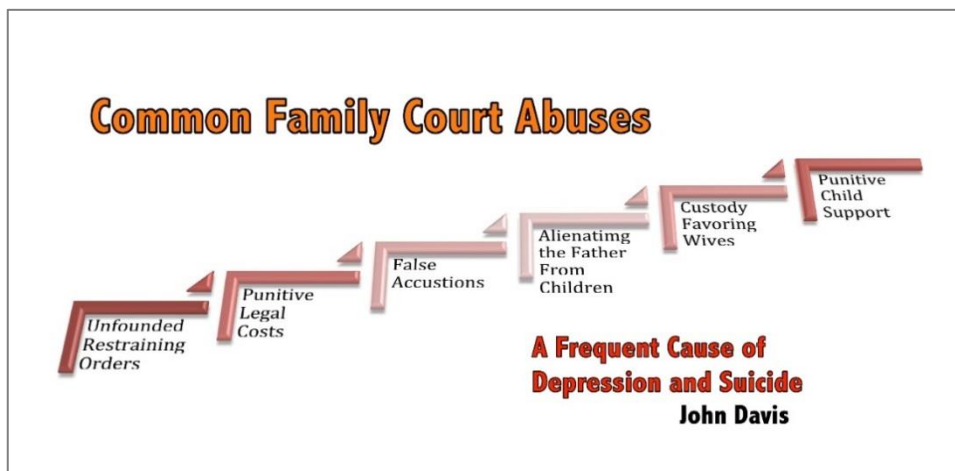
Men show other signs of depression that may differ from women. These include:

- **Abusing alcohol** or other substances
- Escaping by staying at work late, playing a lot of video games or spending a lot more time working out or playing sports
- Risk-taking, like driving recklessly or while drinking
- Being irritable or frequently exploding in anger
- Becoming controlling, violent, or abusive

**If you don't want to deal with a man's anger, then listen to his pain.**

**Figure 7.** Promotional material highlighting some of the symptomatology of depression in men.

We can diagram some of the most common abuses as follows (Figure 8):



**Figure 8.** Commonly applied Family Court abuses frequently resulting in depression and suicide in men.

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## REFORMING FAMILY COURTS

A reform of family courts is not only appropriate, but necessary for a fair administration of human rights for both genders. Hopefully, Senator Hanson's family court inquiry will raise awareness of the serious imbalance in the treatment of men in family courts, and propose changes that will restore fairness. Restraining order abuse should be the inquiry's first focus. In Australia, as in most Western court systems, judges hand out restraining orders in favor of women as if they were candy. These restraining orders create an immediate smear on the record of the man who is the target, and that record follows him for the rest of his life. The restraining orders unfairly eject the men from their home and make them immediately homeless. In addition, judges have such low standards for issuing restraining orders against men that they are issued and kept in place until such time as the man can prove he is innocent. That process, of a man proving he is innocent of false accusations in restraining order abuses, can take years and cost tens of thousands of dollars.

In the US, government studies have found that about 70% of restraining orders that are issued are based on false accusations ("False," 2011). To protect the accused from false restraining orders, there is no harm in limiting the restraining order until a full trial is held, and there is no harm in ordering the accuser to also refrain from harming the accused or any children involved. Most importantly, the standard of evidence used in deciding to issue a restraining order (either a permanent or a temporary restraining order) must be at least clear-and-convincing evidence, or evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. All of the orders and abuses in family courts seriously affect the property and liberty interests of the person to whom the order is directed. Such serious orders should be determined on the basis of at least clear and convincing evidence instead of the whims of a family court judge guessing as to which party is telling the truth by a preponderance of evidence. This, alone, would prevent many of the notorious delays in family courts, and the enormous expense and stress that accompany those delays.

Many accusations made between spouses in family courts are not based in reality. Many of them are exaggerated claims based only on the spouse's bitterness toward the other spouse. This notorious bitterness creates false memories, false accusations and unnecessary stress and harm to at least one of the spouses and clogs the courts with unnecessary hearings. One



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prominent lawyer-and-psychologist, Robert W. Kearns (2018), describes the problem as follows:

A false accusation of child abuse is one of the gravest offenses one can allege against a parent. In our society there is a bright line standard that if a child is abused, the law steps in to shield the child from the attacker, but what happens when our legal system is manipulated so as to trick a court into protecting a child from an innocent parent? The welfare of a child cannot be recognized when he or she is fractioned from a qualified parent because an opposing parent cried wolf and knowingly made false accusations against the other of abuse to gain custody of the child, and the shadow of the allegation of one of the most heinous crimes known to man hovers over the wrongly accused parent for the rest of his or her life.

Mr. Kearns delineates four reforms to family court laws to address the increasing threat to children and parents (mostly Fathers) from false accusations in child custody proceedings:

- (1) a strong, deterrent effect recognized through penalties to the falsely accusing parent, that are proportionate to the damages on the parent and child caused by the accusation;
- (2) an allowance for recovery of damages from the accusing parent once the accusations are known to be false without having to prove any culpable state of mind on the part of the false accuser; (the child and wrongly accused parent should be entitled to compensation even if the false accuser was simply mistaken);
- (3) a requirement that false accusations be reported to law enforcement to preserve evidence; and
- (4) a remedy for the alienation between the child and accused parent [usually the father] that can result from the making of false allegations.

The field of reform in family courts is saturated with feminist advocacy decrying the need for reform, or to protect children and fathers from false accusations in child custody disputes. Nevertheless, the serious damage done to the children and a falsely accused parent compels reform of the courts to avoid, punish and deter the use of false accusations (including mistaken accusations) with intensity.

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One of the most significant reasons that family courts are in disarray, and abusive, lies in legislatures delegating almost unlimited discretion to family court judges in all matters. This results in vast differences in the outcomes of family court cases, varying from judge to judge, and results in the many injustices and abuses that we now see in family courts all over the Western world. Legislators addressing family courts need to issue clear, objective and defined laws in family court cases, and devise a legislative scheme that ensures the laws will be enforced in a gender-neutral manner. For example, feminists are fond of pointing out that men are rarely denied custody orders in family courts. The problem is not with the statistics. The problem is with enforcing the orders.

Many abusive mothers will deny men actual custody, by refusing to cooperate with the father. The courts and the police will rarely, if ever, recognize that the abusive mother passively-aggressively imposing obstacles on the father exercising the children's rights to see him, is a form of domestic violence and a de facto (as a matter of fact) means of kidnapping (if only temporary) the children from the father. This form of abuse, by passive-aggressive mothers, unaddressed and un-remedied by the family courts, the police, and the rest of our institutions, creates enormous stress for fathers trying to help and protect their children. This stress of trying to enforce child custody orders, with constant passive-aggressive harassment from abusive ex-spouses, can be devastating to many vulnerable fathers in terms of inducing and maintaining treatment resistant depression in the father.

Although child support orders (often punitively entered against the father simply because he is a man, and simply because he fathered a child) receive routine police enforcement from the family courts and law enforcement, the father's rights to help and protect his children, embodied in custody orders, almost never receives any enforcement assistance from government programs and institutions. Men punitively go to jail for not paying child support, yet abusive mothers, who deny the father contact with the children, routinely escape any accountability from family courts and law enforcement. This relentless abuse of fathers by a system that favours punitive child support against the father, and permits relentless abuse of fathers by an ex-spouse, is driving more than a few men to experience repeated social defeat, clinical depression, and treatment-resistant depression. Some men succumb to suicide.

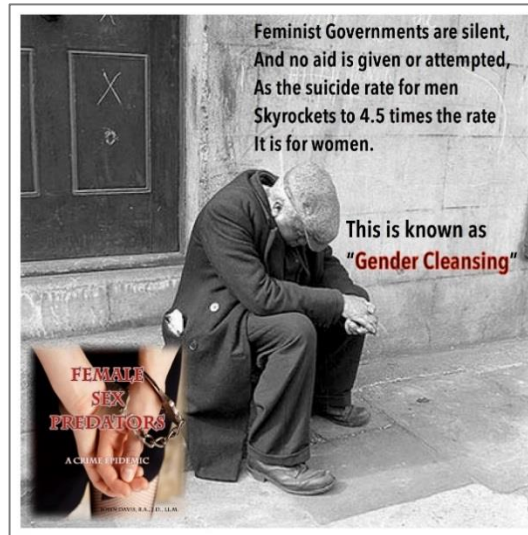


Figure 9. Gender cleansing

This abuse of men and fathers in family courts, take an incalculable toll on the economies of Western nations, and on the lives of fathers and children, in nations that have not reformed family courts to treat men on an equal basis with women. This needs to change, and Senator Hanson’s inquiry into the Australian system of family courts is a good first step to reform.

Note: All of the images presented in this paper are either in the public domain or those of the author.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



**John Davis** is a retired public official and international lawyer who writes on current gender issues. He was educated at Case Western Reserve University (BA), Seattle University School of Law (JD), and New York University School of Law (LL.M post-doctoral). John is fluent in seven languages (including ancient Latin and Greek). He has held positions such as Assistant Attorney General, United States Speaker, and Assistant District Attorney, Chief Wing JAG, U. S. Air Force Auxiliary, and Supreme Court Law Clerk. The author of eight books, John currently edits *Gender Studies for Men*, which publishes "balanced discussions of contemporary gender issues" on medium.com.

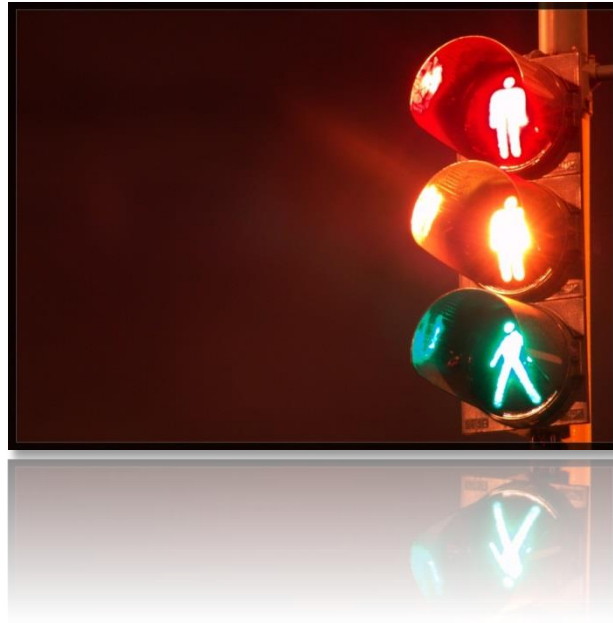
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## THE THREE ENEMIGOS: DESTRUCTIVE MYTHS ABOUT MALES

*Miles Groth*

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### ABSTRACT

*The myth of gender non-difference, the myth of men's power, and the myth of the affectively impoverished male pervade much of the West. These myths excuse how males are treated. That there are no differences between male and female is a fantasy that males have resisted. Men's power over their own lives is as limited as women's but more for social reasons. The story of powerful men is not the story of most men. The myth of the presumably affectively impoverished male is related to the myth of male power. Here the issue is what society encourages and allows males to express. Absent inhibiting and encouraging forces, males are as capable of identifying and speaking what they feel.*

**Key words:** boys, males, men, misandry, myths

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## INTRODUCTION

Three myths about boys and men are implicit in most discussions in the American media and learned publications about sex, status, privilege and power: the myth of gender non-difference, the myth of men's power, and the myth of the affectively impoverished male. Their influence has been disseminated throughout much of North America, the UK, Europe and Australia. The fact they are yoked is not surprising in the Gender Era. However, as we enter the Post-gender Era, an era in which, having exhausted itself in a miasma of angry incoherence, the concept of gender is losing its legitimacy in a fog of claims about what is natural and what is socially constructed, we might recall the origins of the concept as its vapor trail dissipates.

Gender was an invention of anglophone sociologists and psychiatrists who lived in the post-World War II period of relaxation following decades of war in Europe and Asia. An even minimally nuanced history of Western boys and men of that period has not been written, but it will show the connection between men in general being treated badly and fascination with a phenomenon said to be related to sex.

As mostly young men were being blown apart in an extravagance of ordnance and fire during the 1939-1945 war in Europe and the Pacific, a change in attitude toward the returning remnants was forming among those who had stayed behind, especially the wives and girlfriends of those men. Their mothers knew better but were relegated to attempting as best they could to rehabilitate their sons' families.

The history of ingratitude shown veterans of both wars that filled the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is so shocking that the chapter in it on the appearance in the mid-1950s of the odd notion of gender, documented in the writings of Alec Comfort, Harry Stack Sullivan, and the battalion of feminist theorists who began publishing in the early 1960s mostly in the United States, has been omitted or speed-read. The concept and changes in our general attitude toward boys and men are associated with a trio of myths.

## THE PRE-GENDA ERA

In the Pre-gender Era, open affection between males was free and easy, as it has been in most cultures. In the States, male *adhesiveness*—the propensity for intimacy and close friendship—was distinguished from *amativeness*, which described a man's feelings in his

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relationship with a woman in the setting of the family, that ubiquitous institution of child making and child supporting that every culture has also known. The high point of the Republic's culture so far, American transcendentalism, extolled male adhesiveness along with self-reliance in a context of a spirituality deeper than church observances. Its spokesmen were Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman.

The attunement between males that friendship implied was known to men during and after the homeland's Civil War. Men from Mediterranean cultures who emigrated to the United States on the eve of a new century were comfortable with open camaraderie and along with the somewhat more reserved British and northern European immigrants were at home in the homosocial worlds of farmers, miners, sailors and lumberjacks. It was essential among the Great War's fighting brigades. The muted intimacy of male adhesiveness was implicit among assembly line workers, cowboys, and the upper echelon of business and finance. Laying railroad track, working in factories and on Wall Street, men understood one other. While big-city life was often a challenge to men and boys, who thrive in open spaces, fellow feeling was also understood there.

Having been sent overseas only at the end of the First World War, in the 1940's males were shipped in droves to Europe and the Pacific. There mostly young men easily lived in a closeness that is comparable only to prison life. While they were away, they were missed and portrayed as heroes, but the reality of their experience was minimized. When they returned (first, shell-shocked, then post-traumatic and the subjects of study by that now busier than ever medical specialty, mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century psychiatry), they were treated as tainted shadows of who they had been. Males were separated from one another after months or even years of close contact that had blurred the physical and the emotional; without their buddies they were no longer as welcome as, in hindsight, everyone should have expected. Many spoke for several years of having had pals in the service. Some of them met again, but post-war separation amounted to the death of the other. VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) homes were saturated with alcohol and failed miserably in providing some sort of substitute for what these men had known and lost that had gotten them through the traumatic life of the battlefield. They expected to find satisfaction at home with their wives and among new colleagues on the job, but they did not find it in those places to the degree required. The loneliness they felt was forced underground by the boredom

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of shift labor and the new world of tedious office work. Their wives welcomed them home, but the culture in general did not. In Europe, where men had fought in the streets of their hometowns and nearby fields, their heroism and sacrifices were not overlooked and they were never sidelined socially.

With the advent of television in the United States, a view of men as silly and weak was disseminated. Father may have known best, but as a man he was more often portrayed as a foolish bungler who worked in the aircraft industry or as a bus driver. On the other hand, fatherhood had been on the wane before the First World War, and its disappearance after the Second World War was only accelerated by the absence of men returning to a lukewarm homecoming in 1945. Americans increasingly heard that now there was no more need for the father. It was said that mothers had done the father job just as well as they had as replacements for missing men on the assembly line.

## **THE NOW**

Now, more than seventy years later and after the interpolation of two more wars in Southeast Asia and a slew of them in the Middle East and environs, attempts to restore the closeness between men are still missing. Like the blown-up cities they were ordered to maul in the Sixties and later, more and more men are in ruins. More important, talk of toxic masculinity as the social ailment of postmodernity is strident.

We are now nearly a century into habits of ignoring men, but forms of misandry have also materialized that are subtle and more often than not disguised under cover of the rhetoric of the Patriarchy and presumed male privilege. Emotional isolation, increasing suicide rates among young and early middle-age men, and the phenomena of *men gone missing* and *men going their own way* reflect the unwritten history outlined. These are the symptoms of a lingering deep anguish and anger which occasionally breaks through, brutally and mindlessly, in the infamously explosive lives of late-teen or twenty-something loner shooters, that macabre brotherhood without a frat house that is unique to the United States. Their terrorism is mostly against themselves but it also destroys peers and random symbols of absent parents and indifferent adults.

Several myths have grown up around this unwritten history and its fallout to excuse the



tragic situation. They support one another, while the boys and men they are about do not. Together these myths portray half of humanity as without ontological difference from the other half. Boys and men are said to be wired to be violent, overbearing, and incapable of even animal warmth, let alone authentic emotional intimacy. Each misrepresenting myth is marketed as justification for even more bad behavior toward boys and men. Where to begin?

### **MYTH 1 — GENDER NON-DIFFERENCE**

The first myth is gender non-difference, that there is no difference between males and females, boys and girls, men and women. Behind this myth is the conceptual conflation of sex, gender, and sexual preference. Sexual preference means favoring one course of behavior over another, but when does a male drawn to sexual intercourse with a female *prefer* this to making out with a man or simulating intercourse with him in anal penetration? There is no preference here, however, since that would imply two comparable tendencies, but sexual intercourse and any another kind of presexual physical interaction (masturbation, oral sex, anal sex) or social intercourse with physical contact (petting, kissing) are not sexual options, as the terms *homosexual* and *heterosexual* were invented to suggest. There is sexuality (intercourse between a male and a female) and there is playfulness, which may include genital contact. As the Post-gender Era spokespersons themselves are saying (but for different reasons), sexual preference is a meaningless notion. As they explain, since gender is fluid, sexual preference cannot and need not be identified at all. What these theorists overlook, however, is that they are dispensing not only with the idea of sexual preference but also with the ideas of gender.

Sex difference is quite unlike both gender difference and sexual preference. Denying sex is like denying difference in eye color. Both are permanent, genetically determined features of a body. They can be disguised by certain kinds of clothing or tinted contact lenses, but these are entirely cosmetic modifications that either wash away or are thrown into the wash.

The human embryo is initially undifferentiated and transforms into a male or female fetus, a common structural *Anlage* morphing into male or female genitalia. Remnants of the nondifferentiated structure include nipples and an erectile organ. The penis is a large clitoris. (Freud had it backwards.) The male's gonads emerge out of his abdomen and the female's remain inside hers. Puberty brings further modifications into a body which, if it is male, contains more striated muscle cells than a female body. When structured around a skeleton with

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narrower hips and broader shoulders, supported on bigger feet and managed by larger hands, the result is a body that is stronger, whose center of gravity is higher than a female body's, and one that must move in a variation of a certain stride.

While the anatomical details are fascinating and the mystery of *sexual* attraction seems to have to do with the visual preference for certain body shapes, what concerns us here is not so much the outer form of a body, but rather that quality attributed to it that has somehow been separated from the sexed body, namely, its gender—the inner feeling of being a man or a woman. There is no such inner feeling of being male or being female. There are only sensations and observed physical events. The masculinity and femininity associated with the two sexes are consequences of the physical features described that many languages preserve.

Man and woman, by contrast, are sociological terms that have more to do with habits learned by practice based on imitation. There is an inner knowledge of how one is expected to act, but this is not an inner feeling.

Until recently, the connection between the biological creature and the social entity has been simply a matter of identifying what sort of creature could grow another human being inside her body and what sort of creature was needed to procreate the new being. Today an enlightened young man is taught to speak of his sexual mate and himself in this way: “We are pregnant.” In fact, only the female is pregnant. One grows and produces a male or female baby. The other claims and accepts a son or daughter. Both are parents, one by default (she has given birth), the other by choice (he has accepted responsibility for the pregnancy). Only someone bewitched by the notion of gender can confuse anatomical structures and bodily sensations with social roles, fashion and cosmetics.

The slippage in thinking between sex and gender has been possible only since pregnancy can be controlled by chemical contraception. Spontaneous abortion of a fetus is a common natural occurrence in the female body when in its wisdom structural anomalies are sensed, whether they be genetic or the result of disturbances of the internal environment (trauma, malnourishment of the mother, poisoning). It should not surprise that chemical contraception and talk of gender appeared on the scene around the same time—and at the time of increasing disparagement of males, divorce rates, and the use of psychotropic medications to dull or mute

emotional responses.

A female will never know what it is like to live in a male body. This is an experience that has certain behavioral manifestations that are interpreted differently by every male and account for varying behavioral expressions of being male. Orgasm with ejaculation is as unique to males as is the extrusion of a tiny human body through the extraordinarily narrow orifice through which parturition occurs. Just as unimaginable to a male is the experience of the periodic shedding of the lining of the uterus that females experience beginning with menarche. There are dozens of other details of physical experience that belong to being male and they are the province of the male sex. Their possibility as experiences is what matters. The effects of inhibition (physical and psychological) and other variables of social expectation influence the occurrence of such experiences, but the ubiquity of their possibility argues for the uniqueness of the experience of being male. Anatomy is not cosmetic. Men cannot fake an ejaculation.

That there are no differences between male and female is a fantasy that males have resisted. For most, gender role playing is associated with entertainment. And yet the myth of gender non-difference has become a powerful political tool designed to separate and divide human beings especially where cooperation is essential—in the family. We will see what happens to the currently popular interest in so-called transgenderism, which is superseding the drama of sexual preference.

## **MYTH 2 — MALE POWER**

A second myth that affects the lives of males is the myth of men's power, that men are in power in society. Emanating from gender studies (the heir to women's studies) more than twenty-five years ago, we began to see studies of the lives of men and boys that questioned feminist claims about men's power over women. Such power was contrasted with the real power that matters to anyone, men and women, which is the power over one's own life, including the right to suicide, but also choices about the uses to which one's body may be put in society. Females rightly argued that their bodies should not be overpowered sexually and forced into pregnancy. There has not been a comparable argument about males' bodies.

Here again, the usefulness of distinguishing between male power (anatomical, physiological) and men's power (social) becomes apparent. As we have seen, male bodies are on

the whole more powerful than female bodies and this is a matter of the quantity of striated muscle and skeletal structure. The presence of certain androgens in great quantity especially from puberty on through the end of middle age makes possible greater speed and endurance over short spans of time. Males can lift objects much heavier than their own weight and propel objects at remarkable velocity. Their larger hands are capable of a tighter and stronger grip. Higher blood oxygen levels contribute to greater physical power and stamina over the short course. Small muscle strength and coordination in males is equal in females, for example, among pianists. A Martha Argerich or Yuja Wang is up to the virtuosity of a Svatislav Richter or Daniil Trifonov.

The myth of men's power is not about physical power, however. It is about the control of one's life. It is said that men have exploited their physical power to dominate women and girls. This is true for some men and has been observed in most cultures. Correcting this is obviously in service of a good.

What we have not heard about, however, is that males have done much the same with boys and other older males. The motivations for doing so attributed to males range from a drive for dominance, comparing them to apes and other living creatures that form and maintain hierarchies, to a sadistic tendency to manhandle and destroy everything from weaker human beings to regional and global biota. The quest for territoriality and access to females for sex pleasure to somehow find an ovum for every sperm they produce each minute is said to be what men want, quite apart from whatever society may be urging them to do. Consideration of this claim about questing must lead once again to realizing that whatever compulsions men are said to have are reducible to their being males. These have evolved over tens of thousands of years and will not easily be altered.

What interests us, however, is not the myth of male power, but the myth of men's power. The question about what sort of power matters can then be raised. The record shows that men's power over their own lives is as limited as women's, but more for social reasons than the demands of hormone-driven cycles and pregnancy which redound to being female. Motherhood, of course, is a different matter.

Among human beings there is as little an instinct for mothering as there is one for

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controlling the lives of other males and females. That men are less connected to their offspring than women even when they mate for the long term is undeniable. So is the parallel between the history of the formation of culture and the history of masculinity. All of this, which is so much under lively discussion, is best explained, however, by what men have been called upon to do, in part because of being male but, by tradition, more of as a consequence of what men have had more than women, namely, time to do things unrelated to the human race, especially the offspring they have procreated.

Here it is important to recall that until the very recent advent of genetic testing, just who an infant's father is was anybody's guess. Males had multiple sex partners just as females did. Monogamy has become a cherished ideal but it was in the past an unimportant detail of one's biography. Over 400,000 years, male human beings also became men and, as such, given the great deal of time they had went about exploring, searching and researching. Only for a few generations have females not been held to the time-consuming tasks of pregnancy and the solitary responsibility for infant and child care. These changes—equal parenting, same-sex marriages, surrogacy—are newsworthy but will not undo habits that are still very much in practice in most non-Western societies and seem to haunt even the most ardent manly and womanly feminists and theorists of liberation and apologists for victimhood. What has evolved in males and females will not be overridden in a handful of generations in a medicalized technological society. The point is that men have come to have less power over their own lives than they once had as roaming hunters. Only a handful have had tremendous influence in society, but it was only thanks to the many other males they employed—some might say enslaved and used—to implement their plans. And these have been far more numerous than men horribly enslaved by abduction and reduced to a commodity.

The story of such powerful men is not the story of *most men*, however, and it is about most men that we are concerned. A few examples. Men do the dirty work, the lifting and hauling, the fighting for a few other men and women for something called patriotism and honor. They do such labor because they can. Here is the matter of *male* physical power which ironically caused most *men* to sacrifice real existential power in their lives.

An educated, free man might refuse to do backbreaking jobs, even it means he has little money at the end of the week and at the end of his life. Placing a high value on amassing more

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possessions than he needs has supported submitting to these kinds of self-enslavement. To overcome this loss of real power, men do not need to be more sensitive, only more independent in spirit. A man may now refuse to work long hours engaged in tedious labor for his boss in the hopes of contributing more to the lives of his children, especially since his spouse is also bringing home an income. That many women now want to replace the labor of child making, giving birth and homemaking with a career is understandable since this provides her an opportunity to contribute her share of support of a family. Financial independence is another motive, but we are also hearing that many women are also finding that working for *the Man*, whether that *Man* is male or female, can be difficult.

To have power is to opt for following your bliss and this is unrelated to being male or female. That men seem to suffer more from the absence of this power now has everything to do with the changing infrastructure of sexual and social evolution. But, to repeat: We are naïve, it seems to me, to believe that this interior landscape will be changed by a few generations of creative cosmesis and fresh laws. Nearly all human laws constrain and are created by necessity to correct evils, not to create fresh possibilities. In fact, created following political fashion, many laws operate at a level far from the good. The reality as against the myth is that most of us, men and women, have little power—little power over others and even less in our own lives. The myth of men’s power overlooks the situation of *most men’s* lives.

### **MYTH 3 — FEELINGS**

The third myth about males is that they are incapable of feeling, the myth of the emotional wasteland of boys’ and men’s lives. This is perhaps the most destructive of the three myths about males of all ages because it seems to support one of the other two. If males are less capable of feelings *other than anger*, they are less likely to be capable of empathy, love, and virtues such as altruism. It is said that because males are unfeeling, they easily reign in terror over others. It does not square, however, with the other myth, since if males and females are no different from each other and females are by nature affectionate, warm, and nurturant, males should be, too. They are not, so the argument goes, because these tendencies are implicit in the hypothetical mothering instinct and since males cannot bear children they are not hard wired to be warm and caring.

Here, again, the biological and social are not carefully distinguished. Mothering is not,

like lactation, a physiological process. It is also a quite different function in human beings than in other mammals, while as the word *mammal* makes clear, having breasts is required for nourishing newborns. Yet feeding and mothering are quite different. Grooming is instinctual in cats and dogs, for example, but human beings need to be shown how to clean their infants. They use water, not their tongues. The prevalence of human infanticide also requires questioning. Other mammals may do direct or indirect harm to some of their multiple births (for example, ignoring a runt), but human mothers, who *ordinarily* deliver only one newborn at a time, are known to kill it soon after birth or reject it as infancy proceeds. (The latter is likely one possible explanation of infantile autism.) The other details of mothering are learned from other mothers (including the female's own mother) in a community setting (a group of nursing mothers, an extended family), so that to a great extent mothering is a skill that anyone can carry out who can find a source of food for the newborn. If the mother is unable to produce milk, a wet nurse may be employed. Milk from other mammals (cows, goats) may be substituted until the infant can manage soft food. The point is that, apart from breast-feeding, mothering can be handled easily by the father. Current social trends encourage this.

In 1974, a phenomenon known as *engrossment* was identified by the pediatrician Martin Greenberg. This helps account for the readiness of fathers to take on the nurturing of their offspring. There is also research to support the hypothesis that pregnant females who are strongly supported by the alleged father of the fetus experience a more successful pregnancy and are more nurturant when the baby arrives. The presence of the father after a birth, even if he is not actively mothering the baby, is an indicator of the healthy physical and emotional development of the baby—boy or girl. Social practices that have discouraged the participation of the father in caring for the infant are still common in most traditional societies, but the American experiment in coequal parenting ought not provide support for other cultures to abandon practices that are said to prevent females from becoming women who are more like traditional men. Much will depend on what *most* women will want to do with a strong drive to become mothers. This is a social experiment that will require several more generations to provide even basic data on what females really want.

Nurturing the infants they believe they have procreated and providing affection for their pregnant wives (spouses, partners) are not the only evidence for prosocial emotions in males. It

is also a staple of pediatric wisdom that boys are more emotional as infants than girls are. Their moods are more labile and they are harder to console than girls are. The critical periods that follow are to a great extent overseen by social conventions. Here it is chiefly the use of shame and the discouragement of expressions of warmth by boys that carry the day to an even greater extent than encouraging toughness and stoicism. Rough and tumble play appears without solicitation in boys, although it can be encouraged in girls. Play patterns and toy preferences in boys and girls, respectively, speak to biological tendencies. These can be inhibited in boys or encouraged in girls. After puberty, the situation is more under the influence of physiological factors, especially increasing physical size and strength and the presence of testosterone, the effects of which are hardly well understood. The assumption that androgens only promote aggressiveness is likely an exaggeration. They may increase activity levels in boys (and in both sexes, since both males and females produce testosterone, although in very different quantities), but that testosterone, for example, causes all boys to become more destructive as well as more sexually active is a bit of guesswork confounded by conflicting observations in different cultures. The effects of the androgens likely have to do more with geography and climate than with genetics and racial disposition alone. There is the little-known example of the indigenous Tahitian men who when first met showed no competitiveness, ambition, or sexually predatory behavior. Landlocked countries whose residents have experienced fifteen centuries of near subsistence economy may have produced a kind of man who is very different.

These are complicated issues that have been under discussion for many years by social scientists and require more nuanced treatment. For now, it remains only to add a recent guess about the presumed emotionally impoverished lives of boys and men: alexithymia. Like engrossment, the term was coined in 1974, this time by two psychotherapists who claimed that men had less capacity for identifying emotions in themselves and others and finding words for the emotions they did find. The linguistic handicap is questionable, however, given the history of literature, which has been dominated by men, poets especially. There is also the fact that English, the language of the two psychologists, is like all natural languages limited in its emotion vocabulary. The symptom and disorder are more likely related to the tendency of males to show rather than say what they are feeling. For example, a boy who is feeling affection for his mother is more likely to *give* her something than say “I love you, Mommy.” He is more likely to do the same with this father and his friends. It may be that the tradition of males giving females gifts as



signs of love is a consequence of this.

The relation of the myth of the presumably affectively impoverished male and the myth of male power are also related. Here the issue is what society encourages and allows males to express. In most cultures, anger is not inhibited and may even be encouraged in contact sports. It may be the acculturated emotion that prepares men to fight in wars. Here again, though, it is typically for a few powerful males or females that young males especially are groomed to fight. The entertainment of watching males fighting each other (wrestling, gladiatorial combat, jousting) or fighting animals is found in nearly every culture where manhood has been defined and related to masculinity and male physical features, including greater size, muscularity and strength. My point is that absent these *inhibiting* and *encouraging* forces, and absent worries about how to *disinhibit* presumptive innate features of aggressiveness, we will likely see that males are as capable of identifying and speaking what they feel as are females.

## CONCLUSION

The three assumptions about males I have discussed require demythologizing. They are related and reinforce each other's influence on how we raise boys in the United States and places where American culture has exerted its influence. Traditional cultures, especially those closely related to religious institutions, have not been affected by these myths. The misunderstandings and irrational responses are deep-lying and will not be resolved politically. Instead, much of what we see emerging on the international political scene will center on our view of males and discovering what is there in males (and females) that is not dependent on the teachings of the three great Abrahamic religions. I am not optimistic about how much will change over the short term, but I am convinced that the critical factor in understanding our humanity must *at this point in history* begin with a close look at males' lives. The well-being of boys and men should be our principal motivation. The global political situation may depend upon it.

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## THE RELEVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY

*Jerome Teelucksingh*



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### ABSTRACT

*Since the 1960s there have been appeals and efforts to establish a special day for men. International Men's Day has moved from the fringe to the mainstream of the men's rights movement, and it must continue its meaningful and powerful message which has positively impacted the lives of millions of boys and men. In the past, IMD has largely projected a serious, no-nonsense approach as serious problems plaguing our society were addressed. In the future, IMD will continue being serious and uncompromising but this movement must also be seen as exciting and interesting to reach the younger generation and those young at heart.*

**Keywords:** boys, international men's day, males, men

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Since the 1960s there have been appeals and efforts to establish a special day for men (“History and Background,” 2019 & Thompson, 2016). On 19 November 2019, the revamped version of International Men’s Day (IMD) observed its twentieth anniversary. Since its inception in 1999, IMD had an uncertain and shaky beginning which was largely due to my shortcomings—immaturity, lack of experience and training in this sphere of gender activism. Today, IMD stands tall because it rests on the shoulders of outstanding boys and men, in the past and present, who have built a solid foundation by their speeches, writings and activism. Supporters salute those who have breathed life into IMD and made it very much alive.

For the past two decades the momentum of IMD has not been stagnant; it has evolved and expanded. One of the main achievements is that IMD has intervened and rescued the world’s boys and men who were in need of assistance. This is neither an empty boast nor self-praise. There is no statistical evidence but countless lives have been saved. IMD has inspired men to become better fathers, nephews, husbands, step-fathers, partners, employers, brothers, employees, grandfathers and neighbours. Yes, IMD has inspired persons and made them optimistic. There has been overwhelming support from a wide cross-section of society.

Despite the overwhelming support, there has been opposition. Undoubtedly, the critics and cynics have also helped shape IMD. The anti-male opinions and caustic comments should have derailed the direction of coordinators and supporters, but this did not occur. Interestingly, the negative voices ensured greater solidarity for a fledgling vision and some sympathy for this arm of the men’s movement that did not have the benefit of financial resources and high-profile support. Those in the opposition were a minority and proved to be a challenge that ensured a healthy growth of IMD. It is unfortunate that in 2019, some are still fearful and ignorant of this segment of the men’s movement. There will always be individuals and governments who will resist the culture of peace and harmony of IMD. This is a feature of a democratic society; thus, they are free to vent their grievances.

There is no ulterior motive and certainly no hidden agenda. The questions for the discontented are what is wrong with attempting to create better relations within the human family? What is wrong with trying to prevent suicides and depression? Is it wrong to protect the vulnerable and empower the weak and underachievers? IMD encourages solutions to boys’ and men’s problems. Supporters of IMD have not been distracted by the discontented and have

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never forcefully imposed the six objectives of IMD on anyone.<sup>1</sup> Instead, there have been healthy discussions, and the options of reform or behavioural change have been presented.

The strength of International Men's Day is also one of its apparent weaknesses. In accepting men and boys from all walks of life, IMD appears to embrace males who are violent or aggressive. This is an obvious dilemma as we empower and uplift whilst embracing others. Supporters of IMD cannot claim to be all-inclusive and yet ostracize some men or criticize a few boys who are different. Indeed, it would be hypocritical if within the IMD movement, men who are challenged by addictions are condemned and ridiculed. Coordinators and supporters of IMD have welcomed boys and men who are underachievers, deviants, or anti-social but also provided guidance, advice and a model of a better lifestyle.

IMD's main goal is its all-inclusiveness. An illustration of this is the existence of IMD supporters who are conservative, moderate and extreme in their outlook. For instance, the Men's Rights Activists (MRA) who remained unwavering in their criticisms of women or men who sympathise with feminists are not excluded from supporting IMD. However, the ideology of IMD is different as adherents believe that masculinity cannot be defined as anti-female or opposed to feminism. The hate and animosity must be curtailed and left in the past. Highlighting crimes committed by women or shortcomings of females will neither empower men nor bolster masculinity. This will only perpetuate the polarized gender gap and a culture of antagonistic gender relations. Masculinity should be defined within a positive framework. IMD focuses on certain attributes, morals and values such as industriousness, empathy, honesty, bravery, compassion, humility and leadership. These are ingredients for a larger blueprint for defining masculinity and rewriting the gender narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> The six objectives of IMD are "To promote positive male role models (not just movie stars and sports men but every day, working class men who are living decent, honest lives); To celebrate men's positive contributions to society, community, family, marriage, child care, and to the environment; To focus on men's health and wellbeing; social, emotional, physical and spiritual; To highlight discrimination against men; in areas of social services, social attitudes and expectations, and law; To improve gender relations and promote gender equality; To create a safer, better world; where people can be safe and grow to reach their full potential" (Objectives of International Men's Day, 2019).

The different masculinities cannot be seen as static. The broad spectrum of expanding notions of masculinity means that we need to be appreciative of the different conversations continuously occurring at different levels. For instance, masculinity will have different connotations for men residing in rural areas and who are poor, wealthy, or of Chinese, Syrian, European and African descent. Likewise, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish males would view manhood through different lenses. There is neither a theory nor a framework that can neatly encompass these masculinities. These multiple masculinities cannot be marginalized and need to be respected and recognized. We cannot believe that one form of masculinity is the ideal masculinity or that one version is superior or inferior.

Across the globe, IMD provides an elusive, safe space for men and boys. Furthermore, this movement reinforces existing safe spaces. It is a flexible and protective space where men and boys can openly discuss, debate and seek answers. Indeed, it is a space created to deal with the troubling and taboo topics. Those familiar with IMD would know it is promoting a way of life and a mindset that will not compromise one's culture or religion.

International Men's Day has moved from the fringe to the mainstream of the men's rights movement, and it must continue its meaningful and powerful message which has positively impacted the lives of millions of boys and men. In the past, IMD has largely projected a serious, no-nonsense approach as serious problems plaguing our society were addressed. In the future, IMD will continue being serious and uncompromising but this movement must also be seen as exciting and interesting to reach the younger generation and those young at heart. The innovative, fun and creative observances will certainly appeal to families, teenagers and children as they ponder on solutions and strategies for repairing a damaged and misguided world.

Unfortunately, IMD is not yet on the annual calendar of United Nations events. I have done my share of constantly requesting previous and present governments in Trinidad and Tobago for the motion to be included in the United Nations agenda. However, politicians and ambassadors have ignored my requests. Another country will have to take the mantle and carry the motion of 19 November to be officially recognised by the UN. One of the visions for the future of masculinity and IMD should be to permanently eliminate the gender gap to ensure equality and equity prevails in every country. IMD must never lose its momentum as the world embarks on a quest of deconstructing stereotypes, removing barriers, crossing boundaries and

destroying those walls which have created sadness, stigmatization, pessimism, loneliness and pain.

Supporters will continue collaborating with progressive organizations, other movements, individuals and governments to create a brighter, stable future and ensure the survival of humanity. The baton of IMD has been passed to this generation and they must continue this journey into the 21st century and beyond.

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## **SORROWS**

*A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY*

*Jan H. Andersen*



















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

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