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# NEW MALE STUDIES – AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

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### INTRODUCTION

The sexual politics informing male-female relationships and hindering male wellbeing are the topics of issue one of *New Male Studies: An International Journal* for 2023. The six contributors offer refereed scholarly articles and analysis and opinion pieces that examine male negotiations of social dominance and of both sexes' currency in terms of love and respect; that critique the absence of positive male role models and the neglect of male suicide victims; and that investigate the impact of feminist men and gynocentrism on society.

The first of two refereed articles in this issue, Steven Moxon's "Hierarchy is Male-Specific: It is Not Bi-(Inter-)Sexual or Female," argues that "dominance hierarchy (DH) is never bi-(inter-)sexual," that "rare ostensible female dominance (over males) is not even amenable to modelling, and actually is male non-engagement in dominance terms (deference, not submission)." A justification for this argument is that "DH entails neuro-hormonally processing winner/loser effects, for which there is evidence only in males, and requires the Y chromosome's SRY gene."

Peter Wright's refereed article, "Gynocentrism as Narcissistic Pathology – Part Two," continues his survey that "compared gynocentric behaviours with those of grandiose narcissism" and which "revealed a significant overlap between gynocentrism and narcissism, indicating that gynocentrism is an expression of female narcissism in the context of heterosexual relationships and exchanges, and in women's self-evaluations." This article "confirms that gynocentrism is characterised by features of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and concludes that gynocentrism poses significant burdens for relationships and male partners."

In the first of four analysis-and-opinion pieces in this issue, "The Love/Respect Dynamic: As It Played out Historically," Tim Goldich argues, "It's time to put an end to this self-righteous gender-political contest for the coveted title of MVP (Most Victimized and Powerless)." Goldich begins "from the premise that It All Balances Out between Woman and Man (and it always has)"; he advocates for "equalism," which necessitates that "we view gender reality in terms of Male-Female equal

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partnership, and we view gender issues in terms of shared responsibility.”

Cheryl Lacey’s first contribution to *New Male Studies*, “Where Have All the Men Gone?” observes, “many men of age and wisdom are labelled pale, male and stale.” Lacey insists “the world needs wise men” because “men understand humility, sacrifice, faith, loyalty, optimism, discipline and generosity” and because “they aren’t afraid of responsibility.” She concludes, “We need boys to learn and celebrate the honour of becoming a man.”

In “Summarising Feminist Men: Challenges and Impact on Masculinity in the Modern Era,” another first-time contributor to *New Male Studies*, Mathew Shaw, observes, “Some interpretations of feminism theorise that men are inherently oppressive and that women are always victims.” He argues that “feminist men sometimes adopt this attitude,” that “these men can adversely affect other men” because they “do not lend support to male issues.” Shaw warns, “A will to prioritise one sex over the other can have severe consequences for both men and women,” including “a fertile breeding space for the sex-shaming conversations among the sexes we are seeing today.”

Jerome Teelucksingh’s “Silent Statistics and the Silent Sufferers,” offers evidence of the harm done by the gynocentrism Shaw warns about: because of “a lack of statistics and the failure of governments to implement proper suicide prevention programs,” male suicide has become “a global crisis that demands greater attention.” Teelucksingh discusses “a depressing scenario that cannot help the silent sufferers among males.”

The opinions expressed by the authors in this issue do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Team. The articles published here are offered in a spirit of open, evidence-based dialogue regarding sex, gender, relationships, and issues related to the experience of males.

As always we appreciate the thoughtful work done by those who contributed to this issue.



**Dennis Gouws**  
Editor in Chief



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## **DOMINANCE HIERARCHY IS MALE-SPECIFIC: IT IS NOT BI-(INTER-)SEXUAL OR FEMALE.**

*Steve Moxon*



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### **ABSTRACT**

*Dominance hierarchy (DH) is never bi-(inter-)sexual. Rare ostensible female dominance (over males) is not even amenable to modelling, and actually is male non-engagement in dominance terms (deference, not submission). Any female hierarchy is not DH, as it is not contest-based, but from either mutually signalled differential fecundity or maternal rank inheritance. Otherwise, apparent female hierarchy is either non-dominance-based first-among-equals -- winner-takes-all -- sociality of a female sole reproducer, or a loose artefact of ad hoc resource competition. DH entails neuro-hormonally processing winner/loser effects, for which there is evidence only in males, and requires the Y chromosome's SRY gene. Male-specificity is anticipated from the male root function of genetic filtration / mutational cleansing, necessitating male ranking in terms of genomic integrity.*

**Keywords:** dominance hierarchy, male-specific, contest-based, male deference, winner effect

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## **DOMINANCE HIERARCHY IS MISCONCEIVED THROUGH ITS WORKING DEFINITION**

A full century on (1922-2022) from the inception of the concept of dominance hierarchy (DH), remarkably it is still beset with serious misconceptions, none of which even were broached when marking the centenary in the special themed issue on DH of *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (compiled and edited by Strauss, Curley, Shizuka & Hobson, 2022).

Generally understood as a significantly stable, linear and transitive rank ordering of the (same-sex, usually male) individuals of a group, created by a partial permutation of mutual contests, DH has the putative function of differentially allocating resources generically (and, in a rationalised and ritualised way, to reduce agonistic interaction). This longstanding operational (working) definition of DH is undermined empirically when attempts are made to determine a DH within any group of conspecific individuals. This suggests the nature of DH as usually assumed is merely a derived or subsidiary function hiding a narrower, core one; and/or unrelated phenomena are being included within an umbrella too loosely labelled DH. Funkhouser et al. (2018) complain that “dominance ranks depend on the behavioral context, and many studies have derived different rank orders for the same group across different measured behaviors (Norscia & Palagi, 2015; Vervaecke, De Vries & Van Elsacker, 2000; Bayly, Evans & Taylor, 2006; Paoli, Palagi & Tarli, 2006)”. *Context-dependent* hierarchy is a well-recognised phenomenon and thus termed (e.g Nagy et al., 2013; Hewitt, Macdonald & Dugdale, 2009). Finding similarly that DH is “situation- or resource-specific”, Lanctot & Best (2000) point out that “... dominance measurements that were conducted in similar environmental contexts, regardless of the response variable recorded, ranked animals similarly”. The problem, then, is not modes of measurement, but of the unacknowledged differences in what is being measured, with competition scenarios mistakenly regarded as being generic.

This pervading issue with DH has so long been recognised that there is a now thirty-year-old review of pertinent studies by Fedigan (1992), who neatly summed up the problem of taking as generic observation of conflict over a particular type of resource (the most obvious one, of food):

*In fact, it has been found that food tests do not generalize to other conflict situations in any consistent way. Not only does the test-situation only exist in the artificial laboratory-test*

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*setting, it has been found that priority to food does not necessarily correlate with priority to other incentives, and that dominance determined through dyadic tests does not generalize to dominance relationships for the same individuals within the group as a whole. ... Rather than peeling away the layers of the behavioral onion, to arrive at the core of an underlying 'real' dominance rank or dominance relationship, it can be argued that the experimenter has in fact created the dominance relationship.*

### **DH IS ABOUT REPRODUCTION, NOT RESOURCES, SO IT CANNOT BE BI-(INTER-)SEXUAL**

Taking all observations of competitive (or seemingly competitive) behaviour as ubiquitously pertaining to the formation or maintenance of DH is likely to encompass far more than the phenomenon at issue. It's a superficial, top-down view, when examination bottom-up from biology is required to ensure a clear, deeper understanding; if not, indeed, to uncover the actual function that otherwise may have been largely or wholly hidden. Given that reproduction is central to biology, its differential allocation a priori is the chief candidate for the function of DH, rather than reproduction somehow being considered just one type of resource in a range of them, with all being allocated differentially by DH. Reproduction is, after all, the supreme goal, not a resource. Resources are means to ends, and all ultimately are instrumental to reproduction. This basis of DH was put forward by the present author in 2009 as a formal hypothesis, including that differential reproductive self-suppression mechanism appears to be integral to DH, which last, if accurate, would strongly support the core hypothesis. [Note the present updated review of DH is to better specify its nature (as male-only), not to revisit integral reproductive self-suppression (which would be for another paper).]

The function of DH pertaining to reproduction rather than resources entails DH being same-sex, given this is necessarily the nature of competition over reproduction, with individuals attempting to better assert or display their mate value relative exclusively to same-sex others, so as to be preferentially chosen as a sexual partner by those of the opposite sex deemed to possess sufficient mate value. Given that the female is the limiting factor in reproduction, it would be expected that competition over reproduction would be very different according to sex. Unsurprisingly, to cite the title of a 2015(a) review by the present author, *competitiveness is profoundly sex-differential, consistent with being biologically based and within-, not between-sex*. No sense can be made of inter-sexual competition, including that which supposedly is indirect. If

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a strategy employed by one sex interferes with that of the other (sexual conflict), this always resolves to *intra*-sexual competition. [This is revealed in considering even an extreme form in male-perpetrated infanticide (to render the female sexually receptive); among lions, for example. The mother as well as the male achieve fitness gains in terms of offspring quality (essential given an extremely high offspring mortality rate; more important than number) relative to same-sex rivals.] The reality of DH as being same-sex (and usually if not overwhelmingly specifically male) is attested by this being so well and long recognised as hardly to require comment or even acknowledgement, so although it is explicitly stated in the literature, such is uncommon.

That DH is a same-sex phenomenon is confirmed by the discovery of a mechanism whereby sexual behaviour is default, to be overridden, in males, by behaviour relating to DH only if encountered other individuals are not of the same sex. The research of Stowers et al. (2002), echoed by Leybold et al. (2002) and Kimchi, Xu & Dulac (2007), shows that in a mammal model there is a profound (so almost certainly evolutionarily highly conserved) neural algorithm whereby sexing precedes any consideration of how to engage an encountered conspecific other. In male individuals there is then applied a decision rule whereby if the other individual is female, courtship behaviour is employed. Should the other individual instead be male, engagement is in DH (dominance-submission) terms. This root decision-making architecture precludes any possibility of bi-(inter-)sexual DH. Elaborating the mechanism of this mating/aggression switch, very recently there has been the outlining of what would appear to be both its basis neurally (Yamaguchi et al., 2020) and in terms of the pertinent hormonal receptors (Olivier & Olivier, 2022).

By this analysis, DH can be properly understood as a ramification of sex and the sexes, stemming from what has been dubbed the *genetic filter* (Atmar, 1991) or *mutational cleanser* (West-Eberhard, 2005) root function of the male, in turn from the function of sex and the sexes to maintain genomic integrity (Moxon, 2019, after Gorelick & Heng, 2011). [Sex and the sexes do not function to create variation as assumed. That notion arose from a vast over-estimation of the variation produced by sexual reproduction, in a false analysis of meiosis by Weismann back in 1891 (Gorelick & Heng, 2011; Gorelick & Villablanca, 2018). An historical mistake has been missed and forgotten, not least through its seeming utility in providing a major source of variation to

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drive evolution, thereby underpinning the theory. Entrenchment ensued with the great volume of research on the major question as to what can be the utility of sex given its twofold extra cost in comparison to the asexual mode. The paradigm persists despite (the above authors review) overwhelming evidence from many disciplines and fields that it is asexual reproduction that creates the greater variation.]

This male core function entails male same-sex assortment according to relative absence of deleterious genetic material (rather than relative presence of *good genes*, which is the obverse, lesser consideration; a corollary and less accurate criterion -- a proxy), to allocate differential sexual access and facilitate corresponding female mate choice. Male same-sex DH is necessary to facilitate this.

Note that with its concerning reproduction and not resources, DH is not only same-sex but likely also male-specific, in that males compete primarily for reproduction, whereas females compete primarily for resources. See Benenson & Abadzi (2020), specifically in regard to the human case. Williamson et al. (2018) point out that in contrast to females:

*“males typically compete first for mates and only compete for resources inasmuch as they provide further access to mates. Recent work in house mice suggests that this pattern exists in mice as well, with females not engaging in any more agonistic behaviors when given the opportunity to compete for males (Weidt et al., 2018) (p122-123). Females have distinct evolutionary mechanisms from those of males that drive intra-female conflict, as they compete primarily for resources to increase chances of survival for themselves and their offspring, where males compete primarily for mates (Stockley & Bro-Jørgensen, 2011)” (p332-333).*

## **MALE HIERARCHY: THE NEED TO CONTEST, NOT TO REDUCE IT**

It becomes apparent that in an important sense a superficial view of DH is so badly mistaken as to be an inversion of a proper understanding of the phenomenon, in that rather than it being damped down, conflict instead needs actually to be generated in order that relative mate value -- male relative mate value, that is -- can be tested and a rank order established in these terms. This is evident in a profound sex dichotomy in stress response, as reviewed in 2015(b) by the present author: *Stress mechanism is sex-specific: female amelioration or escape*



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*from stress to avoid compromising reproduction contrasts with male utilisation or in effect manufacture of stress to fulfil male genetic filter function.* Once established, a hierarchy itself further drives conflict between individuals of near-adjacent ranking, and does not reduce conflict between individuals ranked far apart. The latter have little or no reason to engage in contest, given the chances of a rank reversal are so very low. The disparities underpinning the rank differential would be so apparent that thus cementing them in DH ranking hardly would be a requirement to preclude the low-ranked individual from mounting a challenge. This is not so in the case of more nearly adjacent rankings, however; the very opposite occurs. Here it is the rank ordering itself that might prompt renewed contest, with a rank being such a reliable overall summation of an individual's strengths. It is by virtue of the closeness in ranking that a lower ranked individual might well consider challenging another individual of higher albeit not too dissimilar rank, to try to switch their respective rank order, given the potential gain outweighs any costs of losing, making it worth the risk. Note, given transitivity, that this one contest may do for the other potential contests in a permutation of those dyads within the compass of the rank differential between the two individuals. By contrast with the significant potential gain, there would be no direct cost of losing in terms of ranking, albeit its subordinate aspect is underlined in a loser effect (see below), corresponding to the winner effect (again, see below) that would be yet another pay-off if the contest were successful.

A usual assumption, then, that DH functions to ameliorate agonistic interaction, does not make sense, so appears to be false. With DH in place, however, it is then available for co-option secondarily to differentially allocate resources of whatever type. As resources can be instrumental to reproduction, this would have utility in reproductive terms as a derived, subsidiary function, and here there would be a service of rendering unnecessary any fighting that otherwise may occur. However, resource categories differ in how relevant they may be to reproduction, so it would be anticipated that there may be contest entirely outside of DH, and/or the strength or reliability of any employment of DH might vary correspondingly. Thereby are accounted the problems in determining any consistent rank order and linearity outlined herein at the outset: of their varying according to context.

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## FEMALE HIERARCHY IS NOT CONTEST-BASED

Given that the *genetic filter* function is purely male -- in effect quarantined on the male side of the lineage away from the female (necessarily so, owing to the female being the limiting factor in reproduction, through gestation, lactation, etc; making it important to avoid any further hindrance) -- then there is no basis here for female same-sex DH. Neither would it have any basis in corresponding competition over female mate value, as this is by the narrower criteria of fecundity, which is not indicated by fighting ability or any general measure of quality. Instead, a combination of signs of developmental stability encapsulated in bodily symmetry and of physiological fertility in youthfulness (what in human terms we would call *beauty*) would sufficiently indicate fecundity; with this being immediately all too apparent in physical appearance. Any facet of fecundity that is not visible could be mutually signalled. No behavioural, attitudinal or ability testing is required. Consequently, there would be no utility in a contest-based female hierarchy in respect of reproduction.

Neither regarding resource allocation: with the female necessarily having evolved to be risk-averse, thereby to avoid any compromise of fecundity, females hardly would be adapted to engage in agonistic contest if its purpose is merely its own subsequent reduction. Not only may injury risk not be sufficiently reduced with ritualisation of combat, but initially determining relative rank would entail a higher level of agonism necessary to reveal salient individual differences in fighting ability, requiring a great deal of physiological effort, not unlikely to significantly threaten fecundity. Even if there were a benefit to the female of ameliorating agonistic contest, the determination of rank itself would risk driving an escalation of agonistic interaction to a level well above that from which the female subsequently would be spared by the adaptation.

The only contest-based agonism for which it would be worth females taking the risk of significant injury is the winner-takes-all scenario of determining sole breeder status. But rather than a hierarchy, this would be a sociality of what could be dubbed *first-among-equals* (winner-takes-all): one apex individual with everyone else equally non-eminent also-rans. A DH would be an alpha plus a beta, a gamma, and a delta, etc. -- a multi-ranked order. Albeit a DH may not be perfectly linear, in featuring shared ranks, especially further down the hierarchy (it may vary in

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steepness along an egalitarian-despotic dimension), this is entirely different to no hierarchy at all and a single apex individual, which indicates a very different mode of formation. Either way, then, in the female case, proper agonistic contest and DH seem not to go together. Any apparent female DH is likely to be either contest-less hierarchy or ad hoc low-level competition.

A contest-less ordering of reproductive privilege in terms of relative fecundity, inasmuch as it isn't self-evident, could be achieved simply through mutual signalling. Alternatively, it could be the outcome of ad hoc competition over resources, where females avoid the risk of compromising their fecundity by contesting other than agonistically, or with no more than mild agonism. Yet this would provide no utility in outcomes of contests being registered in a way that impacts on future encounters. No value would be conferred by DH to females, unlike for males. Theoretically, there appears to be no conceivable utility to females of the contest-based determination of consistent hierarchy that would be adaptive for males.

Just such a sex dichotomy in reality for humans is recognised by Benenson & Abadzi (2020) in the title of their paper, *Contest versus scramble competition: sex differences in the quest for status*. Zilkha et al. (2023) outline something similar: they find in mice “sex-specific behavioral strategies to establish a stable hierarchy ... wild females are characterized by more pro-social behavioral traits, whereas wild males seem to be characterized by agonistic behaviors, social abstinence, and hiding (p9) .... the social organization formed in male mice is mostly dependent on their degree of aggression. In contrast, social organization formed in female mice seems to depend more on social factors such as familiarity and physiological factors” (p10). “Specifically, males engaged in significantly more agonistic and less pro-social behaviors compared with females, in both lab and wild mice ...” (p2). Zilkha et al. point out (citing multiple studies re each species) that their findings are widely applicable: “Similarly, extensive sex differences in the dynamics and behavioral strategies undertaken to form hierarchies were also found in other mammalian species, including hyenas, foxes, rhesus monkeys, baboons, and even humans” (p10). Stockley & Bro-Jørgensen (2011) concur with Zilkha et al. that females employ far less aggression and instead use alliances competitively. And in a major set of studies of hierarchy in mice, Williamson et al. (2018) find that “females indeed exhibited significantly less aggression than males, as is demonstrated by their scores on the various measures examined”. Even more

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profoundly, in a social insect species (in this case a paper wasp), Brown (2019) finds no aggression at all in the replacing of the dominant individual by a successor.

### **THE SOLE REPRODUCING FEMALE DECIDED BY FERTILITY SIGNALLING**

Social insects are the great bulk of species featuring ostensible female DH. In most cases there is a sole breeder (a queen), in an afore-mentioned first-among-equals (winner-takes-all) sociality (a pre-eminent individual with all others un-ranked also-rans, not an alpha + beta + gamma + delta, etc., as in DH). There also may be a deputy: a potential replacement queen. That in some species there appear to be a handful of apex individuals in a seeming short hierarchy, is likely an over-interpretation of a queen plus a deputy and one or two others who fell not far short of them in fecundity. Communication of social information is via a set of complex organic chemicals on the outer surface – cuticle -- consequently known collectively as cuticular hydrocarbons (CHCs). These very recently have been shown in several species to encode fecundity indicators, that in their mutual comparison between individuals decides who becomes the sole breeder, without any agonistic contest. “There were no dominance hierarchies”, conclude Abril & Gomez (2020), instead “intrinsic physiological differences among queens”. *Cuticular hydrocarbons correlate with fertility, not dominance* is the title of Izzo, Wells, Huang & Tibbetts’ (2010) paper on a wasp species. Leonhardt et al. (2016) outline that “In communal or facultative eusocial species where several females compete for reproductive dominance, the relationship between CHC profile and ovarian activity informs both competitors and potential helpers about the reproductive potential of each female and can be used to establish dominance and induce helping behavior.” In confirmation, Honorio, Châline & Chameron (2019) find there are “pre-existing differences in putative fertility signals”, and that “idiosyncratic differences in a putative fertility signal (and therefore presumably in ovarian activity) between workers in the queen's presence reliably predict the outcome of reproductive conflict after queen loss”. Yagound et al. (2014) elaborate: “status discrimination abilities were in fact sufficient for the establishment and stabilization of linear hierarchies. The observed level of accuracy allowed fine-scale discrimination of all top rankers' hierarchical status. ... Low-ranking workers did not exhibit such fine-scale status discrimination. We moreover showed that a putative signal of fertility, 13-methylpentacosane, precisely labelled the workers' position in the hierarchy”. Building on this,

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Yagound et al. (2015) state: “Furthermore, this compound might play a key role in the establishment of the reproductive hierarchy, since workers with low fertility at the onset of hierarchy formation already have relatively high amounts ... individuals with experimentally increased amounts of 13-MeC<sub>25</sub> triggered less agonistic interactions from top rankers, in accord with them ‘advertising’ higher status”.

More revealing still, *cuticular hydrocarbon profiles differ between ant body parts*, to cite the title of a 2021 paper by Sprenger, Gerbes, Sahn & Menzel, building on the discovery of location-specific cuticular hydrocarbon signals in a social insect by Wang, Goodger, Woodrow & Elgar in 2016. This would appear to account for the various forms of particular physical interactions between individuals that have been assumed to be agonistic contest but, without imputing function, more objectively are rubbing or grasping manoeuvres involving different, specific body parts. For a listing and description of these, see Monnin & Peeters (1999). Albeit their classification is specifically in respect of an ant species and its relatives, similar pertains across social insects. The key body parts involved are the antennae and the mandibles, both sets of which are known to feature sensory organs (sensillae) to detect CHCs (e.g Ozaki & Wada-Katsumata, 2010), and mandibular glands themselves produce oderants (Ferguson, 2021), as do antennae – hence antennal so-called duelling or boxing.

Sasaki et al. (2016) find in an ant species that the great bulk (86%) of interaction features antennal duelling, with most of the rest (10%) involving the mandibles. Honorio, Châline & Chaméron (2019) describe what is usually denoted biting as being “when the individual uses its mandibles to grip a part of another individual’s body. In most instances, biting was prolonged ... with no apparent damage or cuts, and we consider this behaviour ritualized biting”. This is, as the authors thus label, a grip rather than a bite, and with no more obvious ostensible agonistic behaviour in social insect repertoire, it is a more than merely plausible hypothesis that social insect ostensible agonistic interaction in general actually is to facilitate the tactile contact required to accurately detect honest fecundity signals.

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## THE SOLE REPRODUCING FEMALE DECIDED BY MERE CONVENTION

A class of modes of determining the female sole (or parallel multiple) breeder(s) is dubbed *convention*-based dominance, as termed and neatly summarised by Tibbetts, Pardo-Sanchez & Weise (2022), (though again, note, the absence of either hierarchy or contest means it is misleading and unwarranted to employ *dominance* terminology):

*In societies with convention-based dominance, individuals have unique attributes that single them out as the next dominant, (e.g., age, tenure in a group, or maternal rank) without reflecting intrinsic characteristics that allow individuals to win contests (Lewis, 2008; Horrocks & Hunte, 1983). For example, some social insects determine dominance based on the seniority convention. The oldest worker is the most dominant and will take over if the queen disappears (Strassmann & Meyer, 1983; Taylor et al., 2020). Nepotistic hierarchies are common dominance conventions where dominance rank is inherited from the mother. Juveniles acquire status immediately below their mother, with younger offspring outranking older siblings (Holekamp & Smale, 1991). ... Although nepotistic hierarchies are considered convention-based, rank inheritance depends on support from mother, kin and coalition members to ensure offspring acquire the appropriate rank (Strauss & Holekamp, 2019; Chapais, 1992).*

Tellingly, while inheritance of rank by females from their mothers is known for many species, there is no corresponding case of inheritance of rank by males from their fathers (Mattison et al., 2019). Inheritance from the mother, like succession by age, occurs only for females, not for males, in line with neither inheritance nor age concerning contest, hierarchy or dominance.

Convention appears to apply in particular when individuals are closely related, and, therefore, there are inclusive fitness considerations. A coalition of close relatives is familial sociality, and the pre-eminent female of a family hardly could be considered to be at the apex of a DH. Familial relations are in terms of age-based seniority and the simple scramble of sibling rivalry, not dominance, for which there is no use, as reproduction (sexual access) is not at issue, with mating being extra-familial, as it has to be to avoid in-breeding depression. Even a derivative DH function of ameliorating aggression is not needed, as close relatedness (consanguinity) would preclude fierce rivalry, and when, in some species, it is necessary to cull weak offspring, amelioration of ferocity would be the very antithesis of what is required.

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A famous case of falsely imputing female DH when sociality instead is familial is that of the wolf. L David Mech, the pre-eminent authority on the animal, had previously described the wolf in DH terms, but completely revised his position upon discovering all groups in the wild are established by mating and having offspring, so that rather than an alpha female (and male) the supposed top-ranked individual should be designated *breeder* or *mother/father* (Mech, 1999). Long before, Mech (1970) had realised that what had been taken to be submission actually is simply a food-begging gesture or a food-gathering motivator by offspring to the parents (who monopolise food in order to allocate it, making sure younger offspring get their share). Agonistic behaviour is more or less confined to driving offspring away from the group upon their reaching maturity. Instead of a DH there is simply seniority (age-based ranking). Issue is taken with Mech's position by Cafazzo, Lazzaroni & Marshall-Pescini (2016), who claim there is DH, yet agree there is age-based determination, which being convention-, not contest-based hierarchy, is a hallmark of familial sociality, not DH. In any case, Cafazzo et al.'s work is in respect of captive wolves, and it's the contrast with wild populations that is Mech's point. It is well recognised that in general across fauna, the close confines of captivity engenders repeat conflict that would not occur in the wild, to the point that natural sociality can break down, with some individuals becoming withdrawn through the experience of multiple negative encounters. There is no reason to assume this is sub-dominance in a DH if the species does not display it outside of captivity. In the wild, Mech's conclusions appear likely to apply across the Canidae family of species, with even domestic dogs (dogs long bred in captivity) also being known to have an age-based tolerant hierarchy when feral (Bonanni, 2017). As already mentioned, some social insect species also have age-based female hierarchy (e.g., Bridge & Field, 2007).

The meerkat is another case in point: the sole-reproducer female is determined by seniority, primarily, and secondarily, weight (Thavarajah, Fenkes & Clutton-Brock, 2014), without contest. It would seem in effect that differential weight given optimum reproductive age and experience is a ready-reckoned proxy for fecundity, settling the matter as to which individual is to take the reproductive crown without need of agonistic interaction. Weight would be an excellent indicator of overall condition and stored reserves available to be utilised in feeding and protecting offspring. Meerkat communities consist of the single breeding female and

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her mate, with everyone else non-breeding alloparents, most if not all individuals (of both sexes) being the pair's offspring. This is essentially familial sociality. [Note the males don't form a DH, as they have been well tested (after dispersal from the natal group upon reaching sexual maturity), in having to survive and thrive either individually or among fellow male rovers to the point of out-competing other males in achieving sufficient weight to show a pre-eminent genetic fitness (genomic integrity), thereby to join a group as the sole male reproducer.]

### **DH IN ITS MOST NOTABLE COMPONENT, *THE WINNER-LOSER EFFECT*, IS MALE-SPECIFIC**

Finding “a sex-specific mechanism underlying social hierarchies in mice”, Van den Berg, Lamballais & Kushner (2015) conclude that this is “whereby males are strongly influenced by prior experience, whereas females are reliant upon intrinsic attributes”. By prior experience the authors mean previous contest, of course. Furthermore, the male-only facility to make use of these they find arises from the Y chromosome's SRY gene, so the mechanism cannot be female, as anyway is clear from its being known to be mediated by testosterone. This facility is known as *the winner effect*, when a prior win provides a physiological (and, in higher animals, a psychological) boost to future winning, and/or *the loser effect* when a prior loss provides a physiological (and, in higher animals, a psychological) brake, predisposing to future losing. By contrast, for females there are no such shifts, and instead each encounter entails mutual assessment anew, irrespective of past dealings. Without carrying over of an impact from one encounter to another, there is no basis for ranking in females. Hierarchy may be apparent and it may be fairly linear, but it would be simply an artefact of differences between individuals according to basic criteria that are so obvious as not to require the sort of testing to uncover underlying difference in which males engage.

*Winner-loser effects* are shown to produce a DH in modelling using cyber interactants in a computer simulation known as *DomWorld*. With no predication other than the ability of interactants individually to process *winner-loser effects*, then (as long as there is no constraint on the option to escape) the result is a self-organising hierarchy of similar linearity to DH in reality (Van Haeringen & Hemelrijk, 2022). As *winner-loser effects* are also the basis of hawk-dove game theory, unsurprisingly, similar results are obtained in thus modelling DH (Huang & Wu, 2022).



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In real living interactants, a *winner effect* has to be “evolutionarily wired” (Morgulev & Avugos, 2020), with specific neuro-hormonal circuitry required to process it (Robertson, 2012), now more fully outlined (Choi et al., 2023), necessitating a genetic basis, of which there are clear indications (e.g Franz et al., 2015), and which van den Berg’s team confirm. That the mechanism is implicit and not through rational acting is shown in human males by Kubitz, Page & Wan (2023). It cannot be cognitively sophisticated, because *the winner effect* has been found in invertebrate as well as vertebrate species (Hashikawa, Hashikawa, Lischinsky & Lin, 2018). It’s long been well-documented across fauna (e.g Fuxjager, Oyegbile, & Marler, 2011; Mesterton-Gibbons, 1999). All of these findings are exclusively in respect of males, and in human males a number of studies find a *winner effect* across a range of contexts, from sports to board games and elections, as summarised by Gorelik (2023), revealing it to be ubiquitous in male-male competitive scenarios.

The contrasting *absence* of a female *winner effect* is newly evidenced in mammals. Dai et al. (2022) point out that “... while in male mice repeated attacks lead to an increase in aggression (*winner effect*) and preference to the winning-associated context, such behavioral changes are not observed in female mice (Aubry et al., 2022; Hashikawa et al., 2018)”. So profoundly lacking is a *winner effect* in females that Hashikawa et al. posit it is through attack failing to provide reward to females. There has accumulated a sufficient body of research into this phenomenon in humans to conduct a meta-analysis. Over the past 35 years, research into the impact of competition outcome on testosterone concentrations in humans reveals an effect only in men and not in women (Geniole, Bird, Ruddick & Carré, 2017; Geniole & Carré, 2019).

This extends to *loser* as well as *winner effects*, albeit there is a study where although there was no female *winner effect* instead a female *loser effect* was found (Casto et al., 2020), but finding even a *loser effect* in women makes this an outlier among studies. Not even a female *loser effect* is found by Abad-Tortosa et al. (2019), whereas it is well evidenced by numerous studies in men, complementing *the winner effect*. Page & Coates (2017) (and Gauriot & Page, 2019) looked at both *winner and loser effects* in tennis players of both sexes and found “these effects did not exist among women, a finding consistent with the hypothesis that androgens mediate winner and loser effects”. Cohen-Zada, Krumer & Shtudiner (2017) found likewise with judo. The same

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sex dichotomy pertains in considering prestige dominance (Cheng, Kornienko & Granger, 2018). That there is both a *winner* and a *loser effect* specifically in male mammals is shown by Chase, Bartolomeo & Dugatkin (1994). The few rodent studies there have been show no female *loser effect* (Hashikawa, Hashikawa, Lischinsky & Lin, 2018).

Authors increasingly are denoting *the winner/loser effect* as *momentum*. That for humans this is psychological (rather than merely physiological) is outlined by Clark & Nilssen (2021), citing in particular Iso-Ahola & Dotson (2014), who conclude “the influence of psychological momentum seems to be greater for male than female performers”.

Even considering not testosterone but instead what is normally considered the female sex hormone, estradiol, Scaia et al. (2018) find that whereas in males there are higher circulating levels of estradiol after winning, there is no such change in females. So, with estradiol too there is no basis of a *winner effect* in women; again, only in men. Likewise in considering not testosterone on its own but in conjunction with cortisol – the dual hormone hypothesis (Knight, Sarkar, Prasad & Mehta, 2020). A meta-analysis of studies investigating this by Dekkers et al. (2019) is supportive in the case of men but not women (for whom there is an almost negligible correlation in the data). Knight et al concur that there is “stronger support for the dual-hormone hypothesis in males than females”. The only support for a female *winner effect* here is in terms of an exception proving the rule: in the case of the “special population” of the minuscule proportion of the female population who compete at Olympic level (Casto, Hamilton & Edwards, 2009), which would be explained by a necessarily highly unusual extent of masculinisation of such women (hyperandrogenism), possibly mild congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), producing profoundly aberrational hormonal profiles.

Strikingly, then, there is no evidence of a female *winner effect* – little if any for a *loser effect* either: any form of momentum – despite the enormous ideological motivation for it to be demonstrated. Certainly, there is a dearth of published studies, and this is likely through null findings failing to interest journals (as is generally the case, and specifically in respect of this topic, given the ideological implications). Countless investigations will have gone unpublished, and countless potential investigations will not have commenced given researchers’ anticipation

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of null findings. If a female *winner effect* indeed were there for the finding, this would be prominent in the published literature starting many years ago. Albeit impossible to prove a negative, it is possible now at least provisionally to conclude that there is no *winner effect* in the female; that is, *the winner effect* is male-specific; likewise, regarding even a *loser effect*.

The profundity of the sex dichotomy in respect of *the winner/loser effect* is revealed by Gorelik (2022) in pointing out that “it is not winning per se that precedes a testosterone boost; rather, showcasing dominance over potential reproductive rivals seems to be the main cause”, and that “... research on the effect of winning on men’s sexual interest suggests that testosterone may likewise be upregulating men’s sex drive in anticipation of greater reproductive opportunities (Gorelik & Bjorklund, 2015; Markey & Markey, 2011; Markey & Markey, 2010)”. What is known about *winner/loser effects* further reveals that not resources but reproduction is what is at issue with DH.

### **OSTENSIBLE FEMALE DOMINANCE IS INHERENTLY IMPLAUSIBLE**

A useful test of DH as being not bi-(inter-)sexual, but instead same-sex (indeed, male-specific), and requiring contest -- and to be a hierarchy, not simply first-among-equals (winner-takes-all) sociality -- is to examine the ultimate manifestation of the still standard view of DH in the unusual putative phenomenon of *female dominance*. This is where, in a few species, females supposedly are dominant to males either wholly (all females dominant to all males) or partially (a minority of females dominant to a minority of males). If even the proverbial exception to prove the rule is absent here, then the rule would be strong indeed. Should the new understanding of DH herein be accurate, then imputation of *female dominance* would be the clearest inappropriate application of the standard view.

That the notion of *female dominance* (over males) not only is a priori theoretically misguided in terms of an understanding of sex and the sexes but makes no logical sense, is clear from the corollary that in the usual case (in the vast majority of species: all those not supposedly female dominant), there would be correspondingly *male dominance* (that is, over females). Even assuming there could be such a thing as bi-(inter-)sexual DH, there would not be 100% dominance in one direction, given that in most species there is a degree of overlap across the

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sexes in measures of key factors (e.g. size, weight, and associated strength) that in males greatly contribute to gaining dominance. If dominance were inter-sexual it would be anticipated that in all species, other than the most extremely sexually dimorphic, a small proportion of males (the most sub-dominant) would be sub-dominant not just to most males but also to a minority of females. A coterie of females would be sufficiently large, heavy and (especially if unusually masculinised) strong to outdo a minority of males in these male very terms, thereby to be dominant over them. That across species this is very much not the case, and certainly not generically, demonstrates that a relationship other than dominance pertains between the sexes. If *male dominance* does not exist, then neither can *female dominance*.

To try to account for rare *female dominance*, Lewis (2020) puts forward a wider conceptualisation, of “female power”, in terms of “leverage”, in particular through a male-biased sex ratio. Lewis is quite vague, though intimates this power involves sexual favours, yet this is implausible. The female already has leverage in being the limiting factor in reproduction through being the gestating and lactating sex. Inclusive fitness considerations of local reproductive output require evolved mutualism (accounted for by any of several empirically equivalent theoretical outlines – without entailing group selection) to drive male protection of and/or giving precedence to the female. This could be a facility that is initiated or upped according to fecundity. Its absence would be to the detriment of local reproduction generally, thereby negatively impacting individuals within the local group generically, either indirectly and/or directly.

### **OSTENSIBLE FEMALE DOMINANCE ACTUALLY IS MALE DEFERENCE**

The most well-known species said to sport *female dominance* is the spotted hyena, yet according to McCormick et al. (2022) “without any observed provocation” males “submit” to females, begging the question of why males would signal subdominance in the absence of signalled dominance. It would seem the male is simply deferring to the female, as males would be expected to do. It’s possible males employ a sub-dominance signal to acknowledge registering a female’s presence and will not compete with her for food or other resources, in a co-option for want of a more specific signal to indicate non-engagement in dominance terms. McCormick et al. state their study was to try to decide between “intrinsic attributes” (aggression) and social

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support for the basis of male-female interaction, and “were unable to assess the leverage hypothesis”. In any case, hyena females do not contest for rank and instead acquire it by convention, in this case by inheritance from the mother (e.g Engh, Esch, Smale & Holekamp, 2000), so if there is hierarchy it is not DH, and hence there could not be a dominance-submission interaction even in principle.

A male act of deference is explicit non-engagement. It is nothing to do with female leverage. Not initiation of courtship or signalling of male mate value, if anything it is a signal of non-courtship; a retiring gesture indicating insufficient own mate value to warrant initiating courtship. Male deference is fairly obviously evolved male consideration for or protectiveness towards the female. That male deference has been assumed to be sub-dominance (submission) is likely through there being little or no difference in the form of the behaviour from that observed between males where the function indeed is sub-dominance. A staple of the evolutionary process is that forms, whether morphological structures or genetically based behaviours, are forever being co-opted for different function; exaptation, to use the term devised by Gould & Vrba. Selection forces can work only on what is already present, utilising different aspects or combinations, possibly aided by a new or hitherto non-utilised mutation. All evolution is co-option (or exaptation) of some kind. McLennan (2008) sums this up as “... traits that had evolved under one set of conditions were co-opted to serve a different function under a second set of conditions. ... Behavior, like morphology, has both structure (what it looks like) and function (what it does). Julian Huxley, a founding father of ethology, had the fundamental insight that behavioral displays often evolve in one context, then change function later in evolution”. What is here seemingly male sub-dominance is a co-option of the same or similar form to become functionally a quite different signal more appropriate for the context: to reassure the female that the male is not going to behave agonistically or in some other obstructive or deleterious manner towards her.

Most *female dominant* species are lemurs (that for brevity are here considered together, though papers cited may be in respect of one particular species). Depending on the species, they display a range of putative *female dominance*, from complete to merely partial. Yet the behaviour is anything but that of dominance-submission. Males are very rarely aggressive toward females,

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even if provoked, according to Radespiel & Zimmerman (2001), who also find that the males simply avoid females, so that invariably the female prevails (in 99.9% of all encounters). Film of lemurs in TV documentaries (e.g BBC *Wildlife on One*, 2002) show males placid and non-resisting when females simply take food out of their hands, in what is no sort of agonistic or any kind of interaction, with neither active yielding nor request. “Dominance within sexes differs from that between sexes”, Pochron et al. (2003) argue in respect of a sexually monomorphic (same-sized) lemur species, where “If females win a disproportionate number of interactions, it is likely that males allow this to happen”; this being in feeding contexts, where “males may trade off the immediate caloric reward available to winners for increased reproductive success” [p182]. If inter-sexual outcomes were in terms of dominance, size would be a major factor in who wins contests, but maturity, not size, is determinant (Voyt, Sandel, Ortiz & Lewis, 2019).

It has long been concluded that the phenomenon indeed is simply male deference, through female feeding priority (e.g Kappeler, 1993), or more widely “cost asymmetry” (Dunham, 2008), or both feeding priority and “reproductive strategy” (White et al., 2007). White et al. found that the top-ranked male deferred the most: the inverse of what would be expected if the sexes were in a dominance relationship. The conclusion of male deference is reaffirmed in the conclusions of the most recent studies/reviews, by Grebe, Sheikh & Drea (2022), and also by Kappeler, Fichtel & Radespiel (2022), who state that there is “spontaneous male submission in the absence of female aggression and linked to female sexual maturation”. In other words, specifically to fertile females, males are deferent; that is, they signal non-engagement in dominance terms. Males hardly could be submissive (sub-dominant) anyway, given the apparent absence of a male DH: Bauer (2004) describes the male interactions as “unstable over time due to male migration and extreme male-male competition during the brief mating season (Budnitz and Dainis, 1975; Taylor, 1986; Sauther, 1992; Sauther and Sussman, 1993; Pereira, 1993; Gould, 1994; 1997”. Males are not sufficiently together to establish male DH as claimed. Neither would the female hierarchy appear to be a DH: Bauer finds that establishment is according to age and weight, adding that it is also according to aggressiveness, but it needs to be considered if any agonism is the exercise of rank already established through age and weight criteria, in which case ranking would not be established by contest, and there would be no female DH.

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White et al. argue that females have evolved to be more masculinised in order to better compete intra-sexually for unusually restricted food availability, given the high energetic demands of lemur species (though both this restriction and the demands are disputed in the literature). On this view, female-female competition gives rise to *female dominance* as a by-product. However, that the phenomenon here indeed is the male yielding rather than the female actively prevailing, is shown by the hormonal profiles of male lemurs: “unusually high estrogen concentrations year-round potentially facilitating male deference via male-initiated affiliation” (Grebe, Sheikh & Drea, 2022). Male estradiol levels are described as not significantly lower than those in females, which is highly unusual, indeed likely unique to some lemur species.

Verreaux’s sifaka, actually another species of lemur, is supposedly completely *female dominant*, but this is contradicted in reports of its behaviour. Lewis, Bueno & Di Fiore (2022) point out that “While 96% of the acts of submission were directed from males toward females, females only won a third of their conflicts with males. ... evoking submission does not translate into winning a resource. Indeed, intersexual power is dynamic, contextual, and dependent on the individuals in the dyad”. Voyt, Sandel, Ortiz & Lewis (2019) write:

*Power relationships between mature females and males were unambiguously female biased. Female reproductive maturity, and not body mass, predicted intersexual conflict outcomes. Once reproductively mature, females almost never lost to males, except when females had not yet had an infant survive past weaning. Our results are thus consistent with the hypothesis that female leverage characterizes social structures of adult Verreaux’s sifaka more than female dominance.*

Again, a result of 100% unidirectionality is also consistent with a phenomenon other than dominance-submission being at play (as explained above). Lewis (2019) reveals the supposed subordination signals given out by males are other than they seem: “... males respond to aggression by females with ‘chatter’ indicating ‘subordination’, but the pattern of ‘chatter’ is quite different to that amongst females”. If male supposed submission signals are very different from any signals females use to each other, then the basis of submission signalling cannot pertain to any form of inter-sexual hierarchy, DH or otherwise. In any case, there first has to be established if either sex actually has a DH, and also if males and females have sufficient social proximity for there to be a putative inter-sexual DH. With males in this species dispersing upon

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sexual maturity to join other males as a floating group, then the sexes are too separated to be able to form a putative inter-sexual hierarchy in any case. Again, no sense can be made here of a notion of female dominance.

### **FEMALE DOMINANCE CANNOT EVEN BE MODELLED**

Modelling that purports to show primate *female dominance* (Hemelrijk, Wantia & Isler, 2008) actually is a failure, being circular and anyway based in assumptions so implausible as to have nil ecological validity (that is, no application to the real world). Reviewing work using the *DomWorld* simulation of interacting cyber agents, Bryson, Ando & Lehmann (2012) conclude: “Contrary to Hemelrijk et al. (2008), *DomWorld* could never account for complete *female dominance*, unless the starting condition had the females already in a dominant position” [p19]. The strange inbuilt assumptions of the model (perhaps the least of which is that the level or intensity of aggression is set only slightly higher for males than for females) lead to the highly implausible outcome that “the female would have a one-in-three chance of defeating an agent very much her superior. This high number of ‘improbable’ outcomes is what creates the dynamicism of the ranking system in *DomWorld*” [p19]. Furthermore, *DomWorld* actually produces nothing more than “a perfectly random dominance hierarchy ... The apparent rise in *female dominance* is only a trend towards complete randomness” [p19]. Bryson, Ando & Lehmann further outline in detail other key problems with the *DomWorld* simulation that together irretrievably undermine any claim for its reflecting a basis in reality for *female dominance* ever to emerge. They explain why the model produces more *female dominance* as the proportion of males increases:

*Adding males to the system increases the rate at which random order is achieved because males have a higher StepDom [the level or intensity of aggression set for a cyber agent in DomWorld] than females and thus the average amount of ‘violence’ per interaction increases with the proportion of males. Since the experimental run times are truncated at an arbitrary but fixed period of time before the ordering of agents is perfectly random, the rate of change determines the proportion of dominant females. [p19]*

With no attempt to address, reply to or acknowledge Bryson et al.’s outline of *DomWorld*’s fatal flaws by those continuing to use it as the basis of research, a recent flurry of papers employing it make no useful contribution to the literature on supposed *female dominance*,

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serving only to perpetuate the notion despite its being shown to be chimeric. Even if were accepted the falsehoods that there can be a bi-(inter-)sexual DH and that the sexes essentially are interchangeable with only small differences between them, there is nonetheless no feasible model that produces *female dominance*; only one employing outlandish assumptions designed to generate that outcome, if not embodying key facets of the outcome within the model itself.

## CONCLUSION

Recent research provides further evidence to bolster the analysis of the phenomenon of DH as being invariably intra-sexual (never inter-sexual – not either rare female dominance or presumed usual male dominance), and, further, that DH is male-specific. That is, DH proper – a hierarchy that is formed through contest, not first-among-equals (winner-takes-all) sociality, and that is linear and transitive – is male-only, with any female hierarchy, when not more apparent than real, a quite different phenomenon: merely signalled relative fecundity, or by maternal inheritance (or some other convention), or ad hoc resource competition. This is in keeping with the function of DH to allocate reproduction rather than resources, in the service of the male *genetic filter* function, leaving the hitherto assumed function of DH to reduce agonistic interaction pertaining not to male actual DH but to female sociality, that anyway is other than DH.

This analysis hardly is of mere theoretical interest, as it relates directly to profound new understanding of sex and the basis of the dichotomy of the sexes, without which sense cannot be made of sociality and behaviour (human or animal). Current hegemonic extreme ideological notions have led to nonsense notions about human social behaviour, that will come to be seen as outlandish historical mistake. Meantime, scientific investigation and its dissemination may not survive growing totalitarian censure preventing informed debate.

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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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## GYNOCENTRISM<sup>1</sup> AS A NARCISSISTIC PATHOLOGY

### PART 2

*Peter Wright*



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#### ABSTRACT

*[Part one](#) of this paper surveyed features of grandiose narcissism and gynocentrism and found significant correlation. Part two investigates vulnerable narcissism as an additional mode of enacting gynocentric behaviour and discusses how this might impact men's wellbeing and gendered relationships. This survey confirms that gynocentrism is characterised by features of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and concludes that gynocentrism poses significant burdens for relationships and male partners.*

**Keywords:** gender, grandiose narcissism, gynocentrism, narcissism, vulnerable narcissism

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<sup>1</sup> Gynocentrism (n.) refers to a dominant focus on women's needs and wants relative to men's needs and wants. This can occur within the context of cultural conventions, institutional policies, and in gendered relationships. (Wright, 2014)



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## BACKGROUND

[Part one](#) of this survey compared gynocentric behaviours with those of grandiose narcissism. The comparison revealed a significant overlap between gynocentrism and narcissism, indicating that gynocentrism is an expression of female narcissism in the context of heterosexual relationships and exchanges, and in women's self-evaluations (Wright, 2020).

## GRANDIOSE NARCISSISM

Grandiose narcissism is divided into two primary modes of expression: 1. *agentic narcissism*, which is associated with posturings of leadership, intelligence and competence, and 2. *communal narcissism* which is associated with posturings of exceptional empathy, helpfulness, fairness, cooperativeness, generosity and other vaunted social values (Gebauer et al., 2012). Both modes are oriented to the affirming of self-esteem and the securing of social power and special entitlements. Grandiose modes of expression also tend to be skewed by gender with more males displaying the agentic form, and females scoring higher on measures of communal narcissism (Gebauer et al., 2012).

The present study will expand its analysis beyond grandiose narcissism to include the further subtype *vulnerable narcissism* which is receiving increased interest from researchers due to its expression by women, thus providing more insights into ways gynocentrism and narcissism are intertwined. The vulnerable narcissist self-identifies with ideals of perfection, but whereas grandiose narcissists also believe they are perfect and believe that others see them that way, vulnerable narcissists believe they are perfect but realise that others are failing to see them that way (Hammond, 2016). The mismatch between the vulnerable narcissist's self-image and contrary appraisals from others leads such individuals to react with feelings of victimisation, hyper-sensitivity, negative emotion, distrust of others, increased levels of anger and hostility (Travers, 2022), relational aggression (Vize, 2019), and sometimes interpersonal violence (Green, et al., 2019; Green, et al., 2020a).

Further characteristics of the vulnerable narcissist include a need for attention and admiration, low self-esteem, introversive self-absorbedness, high neuroticism, hypersensitivity to even gentle criticism, and constant need for reassurance (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010; Brogaard,

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2019). Dr. Craig Malkin points out that vulnerable narcissists “are just as convinced that they’re better than others as any other narcissist, but they fear criticism so viscerally that they shy away from, and even seem panicked by, people and attention” (Malkin, p.34. 2016).

Berit Brogaard (2019) states that because of their high neuroticism and hypersensitivity to criticism, vulnerable narcissists are prone to overreact emotionally, being always on the verge of bursting open with hatred. She elaborates on the psychodynamics of this tendency:

*Vulnerable narcissism is associated with dissociation of the self-image into an explicit, positive self-image and an implicit, negative self-image. The positive self-image is associated with excessive pride, whereas the negative self-image is associated with shame and humiliation. When receiving only positive feedback, the narcissist is able to keep the negative shame-filled self-image hidden below the level of conscious awareness. But when they experience external feedback as criticism, they are forced to confront their negative self-image and feel deeply ashamed.*

*Whereas the vulnerable narcissist is struggling with internally conflicting self-images, no hidden negative self-representation is threatening to make a dent in the grandiose narcissist’s positive self-image. Negative feedback, therefore, doesn’t have as profound an impact on the grandiose narcissist. But the deep shame this brings upon the vulnerable narcissist turns her into a combustible compound destined to explode in a frightening outburst of anger or all-consuming fit of hatred. This hostile reaction to insinuations of imperfection is also known as “narcissistic rage.” (Brogaard, 2019)*

Some studies have suggested that vulnerable narcissism tends to be gender neutral (Besser & Priel, 2010; Miller et al., 2010), however a greater collection of studies confirms a higher prevalence of this type among women (Onofrei, 2009; Pincus et al., 2009; Wright, et al., 2010; Huxley & Bizumic 2017, Şar & Türk-Kurtça 2021; Green et al., 2020b, Green, 2020c; Green et al., 2022; Green et al., 2023). Grijalva et al. (2014) find that differences in gender expression along grandiose and vulnerable lines can be attributed to gender-related norms associated with masculinity and femininity respectively, with Green et al (2020b) proposing that males are more likely to endorse overt narcissistic characteristics, and women less so. Gendered preferences for expressing subtypes of narcissism have not been adequately recognised in the academic community until recently, but with the addition of communal and vulnerable forms of narcissism to the lexicon the assumption that it is a mostly male pathology is turned on its head,

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with females now occupying a sizeable portion of the diagnostic territory.

Based on the foregoing phenomenology, vulnerable narcissism can be conceptualised as a dual archetype comprised of a). an exaggerated sense of perfection and concomitant desire for pedestalisation, with b). a recurring identification with interpersonal victimhood. The dual nature of the archetype is aptly symbolised in the fairy-tale *The Princess and The Pea* (Andersen, 2013), which portrays a young woman's desire for pedestalisation combined with her extreme vulnerability to minor impingements. The plot centres around her claimed royal ancestry which is confirmed only by a test of her over-the-top sensitivity:

*One stormy night, a young woman drenched with rain seeks shelter in the prince's castle. She claims to be a princess, but no one believes her because of the way she looks. The prince's mother decides to test their unexpected guest by placing a pea in the bed she is offered for the night, covered by twenty mattresses and twenty eider-down beds on top of the mattresses. In the morning, the princess tells her hosts that she endured a sleepless night, kept awake by something hard in the bed that she is certain has bruised her. With the proof of her bruised back, the princess passes the test and the prince rejoices happily, for only a real princess would have the sensitivity to feel a pea through such a quantity of bedding. (The Princess and the Pea, 2023)*

As in vulnerable narcissism, the story captures a powerful sense of entitlement in conjunction with a vulnerability to the effects of external forces.

## **TENDENCY FOR INTERPERSONAL VICTIMHOOD**

In 2020 researchers identified a personality construct they refer to as the Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV) (Gabay, et al., 2020). The construct involves four dimensions: 1. a sense of moral elitism, 2. a lack of empathy, 3. the need for recognition (need to have one's sense of victimhood acknowledged and empathised with), and 4. rumination over interpersonal offenses which includes aggressive reactivity and a desire for vengeance. The TIV is centred in a personality type characterised by an ongoing feeling that the self is a victim, which they define as an enduring feeling of being a victim across different kinds of interpersonal relationships. Comparing the Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood with features of grandiose narcissism, and not with vulnerable narcissism, the authors drew the following conclusion:

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*We also posit that both narcissism and TIV are characterized by vulnerability to threats to the self, but that the content of these threats would be different. Narcissists present themselves to the world as strong, capable, and talented (and relatedly, differently from TIV, narcissism was found to be associated with extraversion; Stronge et al., 2016). Therefore, threats are related to anything undermining their grandiosity and superiority, such as extraordinary abilities, achievements or positive qualities. In contrast, the self-presentation of high-TIV individuals is that of a weak victim, who has been hurt and is therefore in need of protection; a considerate and conscientious person who must face a cruel and abusive world. Threats to high-TIV individuals are related to anything that can undermine their self-image of moral superiority; or elicit doubts from their environment as to whether the offense occurred, the intensity of the offense, or their exclusivity as victims. These, and additional hypotheses should be examined in future research. (Gabay, et al., 2020)*

The Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood appears to have much in common with vulnerable narcissism, although the authors of the paper do not address this obvious point—instead they compared features of TIV with grandiose narcissism alone. The authors' conclusion that narcissism and TIV are distinct constructs is therefore not entirely convincing due to the omission of the vulnerable type. The Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood and vulnerable narcissism appear to be highly overlapping constructs as both report a sense of moral elitism, a need to have one's sense of victimhood acknowledged and empathised with, and associated feelings of persecution, resentment and rumination.

In popular culture the exaggerated tendency to present oneself as victim is referred to as damseling (short for damsel in distress), which tends to occur when a woman is not receiving attention, conformity or admiration in line with her self-image. Professor Janice Fiamengo (2021) has identified the narcissistic grandstanding of damseling as a kind of “irresistible lure” for those who would employ it, while also underlining the trepidation and resentment this tendency generates in many men:

*Women's claims of victimhood take a great deal of time and energy away from many pressing issues, and create an uneven political playing field in which every man knows he can be wrong-footed, and every woman knows she can power trip if she wants to. The damsel option disinclines some women from whole-heartedly pursuing competence because they know they can deflect criticism or gain advancement by sorrowing eloquently, creating bad faith in many women, suspicion and resentment in many men. (Fiamengo, 2021)*

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Fiamengo's essay highlights the considerable social and interpersonal attention that can be garnered from a projection of victimhood. Whether the presenting damsel's distress be real, exaggerated or wholly fabricated, it represents a kind of soft power that forces the surrounding environment to stop and take notice.

As noted, narcissism may be expressed in grandiose or vulnerable ways. Empirical studies confirm that the two modalities work as "two sides of the same coin" (Şar & Türk-Kurtça, 2021) with narcissistic individuals typically oscillating, Janus faced, between these subtypes (Horowitz, 2009; Kernberg, 2009; Ronningstam, 2009; Wright, 2010; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010; Gore, 2016). Likewise, gynocentric behaviour displays features of both vulnerable or grandiose narcissism (Wright, 2020), and also oscillations between these two modes of expression.

## **FEMINISM AND GYNOCENTRISM**

Feminist ideology (or branches of it) are characterised as gynocentric by both feminist and non-feminist researchers (Young, 1985; Nicholson, 1997; Nathanson & Young, 2001; 2006; 2010; Kostakis, 2011; Wright, 2018). Narcissism among self-identified feminists has been studied by Imogen Tyler in her paper 'Who put the "Me" in feminism?' The sexual politics of narcissism (2005), which surveyed the connection between feminism and narcissism that has long been a subject of public discourse, and a more recent study has confirmed that feminist women have significantly higher levels of narcissism than non-feminist women, and are less tolerant of disagreement than non-feminist women (Taneja & Goyal, 2019). As detailed by Naomi Wolf, feminism also tends to bifurcate along grandiose and vulnerable lines, or what she refers to as "power" and "victim feminism" (Wolf, 2013). Wolf explains that victim feminism is when a woman seeks power through an identity of disenfranchisement and powerlessness, and adds that this amounts to a kind of "chauvinism" that is not confined to the women's movement alone, stating; *"It is what all of us do whenever we retreat into appealing for status on the basis of feminine specialness instead of human worth, and fight underhandedly rather than honourably."* (Wolf, p147. 2013). Wolf adds that the deluded rhetoric of the victim-feminist creates, *"a dualism in which good, post-patriarchal, gynocentric power is 'personal power,' to be distinguished from 'the many forms of power over others'"* (Wolf, p160. 2013). Other feminist writers have independently concurred with Wolf's categorisation of "agentic" and "victim" modes of

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performing feminism (Wolf, 2013; Denfeld, 2009; Sommers, 1995; Roiphe, 1993).

A century prior to observations made by Wolf, English philosopher E. Belfort Bax observed the same bifurcation within the feminist movement of the first wave, describing a grandiose form of activism he referred to as “political feminism” which concerned itself with claiming equal rights and privileges for women without demonstrating commensurate achievements, capabilities, responsibilities or sacrifices with men, and a vulnerable kind he called “sentimental feminism” which concerned itself with securing sympathies toward women while at the same time fostering antipathy toward men. Bax made the observation that these two forms of activism often occurred in individual feminists who would oscillate between these modes of expression depending on which one was momentarily efficacious for securing power (Bax, 1913).

#### **FOUR DIMENSIONS OF GYNOCENTRISM**

Based on observations above, the following model is proposed for the origins and ongoing maintenance of cultural gynocentrism. The model is comprised of four interlocking factors; 1. A rise of unique gendered customs occurs within aristocratic circles of France and Germany and is subsequently diffused throughout Europe and onto much of the new world, 2. Female pedestalisation is promoted as an integral feature of the gendered customs, 3. An accompanying set of cognitive biases are generated to compliment the gendered customs, and 4. the codification of these gendered principles occurred, and continues to occur, in social institutions, policies, and in law.

##### ***1. A revolution in gendered customs***

Cultural gynocentrism germinated in medieval Europe during a period of increased cross-cultural influences. During the twelfth century, French society experienced the increasing popularity of the Marian cult and its influence on women’s status, the arrival of Arabic poetry celebrating and venerating women, aristocratic courting trends emphasising women’s esteem, dignity and worth, and more importantly the imperial promotion of gynocentrism by Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie De Champagne who, via the arts, crafted the traditional notion of chivalry into one more focused on serving aristocratic ladies—a practice referred to today as courtly and romantic love. The aristocratic classes who crafted the gynocentric themes

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and customs did not exist in a vacuum; the courtly love themes they celebrated would certainly have captured the imaginations of the lower classes through public displays of pomp and pageantry, troubadours and tournaments, minstrels and playwrights, the telling of romantic stories, and of course the gossip flowing everywhere which would have exerted a powerful effect on the peasant imagination. (Wright, 2014).

The gynocentric expectations of the sexual relations contract, as encoded in courtly love fiction, made their way by degrees from the aristocratic classes down to the middle classes, and finally to the lower classes – or rather they broke class structure altogether in the sense that all Western peoples became inheritors of the sexual relations contract regardless of their social station (Wright, 2017). This evolution was hastened by the medium of stories which illustrated its principles: medieval romances of Tristan and Isolde, Lancelot and Guinevere; the weaving and telling of European fairy tales; Shakespeare; Victorian women’s novels; up to and including modern Disney Princess movies and the ubiquitous romance novel which continues to out-gross all other genres of literature today. Today the romantic novel remains the biggest grossing genre of literature worldwide, with its themes saturating popular culture and its gendered assumptions informing politics and legislation globally (Wright, 2017).

C.S. Lewis characterised the above development as a ‘feudalisation of love,’ because noblewomen had adopted the feudal contract between Lord and vassal and repurposed it as a model to govern sexual relations—a model that would intentionally cast noblewomen in the role of Lord (French *midons*), and her man as vassal which continues to be symbolised in the iconic display of a man going down on one knee to propose marriage. Lewis states that in comparison to the gender revolution launched by the feudalisation of love, the Renaissance amounts to a mere ripple on the surface of literature (Lewis, 2013). The resultant sexual relations contract forms the internal rationale of modern societies, including the subsequent waves of feminist ideology which embraced this idea with greater fervour, applying the gendered principles ever more aggressively with each iteration of the movement.

## ***2. Encouragement of female narcissism***

The proverbial ‘pedestalisation’ of women fostered by romantic tropes is one that

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encourages narcissistic self-identification in women (Wright, 2020). An unbroken line featuring noblewomen and the men who love them appears in each iteration of literature; from the medieval romances, through to modern Disney princesses. As a dominant source of role modelling, studies have surveyed the impact of such imagery on women's identity formation and their choices of romantic partners, finding for example that "women are influenced, whether consciously or unconsciously, by what they saw in Disney princess films while choosing mates, setting standards and establishing expectations for their lovers" (Minor, 2014). Parents may not fully appreciate the impact of exposing daughters to aristocratic role models, nor see the harms that can arise from such an identification for later adult relationships. In their book *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in The Age of Entitlement* (2009), Twenge and Campbell underline the dangers of princess role models which encourage daughters to become narcissistic:

*Parents do not consciously think, "Wow, wouldn't it be great to raise a narcissistic child?" Instead, they want to make their children happy and raise their self-esteem but often take things too far. Good intentions and parental pride have opened the door to cultural narcissism in parenting, and many parents express their love for their children in the most modern of ways: declaring their children's greatness. A remarkable percentage of clothing for baby girls has "Princess" or "Little Princess" written on it, which is wishful thinking unless you are the long-lost heir to a throne. And if your daughter is a princess, does this mean that you are the queen or king? No—it means you are the loyal subject, and you must do what the princess says. (Twenge & Campbell, 2009)*

In fairy tale models the female gender role becomes the locus of a narcissistic script, as detailed by Green and colleagues (2019) who suggest an unfavourable outcome whereby, "female narcissists may assert their femininity and receive affirmation from society to attain their goals, and at the same time deflect accountability and externalise blame" (Green, et al., 2019).

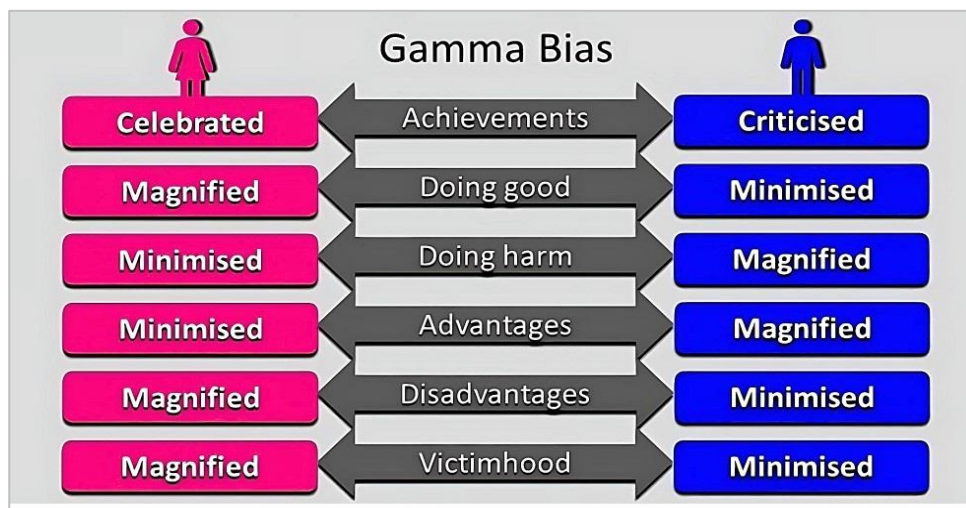
### **3. Activation of gamma bias**

A key mechanism involved in the maintenance of gynocentrism is referred to as gamma bias, a cognitive gender bias theory developed by Seager & Barry (2019). Gamma bias refers to the operation of two concurrent biases: alpha bias (exaggerating or magnifying gender differences) and beta bias (ignoring or minimizing gender differences). Gamma bias occurs when one gender difference is minimized while simultaneously another is magnified, resulting in a doubling of



cognitive distortion (Seager & Barry, 2022).

According to Seager & Barry, gamma bias works by magnifying women's issues and achievements and minimizing men's issues and achievements. Alternatively, the dynamic is reversed and employed to minimize negative female traits and behaviors, while magnifying or exaggerating negative male traits or behaviors.



**Figure 1.** Examples of gamma bias

One hypothesis regarding the historical growth of gamma bias and the disfavouring of males is evolutionary pressures for males to protect and provide for women which involve a reluctance to view men as vulnerable (Seager & Barry, 2019). A more detailed sociological hypothesis presented in this paper posits the emergence of gamma bias in medieval Europe when feudal class distinctions were repurposed as a model for gender relations—the development which led C.S. Lewis to propose that European society had drifted from a social feudalism to a sexual feudalism. Gamma bias may arise from class distinctions and “class cognition” that were part of the original feudal template, which have carried forward as an unfortunate hangover in the gendered context. A notable result of this development is a gender empathy gap (Collins, 2021).

The operation of gamma bias can be observed in accounts of men in relationships with high narcissistic female partners. Green, et al (2019) state that female narcissists treat feminine

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gender ideals as a resource to justify self-enriching thought and actions, and conversely, they obtain power and control by emphasising traditional male obligations to women. Based on interviews with male partners the authors provide the following conclusions:

*[F]emale narcissists were perceived to attack their masculinity and inertia as a means to maintain power and control. In fact, throughout their relationships, participants reported that they experienced sustained and prolonged abuse from their narcissistic partners, including psychological, verbal, and physical violence. Although the physical violence reported was severe (at times so severe that it warranted medical attention), the majority of participants considered that the psychological abuse was more damaging, whereby a combination of experiencing violent threats, cruel reprimands intended to invalidate their reality, and coercive control all resulted in what was perceived as a cynically engineered and slow erosion of their sense of self. These accounts highlight, evidenced by the data extracts above, the significance of femininity and the violation of stereotypical gender norms in the exertion of power for female narcissism. (Green, et al., 2019)*

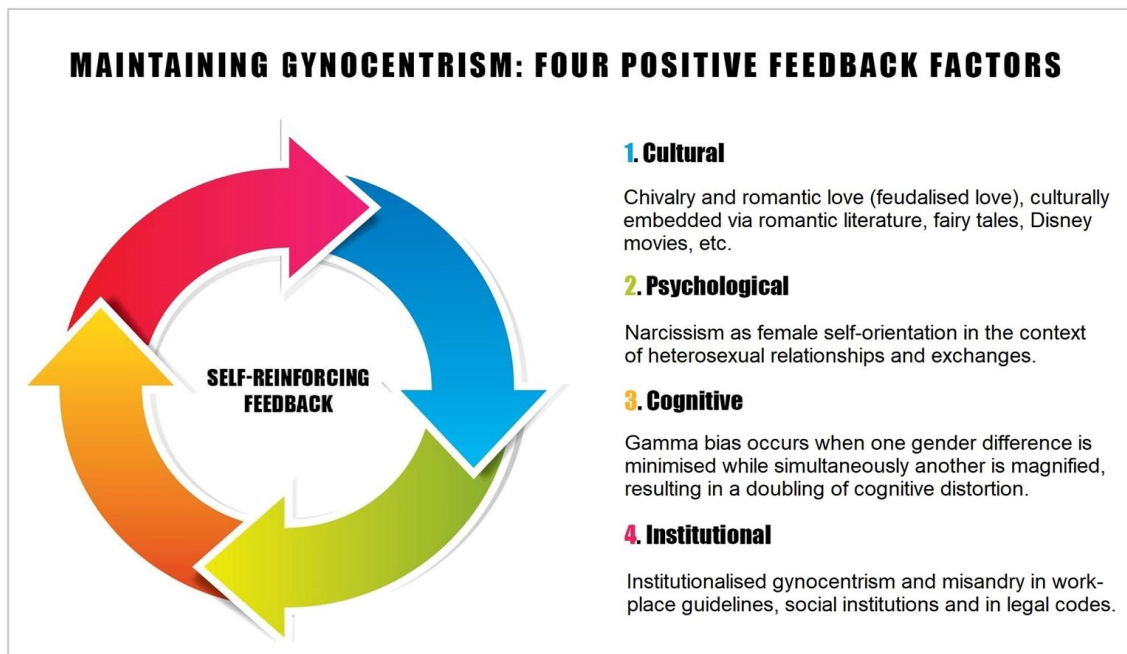
Male participants in the study perceived their abuse by female partners as being overlooked by society because of deeply ingrained gendered scripts that assume violence perpetration is linked to masculine traits, and victimisation is associated with feminine traits. The authors conclude that gendered stereotypes and endorsement of ‘male dominance’ and ‘female submissiveness’ “*appear to be reinforced and manipulated in their favour by female narcissists in their prerogative for power and exploitation*” (Green, et al., 2019). The experiences of these men illustrate the operation of gamma bias and reinforces the added distress the bias causes for men:

*The reinforcement of gendered stereotypes conveyed feelings of distress and frustration on the part of the participants [men], as they felt their partners, presumed to embody these ‘feminine’ characteristics, were given the ‘benefit of the doubt’ and were able to deny that they were perpetrators. Notably, the participants’ narratives of victimisation were not only trivialised and challenged by society, but acted as a barrier to seek help as a result of stereotypical perceptions of masculinity and internalised patriarchal values. (Green, et al., 2019)*

#### 4. Institutionalisation of gynocentrism

Codification of gynocentric mores in workplace guidelines, social institutions and in legal codes is beyond the scope of this essay. However there have been numerous investigations of this topic starting with the publication of *The Legal Subjection of Men* (Bax, 1896), up to the more recent publication of *The Empathy Gap: Male Disadvantages and the Mechanisms of Their Neglect* by William Collins (2021), which looks at the gynocentric advantaging of women and disadvantaging of men across many domains including in education, healthcare, genital integrity, criminal justice, domestic abuse, working hours, taxation, pensions, paternity, homelessness, suicide, sexual offences, and access to their own children after parental separation. The codification of gynocentrism across these domains works to mutually reinforce the three elements named above; gendered customs, female narcissism and gamma bias.

The four-dimensional model above provides a hypothesis on how cultural gynocentrism is maintained, along with the narcissism it helps to en-gender in an increasingly narcissistic era (Twenge, 2009).



**Figure 2.** Maintaining Gynocentrism

The model is not aimed to reduce narcissism to an all-female problem or pathology, but to demonstrate the ways in which female narcissism may lean toward gynocentric modes of expression, much as males demonstrate narcissism in typically gendered ways.

The graphic (Figure 2) shows elements of a self-reinforcing, positive feedback loop which works to exacerbate the effects of the original stimulus—chivalry and courtly love (feudalised love). The effects of the initial stimulus on the whole feedback system include an eventual increase in the magnitude of the originating stimulus: A produces more of B which in turn produces more of A in an ever-increasing spiral of influence. This mechanism accounts for the centuries-long evolution and the longevity of cultural gynocentrism.

As with grandiose narcissism surveyed in part one, this study affirms that vulnerable narcissism has potential to be expressed via gynocentric means, and that gynocentric women are typically characterised by a range of narcissistic behaviours. Vulnerable narcissists display the added tendency of presenting as victims, often camouflaging their own abuses behind a mask of vulnerability and thus rendering male targets more difficult to notice or indeed support. This insidious dynamic ensures that male suffering will continue to fly under the radar until more clinicians make themselves aware of the themes outlined in this survey.

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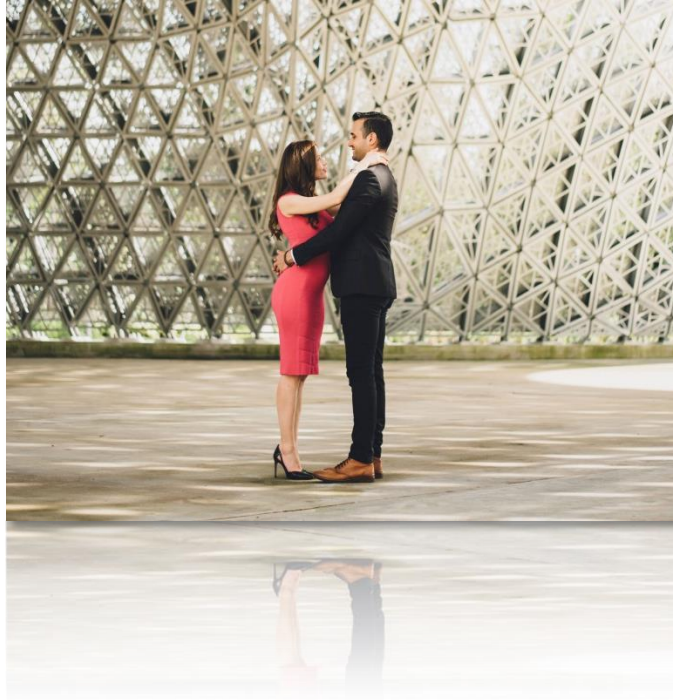
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## THE HISTORICAL LOVE/RESPECT DYNAMIC

*Tim Goldich*



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### ABSTRACT

*Within the traditional gender system, men are respected far more than they are loved, and women are loved far more than they're respected. Both sexes love women more than men, and both sexes respect men more than women. Both sexes have looked upon the other and felt rejected. It's time to put an end to this self-righteous gender-political contest for the coveted title of MVP (Most Victimized and Powerless). Starting over from the premise that It All Balances Out between Woman and Man (and it always has), it's time to replace both feminism and masculism with equalism. In so doing, we view gender reality in terms of Male-Female equal partnership, and we view gender issues in terms of shared responsibility.*

**Keywords:** gender equalism, gender politics, love, man, respect, woman

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Let's talk about Love and let's talk about Respect. What relevance do these concepts have with regard to female and male? How might these concepts relate to gender reality as it has played out over millennia? What follows is an excerpt from my upcoming book, *Equal Partners: The History of Gender Equality*.

It's difficult to define the word *love* without making use of the word *respect*, and difficult to define the word *respect* without using the word *love*. Love and Respect are related concepts that overlap somewhat. It's not always easy to cleanly distinguish one from another. Yet they are far from synonyms. When we are as rigorous as possible in distinguishing Love from Respect and Respect from Love, and we look at gender history armed with that insight, a Love/Respect Dynamic shows up clearly and offers enormous explanatory power. Most importantly, it helps make plain the essential gender balance that is otherwise easily obscured by gender bias.

Obviously both men and women are both loved and respected. Yet there is a deep dynamic, driven partly by role and partly by instinct and Eros, whereby humanity tends to invest its respect upon men and its love upon women. In the more polarized past, this L/R Dynamic showed up more dramatically than it does now, but it remains prominent to this day.

Because they are related concepts, it's easy to mistake one for the other. For example, masculism (the mirror-opposite of feminism) takes note of male chivalry in the form of a man removing his hat, bowing to a woman, offering her his seat, and concludes that women are and have always been *more* respected than men, not less.<sup>1</sup> Let's set the scene:

It's, oh, let's say, five hundred years ago. The sexes being far more highly polarized then than they are now, we may envision a brightly dressed woman entering a room filled with rather identically darkly dressed men all seated around a table. As accorded her sex, she takes a kind of societal sanctioned *ownership* of beauty, grace, goodness; home, family, parenting—all things along the Love-Axis (she has spent a lifetime cultivating those qualities). The men are blitzed by her feminine aura and eroticism. She so adept at the social graces, they feel rather woefully

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1 Paul Elam (of A Voice for Men) once remarked, "Men are not and never have been respected. If anyone has been the beneficiary of more social respect, it is women."

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inadequate, crude, ugly, clumsy in comparison. They do indeed all stand and bow and remove their hats. One man remains standing after he's offered her his seat. Another man solicitously takes her coat while another bows and kisses her hand.<sup>2</sup>

It's understandable if all these deferences will be taken for respect. These solicitous male behaviors do indeed resemble respect, but they derive from *adoration* (love), not respect. As compared with respect, this adoration is no *lesser* thing, but it is *different*. How can we know this? Because of what happens next.

Suddenly, a man bursts through the door screaming "There's a crack in the dam!" Now something important, something potentially catastrophic is happening. *Action* must be taken! And, just as suddenly, beauty, grace, goodness; home, family, and parenting are all rendered irrelevant. The woman who moments before had stolen focus, now disappears. What's needed *now* are qualities such as intellect, competence, prestige; toughness, strength, courage—all things along the Respect-Axis (males spend a lifetime cultivating those qualities).

First thing needed is a leader who can take charge (intellect, competence, prestige). And who will be *his* lieutenants? Now we must find the *expert*, the engineer, the architect, the mathematician, the man with skills and experience in these matters (intellect, competence). Finally, we need the men who will actually dive into those cold, deep waters and, at great peril, patch the dam. Even these men are respected (for their competence, toughness, strength, and courage). But, given their disposability, they are not much loved. The leaders and the experts aren't much loved either. If they succeed, they will be honored (respected), but, in the brutal past, if the *expert* fails, he may well be brutally punished, perhaps executed. If the leaders fail, they may be assassinated. Within the traditional gender system, men are respected far more than they are loved.

From the moment that man burst through the door, the woman is only considered to the

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2 Both sexes feel both superior and inferior to their opposite sex. It is out of a deep feeling of inferiority to the sublime feminine that Man is inspired to perform, achieve, and succeed in an effort to become masterful enough to be worthy of she whom he worships. A cosmos of great art, philosophy, music, literature, architecture, mathematics, and science has resulted.

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extent of getting her to the high ground where she'll be safe. She is loved; her life valued, her fears and feelings empathized with; her entitlement to an inner emotional life ensured. But in the traditional gender system, women are loved far more than they're respected. In seeking a leader, she is not considered (of course, when selecting for the perilous tasks, she's not considered for *that* either). In being imprecise with the words *love* and *respect*, many will mistake adoration (love) for respect.

Meanwhile, gazing into the mirror-opposite, people in general, and women and feminists in particular, mistake veneration for love. In mistaking respect for love, they may find it easy to believe that men are *more* loved, not less. It is a world of "misogyny" (hatred toward women) feminists say. How could women be more loved when women are more hated?<sup>3</sup> Women observe other women throwing themselves at successful men, eager to bed and wed them. So many women fall in *love* with these men; *surely* men are loved. But, in being rigorous with the terms, we discern that it is not primarily *love* that these women fall into. It is not primarily lovable traits that women find so irresistible.

"Love is respect," women are wont to say.<sup>4</sup> And, for women, that phrase makes sense. Indeed, women tend to fall into a kind of sexualized-romanticized *respect* with a man—a man of intellect, competence, prestige; toughness, strength, and courage—a man possessing respectable qualities. But the thing is, love is *not* respect; respect is respect. The two words are not simply interchangeable.

*Misogyny* is forbidden; *misandry* is ignored. To feminists, *misogyny* is a lack of *both* respect *and* love toward women. Being strict with the terminology, we find that *misogyny* is more

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3 Opposites lay on opposite ends of a wide continuum. To get from black to white, one must traverse the grey scale. To get from hot to cold, the temperature scale. But both love and hate are impassioned, and switching from one to the other can happen on a dime. Hate is the mirror reverse of love. I consider the true opposite of love (or hate) to be indifference because there is an extensive emotional journey to get from one to the other. Both sexes are hated, each in their own way. Where men suffer most is within a loveless indifference that may tolerate male suffering and death at virtually any levels.

4 I note that "Love is respect" has become a meme within the domestic violence industry. "You've heard it before — love is respect. But where can you go for support when a loving relationship has become a relationship without respect?" [<https://sova.pitt.edu/educateyourself-love-is-respect>] Women suffer lack of respect, but men suffer lack of love just as much. Where will a man go for support when a "loving" relationship is a relationship without love?

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accurately understood as a lack of *respect* (the extreme of which is a sort of infantilization) toward women, while *misandry* (a word not found in my word processor's dictionary) is more accurately understood as a lack of *love* toward men. It is this *indifference* toward men that accounts for why we don't interest ourselves in hostility toward men even to the extent of knowing or making use of a derogatory label for it.

Historically, as women have observed men respecting each other more than women; appearing to have little practical need for women; excluding women from their inner circle and seeming more interested, active and connected with each other; so men have observed women loving each other more than men; appearing to have little emotional need for men; excluding men from their inner circle and seeming more interested, active and connected with each other. To the degree that women have suffered the pain of greatly respecting and venerating an opposite sex that does not so greatly respect and venerate them in return, so men have suffered the pain of greatly loving and desiring an opposite sex that does not so greatly love and desire them in return.

Both sexes love women more than men and both sexes respect men more than women. Both sexes have looked upon the other and felt rejected.

I submit that we humans *want* respect but we *need* love. The pain women feel for being less respected is terrible, but not so terrible that women and society are able to bring it to consciousness. By contrast, I suspect that being loved second-best is so painful, society in general and men in particular have felt the need to escape full cognizance of it through denial. Society knows full well that women are respected second best, but society has yet to come to grips with the true lack of love toward men.

Women fall in respect with men; men fall in love with women. One is not *less* than the other, but they are *different*. And to make clear that difference, it is helpful to look at the extremes. In drawing out the limit case on each side, the underlying principle is highlighted.

Men can truly be said to fall in *love* because, in general, the qualities in women that men fall in love with—beauty, innocence, nurturance, sweetness, sensitivity, dependence, softness, emotiveness, empathy, vulnerability—are *lovable* qualities. The uncomfortable truth is, one of the

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characteristics found in many of the things we love most is the characteristic of being smaller and weaker than ourselves. It is the innocent child in Woman that Man falls so hard for. In extreme cases, women may feign weakness or even helplessness in an effort to be as cute, precious, adorable and *lovable* as a child (a baby doll) or small furry animal (a sex-kitten). While children and pets certainly command our *love*, do we *respect* them as equals?

Those who seem smaller, weaker, and less capable than us (be they female or male), are perceived as less threatening, less able to take care of themselves, more dependent, more innocent, more vulnerable, more endearing, cuter, and thus more lovable (picture the so-called dizzy blonde). If, however, one adopts such a maximally lovable persona and adopts behaviors that draw *everyone's* love, then one risks being someone *no one* respects.

For life to be maximally fulfilling, we all need *both* love and respect. One without the other is certainly incomplete and inadequate. But that doesn't mean one cannot exist, or that one is not real without the other. Love and respect can exist as quite *separate* entities.

"You can't fall in love with someone if you don't respect them," women will insist. Well, that's true, but only for those for whom *respect* lies at the core of falling in love. Which is why it's not so true for men. A man can fall head over heels in love with a wiggly, giggly, silly, innocent, childlike persona—think *Laugh-In's* Goldie Hawn (not the actress, the persona)—even though there is little in that persona to respect (no accountability, forthrightness, courage, competence, leadership . . . etc.). Despite his adoration for her, his lack of respect may show up as not listening, placating, condescending, or infantilizing her. Love without respect may well be incomplete, but it is *real*—real enough to take a bullet for her, real enough to have taken many a man all the way to the altar.

There are also *male* personae that everyone loves. Think, for example, of Stan Laurel (of Laurel and Hardy fame). Who among us can't love innocent, little, childlike, befuddled Stanley? The difference is that—removing Stan Laurel's comic genius charm and star power—what woman *really* wants to bed and wed a simpleton? What simpleton will make the list of the most eligible bachelors? A woman can love such a lovable persona, but she can't fall into a sexualized and romanticized *respect* with such a persona and therefore few women will sexually, romantically

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desire such a persona. A woman *can* love him, but she cannot *fall* in love with him.

Women who adopt a maximally lovable persona reap the rewards, but only at a cost (lack of respect). To say that the cost women pay is a cost imposed upon them by patriarchy disrespects Woman's adult autonomy and choices. It misses the fact that such personae also reap rewards and that they are personae that women *choose*. Women who adopt such characteristics may be pleasing men, but they are also maximizing their powers to manipulate men. By feigning weakness, she pulls his strings and gets him to do what she doesn't want to do or is afraid to do herself.

Woman's greatest strength lies in her façade of weakness.

Gazing into the Mirror-Opposite (and there is *always* a mirror-opposite), we see that men who choose a maximally respected persona also reap the rewards, but only at a cost. Around the world, hidden away in prisons, veteran's hospitals, and halfway houses are men who, at work, at war, or at the corner bar, have paid a terrible cost for toughness, courage, tenacity, honor, and other characteristics of respected personae. For some, the costs may include the loss of limbs, eyes, face, mobility, perhaps even sanity.

One of the characteristics found in those whom we respect most is the bravery to place themselves between us and danger, even to the point of sacrificing themselves for us. Such men fare well in the eulogies spoken at their funerals; even so, they essentially render themselves disposable for the honor to have died a hero. The downsides of being a so-called sex-kitten are numerous to be sure, but at least they're not fatal. And the downsides inherent in lovable personae receive love (empathy) while the downsides (indifference to their fear and pain, indictment, disposability, assassination) inherent in maximally respected personae do not.

Again, looking at the extremes helps clarify. In extreme cases, a man may feign strength in the guise of brutal indifference to his own pain and the pain of others and do so in an effort to be as feared, obeyed, and *respected* as a warrior or a dictator. Such men can indeed be respected because they possess many respectable qualities: non-complaining, self-sufficient, skillful, disciplined, determined, accomplished, courageous, and so on. But I submit that in extreme cases

there may be next to *nothing* in such a man to *love*—no innocence, no vulnerability, no sweetness, no emotional reveal, no kindness—*nothing*. So, when a woman says that she has fallen in *love* with a stereotypical Green Beret, how can she be believed?

Yes, she's crazy about him, wants to bed and wed him. She tells all her friends she's in love. But, for her, love is secondary. For millennia, men have been falling in love with women they do not necessarily respect and women have been falling in love with men they do not necessarily love. Respect without love is real respect, but it is certainly incomplete and may well be judged inadequate.

The truth is, she does *not* love the Macho Man any more than he respects the Femisa Woman.<sup>5</sup> She *admires* him for his self-contained stoicism and is *impressed* with his toughness and confidence, his commanding presence, his skills, accomplishments, and status. Heightened by the erotic, she may even revere him. She may sacrifice much within herself in order to bow to his leadership.<sup>6</sup>

Both sexes get weak in the knees, but love melts the heart; respect melts the mind. To admire and be impressed is to respect, not love. It's painful to think of women as unloving, even so, despite her reverence, her lack of love may show up in *many* ways. It may show up in a wife's relative intolerance of her husband's fears, incompetencies, vulnerabilities, and insecurities; her lack of empathy toward his inner little boy, his sense of victimhood, or both; sending him to face *alone* that which goes bump in the night; and being the one to threaten and initiate the vast majority of breakups.

We're exploring *Love* and *Respect* at the extremes where the dynamic is most clear cut. Dropping out of the extremes and into the ordinary, we note, obviously, that both sexes are both respected and loved. Romantically, it works something like this: For men: LOVE + respect + SEX = "falling in love." For women: RESPECT + love + Sex = "falling in love." Outside of the extremes, women are less respected only as a matter of degree; men are less loved only as a matter of degree.

5 Macho: immature or inauthentic masculine characterized by glib, invulnerable, obdurate, single-mindedness, and Male Ego. Femisa: immature or inauthentic feminine characterized by self-righteous vindictiveness, victim-mongering, and Female Pride.

6 Both sexes feel both superior and inferior to their opposite sex. It is out of a deep feeling of inferiority to the protean masculine that Woman is inspired to cultivate the sublime feminine, to become beautiful enough (inside and out) to be worthy of the whom she worships – this wheel of mutual inspiration underlies much in the spheres of human aspiration and achievement.

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Just as feminine qualities may be rendered irrelevant within the world of men, so masculine qualities may be rendered irrelevant within the world of women. A man's persona, so functional on the job, may become quite dysfunctional at home. If you adopt the persona and behaviors that make *everyone* respect you, you risk *no one* loving you.

Man's greatest weakness lies in his façade of strength<sup>7</sup>.

The Love/Respect Dynamic tunnels all the way to the very core of gender reality. Its explanatory power is enormous. It is key to understanding how the gender system works.

Clearly, appearing weak and dizzy doesn't lend itself to being respected, nor does being feared and obeyed lend itself to being loved. *Love and respect tend to polarize the sexes because the qualities that beget them are in conflict.*<sup>8</sup>

Wisdom's task is to integrate them both. So, this is not to say that being loved and being respected are mutually exclusive. Integrating the two, however, does present certain contradictions and challenges not easily overcome. To be someone who is extremely lovable *and* extremely respectable means juggling qualities (worldly competence vs. childlike innocence) not readily contained in one persona. Generally speaking, the more one does whatever it takes to be universally loved, the less respected one is apt to be. The more one does whatever it takes to be universally respected, the less loved one is apt to be. For both sexes, life contains tradeoffs and compromise.

Men *could* choose maximally lovable personae, but for men, the rewards of such personae will be less and the costs higher. Such men will likely be disrespected by men and rejected by women. So, in boyhood, most males will tend instead to disown some lovable traits (innocence, silliness, helplessness, vulnerability), traits in conflict with gaining respect. For men, lovable traits

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7 Warren Farrell begins the first chapter of *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are The Disposable Sex*, with the following quotation from Lawrence Diggs, *Transitions*, Nov./ Dec. 1990, p. 10. "The weakness of men is the facade of strength: the strength of women is the facade of weakness" (qtd. in Farrell, 13).

8 Accountability--compassion, liberalism--conservatism, good--evil, order--chaos, love--truth . . . a prime characteristic of fundamental dualities is that the two ends of such dualities are in conflict—wisdom is about integrating them even so. The love-respect duality is similar; however, it is a duality superseded by the more fundamental love--truth duality. And so, in various subtleties and nuances, perhaps the dynamic between love and respect is even more complex.



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have tended to be less rewarding and less effective (manipulation is a less effective *modus operandi* for men). There are downsides to the respected persona (achieved in part by suppressing lovable traits) but, owing to the adaptations of gender together with societal structuring, a man will tend to reap the rewards of respect more and suffer the liabilities less than his female equivalent would.

Women could do as men do and choose maximally respectable personae (The Margaret Thatcher and Hillary Clinton personae are far more respected than loved). But for women, the rewards of such personae will be less and the costs higher. Such women will likely be unloved by women and rejected by men. So, while girls, most women will tend instead to disown some respectable traits (rationality, invincibility, competitiveness), traits in conflict with being lovable. For women, respectable traits have tended to be less rewarding and less effective (domination is a less effective *modus operandi* for women). There are downsides to the lovable persona (achieved in part by suppressing respectable traits) but, owing to the adaptations of gender together with societal structuring, a woman will tend to reap the rewards of love more and suffer the liabilities less than her male equivalent would.

Both sexes have undergone millennia (nay, *eons*) of adaptation to their respective roles and personae. Which is why it's only natural that both sexes signed onto the gender deal. Despite the many downsides, overall, The Deal played well to each sex's relative strengths and weaknesses. For the majority of humans, The Deal was equitable, efficient, and the upsides outweighed the downsides, which is why the sexes were equal partners in creating and maintaining The Deal. Women in pursuit of love/lovability and men in pursuit of respect/respectability, the sexes polarized accordingly, and thus The Deal unfolded inevitably.

In coming to a deeper understanding of love and respect, and the conflict between the two, we come to a deeper understanding of gender reality, including gender polarity. We see how men prioritizing respect and respectability and women prioritizing love and lovability has sent men and women down divergent pathways in which each sex gained much but only by sacrificing much.

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In sacrificing much, each sex *earned* what it got out of The Deal. Rather than blaming the opposite sex for what each sex chose to sacrifice, we might take a moment to focus instead on what each sex gained out of The Deal. Focusing on the gifts (rather than the burdens), each sex might afford some gratitude toward the other for enabling those gifts. Only in a world in which men handle the masculine tasks does space open up within which women can be feminine. Only in a world in which women handle the feminine tasks does space open up within which men can be masculine. Each sex makes the full flowering of the other's archetype possible. For both sexes, there is efficacy, there is choice, there is reward, there is inspiration, and there is compromise.

Toward men, the rule is accountability sans compassion which is ruthless. It is respecting men as autonomous adults responsible for their own actions or inactions, but it is not loving men as vulnerable beings worthy of empathy. If I were to claim that men are less loved because men are less lovable, I will expect no storm of protest or cries of the little-known word, *misandry*. Toward men, accountability sans compassion is a norm that will raise few eyebrows.

As a generalization, men may indeed be less lovable. But there are circumstances built into the role men play, societal expectations, differing obligations, outside forces, and double binds involved. Loving men enough to enter those factors into the equation would add fairness to the accusation of men less lovable. But, for men, there can be no excuses. And thus, the accusation that men are less lovable is plied ruthlessly. Even so, the accusation contains a kernel of truth, and holding men accountable for the part they play in the L/R Dynamic *does* confer respect upon men—even if that respect is not accompanied by love.

But what would happen if I had the temerity to suggest that women are less respected because women are less respectable? Now I can expect a *torrent* of protest along with cries of *misogyny*, *male chauvinism*, and *sexism*! In uttering such a blasphemy, there's hell to pay—social suicide, career sabotage. Toward women, the rule is compassion sans accountability, which is infantilizing (which is just as bad). We love (and fear) women too much to accuse them of lacking respectability. When it comes to *women*, circumstances, reasons, outside forces, far from being rejected, will tend to rise up and shove accountability off the table.

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Sheltering women from the part they play in the L/R Dynamic *does* confer love upon women, even if that love is not accompanied by respect. Nevertheless, if there's a kernel of truth to one, there's a kernel of truth to both. In a world in which both sexes suffer, what is there to admire, revere and respect in Woman's insistence that her suffering is special and uniquely entitled to cultural attentions, empathy, reparations, and her own special *-ism*?

How ironic that, under *feminine-ism*, respecting women enough to hold them accountable as empowered, autonomous adults and equal partners in the human system will be reframed as misogyny. What primarily stands in the way of respecting women? The Sisterhood itself, of course. But this should come as no surprise. Each sex is often its own worst enemy primarily responsible for creating its own gender issues and predicaments.

Only in recent times have the world of men and the world of women largely merged. In the more polarized past, the Love/Respect Dynamic played out in a more obvious way because gender polarity was exaggerated and perceptions fell in line. Women have always contributed more to intellect, competence, prestige; toughness strength, and courage than credited for. Likewise, men have contributed to beauty, grace, goodness; home, family, and parenting. But the exaggeration given gender polarity doesn't cause the reality of it to vanish. Each sex contributed its part in accord with The Deal. In playing their roles and adopting their personae, women *earned* more love (at the sacrifice of respect) and men *earned* more respect (at the sacrifice of love).

Picture a woman, she rocks back and forth heels to toes, her hands behind her back; curly hair tied with a bow, pretty bonnet, dainty hanky, frilly dress, angel-painted face, perfumed, high heels, parasol in one hand, smelling salts in the other. Would you send that floaty little angel being onto a battlefield? Now look again, would you put that sweet innocent in charge? Would you assign her to architect a cathedral? Would you have that wiggly giggly persona perform surgery? By creating a look and persona maximally incongruent with the horrors of killing fields, hard or hazardous labor, homelessness and imprisonment, Woman bought a large measure of exemption from the horrors of the brutal past at the cost of her perceived intellectual credibility and competence. It was her choice, and being smaller and weaker and the bearer-nurturer of children that was the choice she made.

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So, there's nothing to begrudge. All this gender negativity, rancor and resentment, victim-mongering and entitlement to vengeance is based on gender *politics*, not gender *reality*. Woman gained extra safety, charity, leniency, empathy, insulation, because she *earned* it. It derived from biology and it was built into the role she played. She played her role well and humanity benefited. She wasn't gifted with anything for free. In the brutal past, any measure of extra safety was a *golden* commodity and to procure it for herself, Woman paid *dearly*. When someone pays for something, they're morally and ethically entitled to take possession of it. So, there's no sense begrudging Woman her exemptions from battlefields, hard-hazardous labor, and imprisonment, nor for the extra adoration, coddling, innocence, and protection she enjoyed. They were written into her contract. She fulfilled her end of that metaphysical contract and *earned* the rewards.

Meanwhile, Man gained extra prestige, leadership, credit, accomplishment, because he *earned* it. It derived from biology and it was built into the role he played. He played his role well; humanity benefited. He wasn't gifted with anything for free. Especially in the brutal past the costs associated with owning toughness, strength, and courage were *staggering*. When someone pays for something, they're morally and ethically entitled to take possession of it. So, there's no sense begrudging Man his rewards and privileges, nor for the extra reverence, fame, status, and importance he enjoyed. They were written into his contract. At *great cost*, he fulfilled his end of that metaphysical contract and *earned* the rewards.

I've read history textbooks stating flat out that men ought to be ashamed for hogging the historical importance. But neither sex need look back at their respective rewards and feel the least bit guilty about them. In suffering the vast majority of the dark side of human nature, including human brutality, Man earned his patriarchal triumphs. In suffering the support role, Woman earned her Glass Floor.<sup>9</sup>

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9 The mirror-opposite of the Glass Ceiling, the Glass Floor is a kind partial insulation between women and the dark side of the world and human nature together with most of life on earth's most deeply filthy, brutal, arduous, hazardous, and corrupting realities. The Glass Floor tends to safeguard women from sinking to the extreme bottom (of homelessness, mineshafts, foxholes, prison cells, etc.).

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In focusing in on the Respect-Axis (as feminism does), we must conclude that Woman suffered all things. In focusing in on the Love-Axis (as masculism does), we must conclude that Man suffered all things. In taking in both the Love- and the Respect-Axes, we may reasonably conclude that It All Balanced Out. Given their politicized perspectives and their political agendas, both sides of the gender-political divide covet the Victim Crown, but neither side is entitled to it. While The Deal has always been unfair to certain individuals (of both sexes) who didn't fit the binary; overall, The Deal was co-created and equitable. It was efficient (a top priority in a brutal world where the goal was survival) and out of The Deal, each sex got what it wanted most.

It is a perversion of the current gender *politics* that we now, retroactively and anachronistically, look back and decide that The Deal wasn't fair to one sex or the other. In judging The Deal unfair to women, we're motivated to renege on The Deal, but *only* where men have benefited from it. Steven E. Rhoads astutely observes, "As a result, one widely used history text gives more attention to Maria Mitchell, a nineteenth-century astronomer who discovered a comet, than to Albert Einstein; another has three pictures of Civil War nurses but none of General Sherman or General Grant."<sup>10</sup> Political correctness demands that we speak of the brave men and women who died in the Civil War. Over 600,000 men, but less than 100 women, died fighting that war. There is no justice in taking from the men of the past the prestige those men *earned*.

Both feminism and masculism falsely fan the flames of inter-sex rage, rancor, resentment, victim and vengeance motives.<sup>11</sup> The fallout of which can be seen in vast damage to the social fabric, including diminishment of heterosexual love, marriage, and parenting leading to a severe lack of father energy, leading to a rise in every social pathology that concerns us most in the world today.

*Obviously*, the human world is going to be at its most healthy, functional, joyful, and vibrant when the sexes are at their most harmonious, complementary, and mutually inspiring.

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10 Rhoads, Steven E., *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004) p.40

11 When understood in terms of give and take, the gender-political inter-sex resentment becomes rather absurd. It's as if a man goes to the store, spends hard-earned money on a toaster oven. An observer then sees him walking home with his shopping bag, and mutters bitterly: "How come he rates a toaster oven? I don't have a toaster oven; what a jip!" Why is this observer-victim deprived of a toaster oven? Because she chose to buy a blender instead; each sex got what it paid for.

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Conversely, the human world will be at its most pathological, dysfunctional, depressed, and enervated when the sexes are at each other's throats. This essay has concerned itself with the past, the future is for us to decide.

It's time to put an end to this self-righteous gender-political contest for the coveted title of MVP (Most Victimized and Powerless). Starting over from the premise that It All Balances Out between Woman and Man (and it always has), it's time to replace both feminism and masculism with equalism. In so doing, we view gender reality in terms of Male-Female equal partnership, and we view gender issues in terms of shared responsibility. Only then can we transition from a politics of gender complaint to a politics of inter-gender negotiation, unity, fairness and forgiveness.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



**Tim Goldich** is the president of the Chicago chapter of the National Coalition for Men and an avid member of the ManKind Project, two organizations that variously support men politically and emotionally. He is also an educator and mentor to boys on their way to becoming men. Goldich facilitates the personal growth work of men on New Warrior Training Adventure weekends and of men and women on personal growth weekends called Path to Spirit. He is the author of four books, including [Loving Men, Respecting Women: The Future of Gender Politics](#).

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## WHERE HAVE ALL THE MEN GONE?

*Cheryl Lacey*



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### ABSTRACT

*Many men of age and wisdom are labelled pale, male and stale. Simply because they're female, women angrily demand the right to replace these men and bully them into silence. Schools promote political agendas and blame men for having to and failing to act. Teenagers mock history and attack men for the existence of Western nations, and for their failure to give them everything for nothing. Men understand humility, sacrifice, faith, loyalty, optimism, discipline and generosity. They aren't afraid of responsibility. They also know that teacher is merely a job title and that real teaching requires, and is, so much more responsibility. The world needs wise men.*

**Keywords:** boys, education, family, men, school

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**‘F\*\*\* THE WORLD. I’M THE MOST IMPORTANT’.**

That was the printed message on a hoodie worn by a sloth of a teenager – aged about 15 – who was slouching in a government benefits office. He was either the Grand Master of the ‘*Me Me Me*’ movement, or a devout follower.

A highly regarded gentleman in his early 80s, with life experience and a CV most would only dream of, stood leaning against his walking frame, reading the message. He called the teenager over and told him that what was written on the hoodie was most inappropriate.

‘You wouldn’t speak to your mother like that, would you?’ he asked.

‘She talks to me like that’, the teenager replied.

The gentleman had a quiet but firm word to the teenager and then watched as he walked away and stood against the wall to prevent anyone else reading his hoodie. Apparently, he had learned a lesson.

This gentleman, like many of his age and wisdom, are labelled pale, male and stale. There’s nothing they haven’t been attacked about. Simply because they’re female, women angrily demand the right to replace these men, yet bully them into silence for fear of being accused of harassment. Schools promote political agendas and blame them for having to and failing to act. Teenagers mock history and attack them for the existence of Western nations, and for their failure to give them everything for nothing. Men like this gentleman are few and far between. You could say they’re from the *old school*. They understand responsibility, community, dignity, sacrifice and compassion. They’ve endured a life we cannot begin to imagine, even if they’ve come out well off on the other side.

The sloth in the government benefits office will never be the same again. He was given a lifeline and an education on beliefs and behaviour – not by an angry woman, or an irresponsible school, or a selfish uneducated teenager, but by a stranger who cared.

The world needs men. The world needs to value men. We can’t lose them. Yet we are.



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## **WHERE HAVE ALL THE MALE TEACHERS GONE?**

It has been said that the very first public school began in 459BC. It was the “house of the book” or the “house of the teacher”, and it was established in Jerusalem by a Jewish scribe and priest, known as Ezra. The purpose of his school was to provide education for fatherless boys, aged sixteen and upward. The Jewish community continued to take the lead, and determined that all children, regardless of class, were entitled to an education. The result should have been the beginnings of an equal opportunity for all boys and men, regardless of circumstance.

What we now have in elementary or primary schools is a world, literally, where on average just 10% of elementary teachers are male. Statistics for men in secondary schools and further education aren’t as easy to quantify. Scanning OECD reports, figures indicate just 40% of teachers in secondary schools in OECD countries are male.

Where have all the male teachers gone?

## **WHERE HAVE ALL THE FATHERS GONE?**

A young boy becomes a man despite growing up with a father. Interventionists, the likes of Ezra in 459BC, are few. Consistency of their goodwill and intentions even more sparse. Globally nearly 8% (101.3 million) of all households are headed by a single parent. 84% are mothers (Baht, 2020).

Infants learn whom and what to trust and whom and what not to trust. Those young boys without a father figure at home learn issues of trust predominantly from their mother. The absence of a male figure at school consolidates a childhood weighted heavily toward the authority and influence of women.

Who, or what, is driving this trend? What is the philosophy or agenda behind it? What would be the consequences if this were to continue?

## **WHERE HAVE ALL THE FAMILIES GONE?**

Family matters have become school matters. Decisions are made every day by school employees, under the guise of *duty of care* and *best interests of the child* – often alienating parents

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from knowledge of, or contribution to, decisions made by the school, and more recently by the children themselves through a *mature minor* window.

In cases of complex family matters, particularly separation and divorce, where men are no longer welcome in the family home, the vast majority of teachers, predominantly female, make decisions about students without full parental input. A form of alienation against one parent occurs. The school system uses issues of *duty of care* as a defence coupled with the perceived right to being an authority on the education of the *whole child*, while continuing to apply methodologies from other disciplines in an ad hoc and potential damaging fashion to the boys and men.

Have schools become environments for reducing further, through daily decision making and inappropriate engagement in complex family matters, the value society places on men, fathers and boys?

### **WHERE HAS ALL THE HOPE GONE?**

Of the more than 3100 who kill themselves in Australia every year - more than 2,300 (75%) - are male. This figure does not include single vehicle accidents, accidental drug overdoses or falls. Figures from the World Health Organisation, state that in 2019, 700,000 people died by suicide, with more than twice as many being males (World Health Organisation, 2021).

Adolescence (10-19 years of age) is a critical period for acquiring socio-emotional skills. Half mental health conditions appear before 14 years of age. What is the impact of a female dominated childhood at home and school on boys becoming men?

### **HONOURING MEN**

When losing my father, all too suddenly, I wasn't ready to say good-bye. Not because of unspoken love – we said it often; I wasn't ready because I felt I hadn't learned all I could from him. Dad was a gentleman – in every sense of the word. He had an extraordinary mind, and he understood the world with intellect and wisdom gained from incredibly diverse life experiences. His own father was a WWI veteran – a deeply disturbed ANZAC, like so many other young men who went to war to protect the motherland. The fallout of this war had tremendous

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ramifications for Dad, and then there was also WWII, with all its implications. Little wonder he chose a private way of being. Reflecting on his life, his struggles and the impact of his own father's life experience, eventually prepared me for saying good-bye. I realised I learned all I could from Dad in his lifetime, not mine. He gave me a remarkable life with him – and that's everything.

Men like my father are our greatest educators. They understand humility, sacrifice, faith, loyalty, optimism, discipline and generosity. They know the difference between knowledge, experience and application. They aren't afraid of responsibility. They also know that *teacher* is merely a job title and that real teaching requires, and is, so much more.

Next time you see your father, hug him and tell him you love him. If you don't talk, start now. And when you see an elder male, introduce yourself, ask him about his life – in particular his childhood and his family. Take the time to listen. Chances are you'll get an education. Our men aren't pale and they're certainly not stale; they're the last of God's Police and they won't be with us forever. Even more importantly, think about the sloth in the government benefits office, his family life and his schooling. Where will he be 60 years from now?

We need a new generation of God's Police. We need to raise them and educate them. We need boys to learn and celebrate the honour of becoming a man. May the legacy of our great elders live on and may our youth embrace the greatest role models that ever lived, before it's too late.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



**Dame Cheryl Lacey**, DSJ, is a mother and an accomplished and highly motivated educator. Since her first year of teaching in 1989, Cheryl began to unpack Australia's education system and has developed a First Principles framework to rebuild it. Her framework places families firmly in the centre of all decision making. She self-published her first book during her second year of teaching and secured a publishing contract in the USA and subsequently lived and worked in New York, advising educational leaders. Cheryl continues to write, speak, and advise on the relationship between family and school and the need for fundamental change.

The adoption of her two daughters led Cheryl on a path of community service, most notably in her 20-year membership of the Rotary Club of Melbourne. Cheryl is currently leading a team of dedicated members to reaffirm the purpose and founding principles of Rotary and secure a permanent home for the club.

Recognized as a Dame of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller Australasia, in 2021, Cheryl represented the Victorian Priory at the Sovereign Council in Malta in 2022. She has recently completed postgraduate studies in Parental Alienation, as part of the first group of professionals world-wide to complete such a course.

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Where have all the male teachers gone?

## **WHERE HAVE ALL THE FATHERS GONE?**

A young boy becomes a man despite growing up with a father. Interventionists, the likes of Ezra in 459BC, are few. Consistency of their goodwill and intentions even more sparse. Globally nearly 8% (101.3 million) of all households are headed by a single parent. 84% are mothers (Baht, 2020).

Infants learn whom and what to trust and whom and what not to trust. Those young boys without a father figure at home learn issues of trust predominantly from their mother. The absence of a male figure at school consolidates a childhood weighted heavily toward the authority and influence of women.

Who, or what, is driving this trend? What is the philosophy or agenda behind it? What would be the consequences if this were to continue?

## **WHERE HAVE ALL THE FAMILIES GONE?**

Family matters have become school matters. Decisions are made every day by school employees, under the guise of *duty of care* and *best interests of the child* – often alienating parents

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from knowledge of, or contribution to, decisions made by the school, and more recently by the children themselves through a *mature minor* window.

In cases of complex family matters, particularly separation and divorce, where men are no longer welcome in the family home, the vast majority of teachers, predominantly female, make decisions about students without full parental input. A form of alienation against one parent occurs. The school system uses issues of *duty of care* as a defence coupled with the perceived right to being an authority on the education of the *whole child*, while continuing to apply methodologies from other disciplines in an ad hoc and potential damaging fashion to the boys and men.

Have schools become environments for reducing further, through daily decision making and inappropriate engagement in complex family matters, the value society places on men, fathers and boys?

### **WHERE HAS ALL THE HOPE GONE?**

Of the more than 3100 who kill themselves in Australia every year - more than 2,300 (75%) - are male. This figure does not include single vehicle accidents, accidental drug overdoses or falls. Figures from the World Health Organisation, state that in 2019, 700,000 people died by suicide, with more than twice as many being males (World Health Organisation, 2021).

Adolescence (10-19 years of age) is a critical period for acquiring socio-emotional skills. Half mental health conditions appear before 14 years of age. What is the impact of a female dominated childhood at home and school on boys becoming men?

### **HONOURING MEN**

When losing my father, all too suddenly, I wasn't ready to say good-bye. Not because of unspoken love – we said it often; I wasn't ready because I felt I hadn't learned all I could from him. Dad was a gentleman – in every sense of the word. He had an extraordinary mind, and he understood the world with intellect and wisdom gained from incredibly diverse life experiences. His own father was a WWI veteran – a deeply disturbed ANZAC, like so many other young men who went to war to protect the motherland. The fallout of this war had tremendous



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ramifications for Dad, and then there was also WWII, with all its implications. Little wonder he chose a private way of being. Reflecting on his life, his struggles and the impact of his own father's life experience, eventually prepared me for saying good-bye. I realised I learned all I could from Dad in his lifetime, not mine. He gave me a remarkable life with him – and that's everything.

Men like my father are our greatest educators. They understand humility, sacrifice, faith, loyalty, optimism, discipline and generosity. They know the difference between knowledge, experience and application. They aren't afraid of responsibility. They also know that *teacher* is merely a job title and that real teaching requires, and is, so much more.

Next time you see your father, hug him and tell him you love him. If you don't talk, start now. And when you see an elder male, introduce yourself, ask him about his life – in particular his childhood and his family. Take the time to listen. Chances are you'll get an education. Our men aren't pale and they're certainly not stale; they're the last of God's Police and they won't be with us forever. Even more importantly, think about the sloth in the government benefits office, his family life and his schooling. Where will he be 60 years from now?

We need a new generation of God's Police. We need to raise them and educate them. We need boys to learn and celebrate the honour of becoming a man. May the legacy of our great elders live on and may our youth embrace the greatest role models that ever lived, before it's too late.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



**Dame Cheryl Lacey**, DSJ, is a mother and an accomplished and highly motivated educator. Since her first year of teaching in 1989, Cheryl began to unpack Australia's education system and has developed a First Principles framework to rebuild it. Her framework places families firmly in the centre of all decision making. She self-published her first book during her second year of teaching and secured a publishing contract in the USA and subsequently lived and worked in New York, advising educational leaders. Cheryl continues to write, speak, and advise on the relationship between family and school and the need for fundamental change.

The adoption of her two daughters led Cheryl on a path of community service, most notably in her 20-year membership of the Rotary Club of Melbourne. Cheryl is currently leading a team of dedicated members to reaffirm the purpose and founding principles of Rotary and secure a permanent home for the club.

Recognized as a Dame of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller Australasia, in 2021, Cheryl represented the Victorian Priory at the Sovereign Council in Malta in 2022. She has recently completed postgraduate studies in Parental Alienation, as part of the first group of professionals world-wide to complete such a course.

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## SUMMARISING FEMINIST MEN: CHALLENGES AND IMPACT ON MASCULINITY IN THE MODERN ERA

*Matthew Shaw*



### ABSTRACT

*Some interpretations of feminism theorise that men are inherently oppressive and that women are always victims. Feminist men sometimes adopt this attitude. Whilst feminist men can appear as working to create a more just and equitable world for all people, certain feminist men do not lend support to male issues. These men can adversely affect other men, causing them to struggle romantically, physically, or emotionally. A will to prioritize one sex over the other can have severe consequences for both men and women, giving rise to a society that lacks trust and empathy for all, providing a fertile breeding space for the sex-shaming conversations and discontent among the sexes we see today.*

**Keywords:** feminist men, gender politics, male, masculinity, sex-shaming

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## CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM AND MEN

Many scholars and academics argue that feminism works only by benefitting both genders (Enslin, 2003; Kinsella & Shepherd, 2019). It is clear that feminism has evolved from its traditional roots through a multitude of waves from the latter part of the late twentieth century leading to changes in how we engage in philosophical debates (Witt & Shapiro, 2000). Such a shift can be seen in the works of Horrock (1996), Farrell (1994), and Pizzey et al. (2000), who began to question whether this ideology is as mutually beneficial as once thought. Today an increasing number of social commentators, the likes of Piers Morgan or Candace Owens, mainstream academics such as Jordan Peterson, and a growing number of academic researchers such as Abhisek (2022) and Ólafsdóttir & Rúdólfssdóttir (2022) are raising points of a similar nature.

An increasing number of scholars, such as Yang (2007) and Cobb (2015), now argue that this new fourth wave of feminism is more entwined with the modern dynamics of social media than with its traditional values. An example of this confusion is shown in O'Donnell and Sharpe's works on uncertain masculinities that suggests that "what we see from the turning point of the 21st century is the decline of one the longest-running fables of all time, the superiority of men over women" (2000, p.89). On the other side of the pendulum, society in the West has seen a noticeable rise in the presence of men who have chosen to adopt the feminist ideology and promote its messages. This brief commentary will look to assess the role of the feminist man, who they are and what they look to achieve. However, to add to the literature concerned with the lived experiences of males, the essay will look to contribute fresh interpretations and insights into the possible effects of this type of masculinity on everyday males and how it causes them to question their interpretations of what it means to be a male in the twenty-first century.

## FEMINISM'S IMPACT ON MEN

Freud's 1931 paper on female sexuality stated that due to our bisexual nature and genetic cross-inheritance, every person combines both feminine and masculine characteristics. As such, any true definition or claim of either existing in a pure form is solely theoretical and steeped in uncertainty (Freud, 1966). The height of success for male achievement and the status benefits afforded by the patriarchy, or the time of most apparent distinction between the masculine and

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feminine roles, was the mid-nineteenth century (Clare, 2010). A period of time when women were perceived as delicate, easily excited, refined and somewhat nervous (Clare, 2010), whereas men typically displayed such traits as physical and mental strength, stoicism, rationality, and a perceived lack of emotion (Jobbins, 2017; Tosh, 2007). This image continued throughout the twentieth century and became the traditional male stereotype. In the late seventies, the personification of what it was to become male developed and became that of someone who shows evidence of being macho, aggressive, rational, independent, and invulnerable, with no room for contradiction or uncertainty (Wilson, 2004). These aspects of masculinity exist today and are used as baseline indicators in assessments such as The Male Role Norms Scale (Thompson and Pleck, 1986), which ascribes masculinity to three key facets: status, toughness and anti-femininity.

The latter part of the twentieth century has seen such assessments change as men become more liberal and accepting of the change in gender roles, expectations, and balance, with more men adopting a feminist point of view. Examples of the intersectionality between masculinity and feminism can be found in a review by Kachel et al. (2016) and Kincaid (2022). In the period since the seventies and particularly in the twenty-first century, we are now seeing many versions of masculinity due to the increased presence of women in what were previously considered male-only spaces such as factories, director's boards, sporting arenas or pubs. Furthermore, due to increased acceptance and the lifting of legal restrictions in most Western countries of homosexuality and the LGB community, we now see an increased presence of men who are open with their sexuality, so the stigma of homosexuality is less so than in previous times. This cultural shift and the dominating presence of feminism in our political, educational, and societal systems has led to an increase in men who are very connected with femininity or, as Sbardelini et al. (2022) refer to it, a feminine-masculine duality.

In recent years, the online promotion of tags such as #MeToo, #BringBackOurGirls and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen in the online space have been beneficial in promoting positive messages and raising awareness of important issues. However, scholars such as Willem & Tortajada (2021) summarise that they have been adopted and used more as tools for self-branding, self-promotion virtue-signalling and at times making defamatory comments about the

character of men. Examples of this can be found in feminist online discussion spaces where men are framed as requiring intervention, a good boy, often viewed as in a position of loss, or a bad boy that needs to be saved, encouraged to be a positive example by engaging with and promoting in their pro-feminist behaviour all the while leaving them open to having their intentions questioned as backed by a sinister motive (Waling, 2022). Most males are perceptive enough to know that overtly macho displays of behaviour can be off-putting to women who may prefer emotional or educational intelligence and sensitivity (O'Donnell and Sharpe, 2000). As such, this was a cliché wheeled out by the "Pick Up Artist Troupe" made common through multiple sexuality-based reality TV shows such as VH1's similarly named show or *The Bachelor*. Such behaviours are somewhat contrasted in modern dating shows such as *Take Me Out* or *Love Island* or directly contrasted in shows such as *Married at First Sight*. This has had a negative effect now that men are often left in a position of confusion when it comes to interacting with women in both social and romantic settings, as there is an increased concern about whether affable behaviour is shown due to genuine feeling and emotion or just for personal, most often sexual gain.

Since the late twentieth century, the number of men who empathise with the plight of women, both their historical and present quandaries, has increased (Silver et al., 2018; Estevan-Reina et al., 2020). Many appear in complete agreement with the feminist stance. With the recent increasing interest in social justice issues, intersectionality, and gender, all appearing to be brought about as vehicles for male oppression, affected by and promoted through access to 24/7 media, meaning feminist men, can be found in all aspects of our lives. Whilst no clear and recognized definition exists within academia, hypothetical examples can be found in the education system, the political system, mainstream media, our healthcare centres and various criminal justice and family law systems, including our lawyers and judges. Famous examples of feminist men who operate within these circles are Ryan Gosling, Mark Ruffalo, Harry Styles, John Legend (Werft, 2017), and the U. N's HeForShe champions, Ed Miliband and Justin Trudeau (Siegel et al., 2022). In contrast to his political compatriots, David Cameron was targeted by *Elle* magazine for non-endorsement of the feminist movement (Pearlman, 2014; Cobb, 2015).

Since the inception of feminism, there has always been a wealth of male feminist

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academics who have gone on to critique various aspects of masculinity (Horrocks, 1996), such as Warren Farrell, Michael Kimmel, and Dr Michael Flood. Whilst the latter academics have remained staunch feminist allies, Farrell faced harsh criticism from feminists, working within the media at the time, when he switched his primary research interests to the plight of young males. The Independent newspaper referred to his 1994 work "The Myth of Male Power" as "the twinge of jealousy men sometimes feel when confronted by feminine solidarity .... joyless whinge that is wholly blind to the merry and unruly aspects of the sexual debate, the ordinary busy liveliness of human affairs. Farrell is a self-appointed cheerleader anxious that men explore their inner maleness before it is too late" (Winder, 1994). Such criticism also extends to academic circles. As Anderson (2015) suggested, the male crisis Farrell discussed, including the perceptions of male marginalization and their impression of oppression, has been debunked and proven as a myth. Recent times have seen continued references and criticisms of his work, specifically in conversations about the manosphere, as highlighted in works by García Mingo & Díaz Fernández (2022) and Sugiura (2021).

Male fear of women and femininity is not a modern phenomenon (Clare, 2010, p.194). Anderson (2015) argues that current discourse has moved on from the traditional notion of the male-hating feminist. In contrast, however, it remains in constant discussion among extreme groups and fuels a lot of manosphere content (Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Sugiura, 2021). A potential reason for this rise in the visibility of such men comes from, as Tompkins (2006) writes, the suppression of male desire and the devaluing of their experience attained through the positioning of women as the epitome of the American moral high ground throughout most of the twentieth century. This overt change in portrayal and framing subsequently allowed for subtle changes in the portrayal of men and masculinity by promoting traditionally framed feminist activities, such as holding babies, discussing their feelings and being more caring and accessible than the previous generations' counterparts. Such changes in the stereotypical image have led to a softening of the male image as a whole, which has been absorbed by the media and women throughout the world. Its impact can be evidenced in a survey by O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000 p.114) that found seventy-five per cent of respondents claim that "it is important for men to be sensitive and caring as it is to be strong and tough". Often, these men do not harm the

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feminist movement or other men, nor do they cause overt or intentional distress. Their means of showing support are often manifested by calls for more education, the challenging of previous sexual attitudes and behaviours, the promotion of feminist organizations and causes, support in feminist activism, allyship (Silver et al., 2018) and the opportunity to exemplify what a feminist society would deem to be the ideal role model for men of this generation.

This cultural shift offers a potential explanation for why pastimes like video gaming, sports, and cars, amongst others, are now looked upon from a position of judgement and ridicule by other men. This has left those who enjoy these activities feeling like they no longer belong, that they must seek to change their behaviours and take on board hobbies or behaviours that may not come naturally to them. An aspect of the feminist man that has the potential to be detrimental to masculinity is any attempts to make it difficult for them to act in their natural manner or display stereotypical male values, causing feelings of uncertainty and insecurity concerning their masculinity on both an individual and societal level. An additional avenue where there is potential for risk can be when feminist men challenge traditional gender roles, such as the idea that men should be the breadwinners and women should be the homemakers leading to conflict with other men who hold more traditional views, such as men are expected to be assertive and competitive.

Historically, traditional men have been raised with the mantra of being strong, stoic and in control of their emotions irrelevant to their circumstances, the adage of "bravery in the face of danger." Recently, with the influx of modern dating apps, women often traditionally attracted to confident and assertive, some men are failing to find romantic partners (Thomas et al., 2021). Overly feminist men criticise these behaviours, making it difficult for those who display them to succeed in their relationships and careers and creating a hostile working environment. It must be noted that there are males raised within such a traditional household that more extreme interpretations of behaviour could arise potentially from something forced upon them as a child. In contrast to traditional male traits, Anderson (2009) states that excessively feminist men can be seen as weak and indecisive, making it difficult for them to find a romantic partner. This can lead to feelings of anger, resentment, and in extreme cases, physical or sexual violence. Both aspects somewhat reflect the incel community, who share the same difficulties in finding not



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only intimate but social relationships and reject the notion of feminism.

Holding either opinion can sometimes socially alienate other men, who may feel threatened by their beliefs, making it more difficult for women to achieve genuine social equality. As Thompson (2015) states, unfavourable or incorrectly formed attitudes about feminism create barriers to activism. White Knights and overly feminist men not only enable uncomfortable situations but may also promote negative stereotypes about men, such as the idea that all men are rapists or abusers. As Tory MP Sir Christopher Chope summarised in the UK House of Commons recently (Scott, 2023), men are accused of being sexist or misogynistic simply for being men. Such accusations can make men feel alienated and unwelcome in specific spaces, making it difficult for them to speak up about their experiences or participate in conversations about relationships and gender equality. This issue can be exacerbated by overly feminist men, who can make it difficult for men to find love due to fuelling distrust and hostility towards men. As Thomson (2015) suggests, it could be detrimental to men who do not embrace feminism in that it may potentially lead to them finding it threatening to interpersonal relationships of either a sexual or familial nature.

These difficulties in approaching women as romantic partners or occasionally in workplace relationships result in behaviours that fall under the "White Knight" phenomenon (Leone et al., 2020; Krendel, 2020). In these cases, men assume the role of saviour in situations where there is the suspicion of threat, ridicule or harm to a female and plays on the stereotype of the damsel in distress being swept off her feet (Glick & Raberg, 2018; Lamia & Krieger, 2021). Whilst there are cases where the interference of a well-intentioned male prevents harm from coming to a woman, as Clare (2010) suggests, it is an action that may subliminally reflect a male's biological underlying compulsion to prove himself and his manhood to women. This hypothesis could provide evidence for the recent campaign throughout London that encouraged Men to "have a word" or interject in situations where a woman may feel threatened or in danger (Mayor of London, 2023) or EE's UK "Not her Problem" campaign using threatening tones from men, including sportsmen such as Jordan Henderson to acts as a deterrent to online misogyny during the ladies Euros in 2022 (EE Press Office, 2022). A relevant contradiction to this can be found in the works of Leone et al. (2022), and Carlson (2008), and an opinion that is now becoming more

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commonplace is that traditional men can feel prohibited from intervening in suspicious situations due to potential conflict with peers due to interference in their seduction attempts.

Further confusion surrounds this discussion aspect as White Knighting behaviours can be called out under the hashtag "#Toxic Masculinity," A recent term in popular discourse that builds upon discussions that took root in the latter part of the twentieth century, where it was viewed that the masculinity portrayed by various outlets and social commentators was in a deviant state, akin to that of a disease (Clare, 2010). The term and discussions surrounding it have increased dramatically in popularity across all aspects of media, academia, education, politics, and society (Brown, 2021; Krendel, 2020).

At times, some interpretations of feminism theorise that men are inherently oppressive and that women are always victims systematically, through the patriarchy, in the workplace, and gender-based discussion or violence, an attitude also adopted by some feminist men. Whilst feminist men can appear as working to create a more just and equitable world for all people, regardless of their gender, there are certain feminist men and traditional men who, as a result, feel they do not lend support to male issues, as shown by the claims of a debunked male crisis discussed previously. Evidence of this in the workplace can be seen by the continued push for equal representation in STEM fields, C-Suite roles, or in the boardroom, yet little is spoken about addressing the imbalances that occur in areas such as the arts and humanities or education. Examples of these areas include 76% of UK teachers being female (Gov.UK, 2023), 80% of psychologists being female (Johnson et al., 2020), and five in every six counsellors being female (Brown, 2021). This uneven split continues into future generations as the following fields: psychology (81.4%), teaching (78%) or social sciences and humanities (68%) are primarily composed of female students (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2023).

An issue that arises from the perspective of feminist men is that men are the primary perpetrators of aggressive or violent behaviour. This attitude can contribute to cutting men out of discussions about causes and solutions and lends itself to the impression that male victims are simply being overlooked. This follows the patriarchal view that all violence towards women is often deemed a tool for men to reinforce hegemonic masculinity and gendered power structures.

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Furthermore, in cases of sexual violence, whilst displaying dominance over women, it does so also over other men, thus fulfilling a man's natural need for social status and power (Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016; Hinds & Fileborn, 2022). It is critical to remember that whilst the manifestation of violence in a physical form is predominantly shown by males, like women, males also face the threat of becoming victims of psychological and verbal violence (Thobejane, Mogorosi, & Luthanda, 2018). Adopting this attitude can result in numerous issues for male victims due to the promotion of campaigns with such messages as Believe All Women, where there is societal support that a woman who tells of an experience of violence should be believed to be telling the truth until proven otherwise. This compounds upon the physical violence faced by male victims of violent women as in this situation, socially they do not feel that they will be believed, and there is very little in promoting a responsible government strategy or funding for support or residential services. Gaining access to accurate statistics remains complex, as many incidents go unaccounted for. Ullrich (2019) extends upon this notion of mistrust by summarising that the patriarchal view of violence is echoed throughout the UK Criminal Justice System, whose old gender perceptions are steeped in sexual inequalities, making it difficult for men to report. For those that choose to do so, the prosecution process is often long-winded and fraught with difficulties. This overemphasis on the behaviour shown by men toward women has led to numerous campaigns and safety bulletins aimed at increasing women's safety but does not account for men who remain the primary victims of violence in Western society on a macro level.

Over sustained periods, prolonged exposure to abuse or violence brings significant risks to mental health and leads to varying outcomes in the short- and long term (Moffitt, 2013). Short-term effects can include depression and social isolation; longer-term effects include suicide, self-harm or acts of violence toward others out of a need for revenge. With men's issues overlooked in the domestic violence space (Broberg, 2022) and the notion of traditional masculinity going through a turbulent time, it should not be a surprise that men are experiencing suicide at a higher frequency than seen before. Whilst this has not gone unnoticed amongst politicians and the press, little has been done in response. We continue to see funding for services handed over to women-only services and the creation of independent living spaces for female victims, such as

the 15-story facility in Ealing recently announced by Woman Pioneer Housing and questioned by some residents (Booth, 2023), but very little progress in addressing the same issues for men. This is reflected by the increased number of social and charitable organizations that have pooled together to provide men with peer support networks. In the UK, this involves organizations such as Andy's Man Club, The Proper Blokes Club or The Mankind Initiative. This emergence is not limited to the UK either, as groups such as EVERYMAN and Mensgroup now operate in the United States, and there are services such as Mensline or Dads in Distress in Australia that serve well to illustrate the international nature of the bias in political spending and discussions in this area.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that there is somewhat of a disconnect between certain traditional types of men and those who overly identify with the feminist point of view. It is also clear that they are here to stay and will continue to hold positions where decisions can affect all areas of society. Without doubt there is evidence that suggests feminist men are beneficial in society, and perhaps this is nowhere better exemplified than the fight against sexual violence. However, it also extends to promoting individual identity and some would argue that it goes a long way to addressing the unequal historical balance between the genders. What cannot be ignored is how some men adopting this ideology can affect other men, causing them to struggle romantically, physically, or emotionally. We live in a time where it can appear challenging to be a manly man or man that can empathize with the plight of women. The increased frequency of terms like toxic masculinity or the internet slang "Soy Boy", someone lacking male characteristics (Moonshot, 2021), provides ample evidence. The desire to promote the needs or concerns of one gender over the other does not result in a more equitable or fairer society. It only fuels the isolation of one gender and can fuel a sense of resentment toward the other. The will to prioritise one sex over the other can have severe consequences for both men and women and gives rise to a society that lacks trust and empathy for all, providing a fertile breeding space for the sex-shaming conversations and discontent among the sexes we are seeing today.

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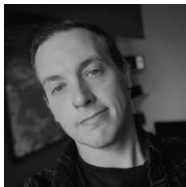
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**Matthew Shaw** is from London, UK. He holds an MA in Social Policy and BA (Hons) Criminology from Plymouth Marjon University. Matthew is currently undertaking his PhD analysing the “Crisis in Masculinity” and the potential pathways to violence that may arise from it. Amongst his research, he has discussed potential pathways for the rehabilitation and reintegration of British children in Syrian refugee camps, the history of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs in the African region, the driving factors in the female migration to Iraq and Syria, intimate partner violence committed and the rise of “Incel” culture as a form of extremism in the United States. Matthew has also studied various political strategies relating to the field, including critiques of Neoliberalism and the current Prevent strategy.

He has completed two internship positions working alongside the Criminology and Forensic Investigation department at Plymouth Marjon University, assisting the Arts and Humanities faculties in researching program experience enhancement. This experience led him to participate in a European PhD study at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, assessing psychological, sexual, verbal, financial and physical violence between intimate partners. This was followed up with a research placement at the Global Counter-Terrorism Institute. He currently holds an Action Counters Terrorism Training certificate and employment development certificates in safeguarding adults and children, drug and alcohol awareness, suicide and self-harm awareness and intervention. His academic work builds upon his previous professional experience, his experience as a father of a blended family with children across the age of seven to eighteen compiled, through social outreach work for those recovering from substance abuse or alcoholism, in addition to his role as a CCTV analyst within Plymouth City Council in collaboration with Devon and Cornwall police.

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Photograph by Gabriela Palai -- <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-standing-on-brown-wooden-dock-395196/>

## SILENT STATISTICS AND THE SILENT SUFFERERS

*Jerome Teelucksingh*



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### ABSTRACT

*The relatively high incidence of suicide among men is a global crisis that demands greater attention. This situation is largely due to a lack of statistics and failure of governments and non-governmental organizations to implement proper suicide prevention programs. An indifference to male suffering has created a depressing scenario that cannot help the silent sufferers among males.*

**Keywords:** alcoholism, murder, prevention, statistics, suicide

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## INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, I have lost eight friends due to suicide. They acted normal and did not display any signs that seemed life-threatening. Two of these friends took their lives because they were either unemployed or retrenched. Five friends became severely depressed and became alcoholics or developed drug addictions when they lost custody of their children due to a biased court system. The final friend who struggled with mental health issues, was unable to pay a bank loan and faced losing his home. Their deaths left a void in my life and a burden of guilt as I should have recognized the cries and intervened to help.

The struggles of other silent sufferers across the world have forced many into the suicide scenario. Society should be educated on the impact of suicide and the impact on coworkers, neighbours, friends and relatives. But how can we help if there are no statistics to alarm us? How can we help if every year the silent sufferers who commit suicide simply become part of the statistics?

In 2009, I met Yuri, a member of a local men's organization, who appeared normal and enthusiastic about men's issues. In one of our conversations, he mentioned his failed suicide attempts. Yuri blamed his suicide on a fatherless home and confessed that he hated his mother. Subsequent discussions were eye-opening, as he recounted that his pregnant mother wanted an abortion. However, the procedure failed and she reluctantly decided to have the baby who would be called Yuri. She never developed an attachment to her son. Later, when Yuri was ten years old, he learnt of this drastic decision by his mother to have an abortion. This was the beginning of a dark journey for Yuri as he felt unwanted, unloved and neglected. It led to the onset of depression and suicidal thoughts and as a heartbroken teenager and young adult Yuri tried to end his life in three attempts: drinking a poisoning substance, hanging and taking an overdose of pills.

## SUICIDE —MULTIFACETED ROOTS

The horrors of male suicide in the Caribbean were a common feature of colonialism especially among the Indigenous peoples (First Peoples), enslaved Africans and indentured labourers, many of those who were oppressed, raped, humiliated, sodomized and physically

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abused felt that suicide would be the best option to escape the pain, shame and hurt. During indentureship, the murder of a wife by a male Indian labourer who then took his own life, when he suspected or learnt of his spouse or companion being unfaithful, was a horrific ordeal (Perry). It occasionally occurred among the indentured labourers in the British West Indian colonies such as Trinidad. Two illustrations of the sensational reports were in a Trinidadian newspaper in 1895 (“Murder and Suicide”, “Another Plantation Murder”).

The horror of murder-suicides continued into the 20th century. For instance, in 1992 the Sunday Guardian (a newspaper of Trinidad and Tobago) investigated the issue of murder-suicides among husbands and wives, Dr. G. Hutchinson, of the Psychiatry Unit of the Substance Abuse Centre at Caura Hospital noted, that family murders followed by suicides points to “underlying depressive sickness” and a “pathological jealousy”. Hutchinson felt that the violence of men can be explained: “It is a cultural think, men are concerned about their esteem and sexual potency. Often when a man has several relationships with women he is acting out of deep – seated emotions of insecurity.” Our boys and men need to feel secure and understand the meaning of their role in life. They must neither have their confidence undermined nor their rights eroded.

In 2021, research revealed that suicides among young Black males in the USA were on the rise (Moyer). The suicide of tWitch, a popular personality in the USA, in 2022 was a shock to fans and followers. The sad reality is that the issue of male suicide often comes to the forefront when a prominent man commits the act but then interest wanes until another suicide occurs. Suicide affecting ordinary men has also been highlighted by the media. An illustration is India in which there is a rise in false rape cases against men that often result in suicide of these wrongfully accused men. Also, in India in 2013, there was an increase of married men who, accused of cruelty, also committed suicide (“Cases of married men committing suicide on the rise: Report”).

If there is to be progress as a society and find permanent solutions, we cannot just simply react when confronted with the sensational details of a suicide. Our men have to be proactive and address mental illness head-on and ensure that programs are implemented to deal with the

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aim of curbing suicide rates.

Twenty years ago, I briefly taught at three secondary schools. In both public and prestigious schools, I saw students with scars on their wrists following suicidal attempts. There were also reports of suicidal ideation among primary school students who were under pressure to succeed in their exams. Unfortunately, these warning signs are often ignored by teachers and parents. Frightening incidents such as this should motivate the relevant authorities to start creating an awareness programme in primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions.

In the 21st century, mental illness continues to be stigmatized, and its prevalence is underestimated. This is obvious as governments in the Caribbean, and across the world do not provide sufficient funding and are not training enough mediators to intervene. Citizens need to demand that suicide hotlines and NGOs are easily available for the silent sufferers. They should also ensure that counsellors are accessible and relevant programs are implemented in schools. There are online groups such as the Zero Suicide Alliance that promote suicide awareness and prevention.

In Trinidad and Tobago, more attention is often placed on the annual murder toll than suicide rates. Men across the globe need to question the invisible statistics or silent statistics that could help us to better understand the prevalence of male suicides. Where are the numbers indicating the suicide rate among First Peoples in Canada or USA for the past 5 years? What is the suicide figures for suicide among European boys in 2020 and 2021? What is the percentage of young men, between 18 and 30 years who committed or attempted suicide? The absence of these silent statistics relating to suicide reflect uncaring governments and NGOs that are in the dark and unable to provide that light for dark and depressed minds of our males. Governments have tended to use terms as Gross Domestic Product or Gross National Product to determine the economic health of a nation but often neglect other criteria as suicide, poverty and unemployment among males as critical in assessing a country's progress.

Rob Whitley, of the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University in Canada, referred to male suicide as "The Silent Crisis" (Whitley). A report from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) revealed that every year in the Americas, 65,000 people commit suicide.

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Even more worrisome is the statement that “Mortality from suicide continues to be higher in men than in women (male-female ratio of 3.8); however, women report more suicide attempts” (“Suicide Mortality”). This is true for Trinidad and Tobago, in which 20.2 per cent of women and 79.8 per cent of men committed suicide during 2019 – 2021 (Polo).

Whilst these higher figures among men might be true for other regions, the fact is that there is a lack of accurate annual global statistics reporting male suicides. Some of us have accepted male suicides as normal and part of society. Silent statistics are missing that could help save the current and future silent sufferers who are contemplating suicide.

Undoubtedly, society places tremendous pressure on men and boys to excel and to succeed. Furthermore, the goal of becoming wealthy and caring for their families is also part of the responsibility unfairly dumped on men. There is an urgent need to ensure men and boys who have attempted suicide are given another opportunity to appreciate their purpose in this life.

There are a number of determining factors including biological, psychosocial, and psychiatric which contribute to suicide. As a society we should not only depend on a therapist, psychologist or counselor to help. A father has to be aware of the warning signs and intervene. Likewise, a teacher has to be more observant and identify warning signs: if the child has become withdrawn, if he or she does not want to eat or play with friends. Every person has a responsibility to save each other, not just boys and men but everyone. September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month but we should ensure that suicide prevention and awareness is not restricted to one month. It must be an ongoing activity, especially among our boys and men who feel lonely, abandoned and rejected.

The idea of strong or good friends is a myth that needs to be deconstructed. We have to stop identifying people as strong or role models; doing so puts pressure on people to deliberately wear a mask of perfection or create a public persona. The result is that it could lead to depression if persons feel they cannot live up to society's expectations. Boys and men need to avoid being trapped in that myth and realise that all of us have weaknesses and faults.

The crucible for shaping masculinity is often the family. It is an important institution, but in many communities, families have become side-lined and often given a secondary role in

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society. In the 21st century, (as in previous centuries) it has been difficult to maintain the cohesiveness of the family unit. In 1991, Dr. Linda Baboolal spoke at a Hindu temple in Trinidad on the topic “Effects of Drugs and Alcohol on Family Life”. She highlighted the importance of closeness between parents and children in the home that would result in “well-adjusted members of society” who could “interact positively” with others. Baboolal warned, “Alcoholism is a family disease, passed on from generation to generation...It is a disease which occurs in both men and women. The man drinks openly with the boys in the rum shop” (“Family life is under attack, says Baboolal”). Some of us would disagree with this statement but in the Caribbean (and rest of the world) it cannot be trivialized. It illustrates a distorted version of masculinity (or empty masculinity) in which alcohol is associated with becoming a man. Some in society are afraid to criticize this behaviour believing it is unchangeable.

Alcoholism and substance abuse are often linked to so-called bad forms of masculinity that often result in suicide. However, what might be considered bad is a result of not conforming to the mainstream perceptions of masculinity. But why display empty masculinity or fringe masculinity that is often self-destructive and results in suicide? These are crude attempts by boys and men to define their identity, maintain boundaries, win friends, earn respect, create fear, and create a space. Do not believe these empty masculinities should be ignored.

The media (including social media) must be proactive and realise its significant role in educating the public about warning signs and preventative measures. This would be much more useful rather than focusing on the sensational details of the suicide of a prominent personality. There is need more suicide prevention awareness campaigns that should occur throughout the year especially given the rise in cyberbullying.

Religious leaders also have a crucial role to play. They will speak about it in churches and temples but they need to go out to schools, and see how they can play a role in helping people. Although we tend to criticise or overlook religion, it has a place alongside therapy and medication to give persons a hope and a better chance of survival.

It seems as if suicide has been part of humanity’s DNA. In 2001, a medical journalist suggested that genetics was linked to suicidal behaviour (Palkhivala). Two decades later, in 2021,

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the International Suicide Genetics Consortium released its findings revealing the genetic links of persons who attempted suicide.

Male lives are as important as others in society. Men and boys must cultivate a small and trustworthy network of friends who they could tell their inner feelings without fear of it becoming gossip and without fear of being ridiculed, mocked or taunted. This network would be a safe space or an informal zone to obtain support. This is where everybody has that power to intervene and help a potential suicide victim. It sounds impossible, but we can create a world without suicides.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



**Jerome Teelucksingh** is an activist from Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. He initiated the inaugural observances of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Men and Boys (31 January) and World Day of the Boy Child (16 May). He has published and spoken on masculinity, the men's movement and challenges facing boys.

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