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NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

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The Myth of Male Power: Why Men Are the Disposable Sex Part 1

WARREN FARRELL



In dialogue form, the author reviews the highlights of the book version of The Myth of Male Power. Farrell takes us into our legal system, world history and religions, the psychology and sociology of success, suicide and love, and the politics and psychology of domestic violence, date rape and sex. He shows that men's corporate and political power has blinded them to the definition of real power: "control over one's life." Men are shown to be the "disposable sex." Their façade of strength camouflages an inability to detect feelings of weakness and powerlessness. Farrell envisions gender studies as helping both sexes make an evolutionary shift from a focus on survival to a proper balance between survival and fulfillment. He proposes "gender transition movement" from the rigid to more flexible roles for men and women.

Key Words: men, boyhood, gender, social roles

Introductory Note: The following is a transcript of conversations between journalist Tom Howard and Warren Farrell that were taped in 1993 when Dr. Farrell's book *The Myth of Male Power* was published. The book remains in print (with an updated introduction for the 2001 edition) and CDs of the script are available privately at <http://www.warrenfarrell.com/cds/html>. Dr. Farrell wrote the basic script of the exchange himself, emphasizing the book's highlights. The dialogue format makes his book even more accessible, as if you are having a conversation with Dr. Farrell at a party and he is in direct dialogue with you about every question you might have about the cross-cultural, psychological, historical and legal issues related to men and women. In these fast-paced exchanges on both the written transcript and CD versions of *The Myth of Male Power*, the book comes alive. While the CD best captures Warren's personable and engaging style, the written script presented here encourages the more careful analysis appropriate for an academic publication. The written script also allows for an easier comparison to the full text of the book version of *The Myth of Male Power* with its extensive endnotes. The reader is encouraged to consult the book's precise notes and government sources on which this dialogue is based.

With Dr. Farrell's permission, this is the first time the text of the conversations has been made available in this form. What has happened during the nearly twenty years that have passed since the book appeared is testimony to the author's prescience. With the loss of blue-collar jobs and a dangerously weakened economy, the situation for men as Dr. Farrell described it in 2001 has worsened, especially for young males. By distinguishing between external power (for example, control over others) and internal power (control over one's own life), Dr. Farrell simultaneously navigates three experiences of male power and powerlessness: the external power (and often oppressiveness) of the few; the *external powerlessness* of *most males*; and the different types of *internal* powerlessness experienced by virtually all males. We often forget that when pronouncements are made about "men" it is not made clear that reference is being made to only the external power of a very small number of corporate and political moguls, not the internal and external powerlessness of the blokes, guys and lads of this world. Finally, Dr. Farrell does not omit reference to boys in his discussion. This is important, since as he makes clear, the stage for the internal powerlessness of virtually all males is set early in a boy's life. This is true not just in the United States, but in all cultures and classes.

New Male Studies is proud to offer this contribution in two parts. In several places, statistics have been updated. The most current data present an even bleaker picture for boys and men and *The Myth of Male Power* helps us understand both why that was so predictable and exactly what needs to be changed to create a healthier masculinity for the future. In brief, Dr. Farrell explains why raising our sons successfully in the past differs from raising our sons successfully for the future.

Warren Farrell is also the author of *The Liberated Man* (1975; updated edition, 1993); *Why Men Are the Way They Are* (1986); *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say* (1999); *Father and Child Reunion* (2001); *Why Men Earn More* (2005), and co-author of *Does Feminism Discriminate Against Men? A Debate* (2008). He is currently co-authoring, with John Gray, *Boys to Men*. He lives physically near San Francisco, and virtually at www.warrenfarrell.com.



Tom Howard: Warren, right up front, I have been fascinated about this concept in your book about power. What do you mean about power?

Warren Farrell: In the *Myth of Male Power*, what I am trying to do is redefine what we mean by power. I'm saying that power is the ability to control our own life. If we have the ability to control our own life, we have power. We don't have power if we are working for somebody else and if we feel obligated to take a job we don't like in a coal mine or become a principal rather than a teacher because it earns more. If we love teaching but become a principal, we earn more money and like it less, and then we die sooner as a result of stress and someone else is spending our money while we are dead. I don't call that power.

Tom: You point out in your book that men, on average, die earlier than women. Are you hoping that one result of this book will be to give men and women information that will help men live longer?

Warren: Definitely, and that means getting men to understand what their feelings are, being able to express those feelings, getting society to understand what we are doing that is leading men to becoming 85% of the homeless, most of the alcoholics, most of the gamblers, 94% of the prisoners and most of the victims of homicide and suicide. It's funny, Tom, that we had really very few problems understanding that blacks are more likely to be victims of these problems because of their powerlessness as a group. But when men as a group are victims of each of these problems we can't conceive that it might be because they have a different form of powerlessness.

Tom: I've heard lots of women saying they are really impressed with the sense that they get that you understand how they feel as women as well as able to explain what is going on with men. It seems to me that one of the things that you really emphasize in this book is that although you think it's time for us to pay attention to what happens to males as far as powerlessness is concerned, you are not in any way suggesting that we start denying women's experiences of powerlessness.

Warren: Absolutely, and it would be really sad if I have to spend ten years of my life, ten years from now, countering people who are saying: "Okay, I understand that men are hurt in various ways" and now put down every woman that they have been involved with. It has been my intent to explain how the roles that I have grown up with have been so unnecessarily limiting to both girls and boys.

Tom: So you don't think that the old roles were good?

Warren: I don't think they were good for the standards that we have today. But I do think they were good for the survival of the species. I will explain in this tape that the roles that used to be functional for survival have now become dysfunctional. They have become dysfunctional in an evolutionary instant and that is why making the transition is so tough.

Tom: So, you will be taking us from a personal level to a more societal level?

Warren: I will be looking at both the past where the sexes had to be role mates to looking at the future where the sexes, I believe, desire to be soul mates.

Tom: On a personal level, what made you so interested in the women's movement for so many years, Warren?

Warren: I think first, I remember my mother being so happy in many instances of her life when she had her own sources of income and when she did not have to ask my father for money, like a welfare recipient does to the government. I can remember feeling sad that the girls weren't taught to play

team sports with us boys. I had a girlfriend who I especially wanted to play team sports with me. They were taught to be prudish in sex and you can understand why I did not like that! And we guys were taught to be sex maniacs. The whole concept of roles, where people have to fit into straightjackets is really sad to me, and really confining and really anti-human. The women's movement was the first thing that came along that started questioning the same things I was questioning, so I assumed it would be helping both sexes free themselves.

Tom: Were women more interested in all this stuff than men from the beginning?

Warren: Yes. Historically, for women, relationships were their source of income; for men, income was their source of relationships. My audiences were about 90% women and about 10% men. Most of the men were dragged there by women. This only reinforced that women were the smart ones and they were stuck with us guys.

Tom: There must have been some ego gratification in being the country's leading male feminist, no?

Warren: Not an ounce! Yes, I really secretly loved this perspective. It allowed me to see myself as one of America's sort of new-age guys, sort of a new top gun. Feminists would often ask me such things as: "Warren, how can we clone you?" "Do you have a brother?" "What in your background made you so secure?" I have to say that really reinforced my secret pride; and that the three or four new speaking engagements I got after almost each engagement allowed me to have a lot of financial security.

Tom: I would think that is an important point. Financial security usually leads to ideological lockjaw, so what loosened your jaw so to speak?

Warren: I think what loosened my jaw was reality. As most of the women who were my strongest supporters got divorced, I could only assume the problems were their husbands, and most of these women agreed that the problems were their husbands! But one of the things that I observed in some of my feminist women friends was that they had something in common, and what they had in common was their increasing anger toward men and almost a restlessness in their eyes that did not seem to reflect a deeper inner peace. And I think that as I was observing that, one day, in one of those rare moments of internal security, it hit me, and I asked myself whether I had had a positive impact. I wondered why so many more women than men were listening to me, and this was because I was listening to women and not listening to men. I reviewed some of the tapes from the hundreds of men's and women's groups that I had started. I noticed that when women were criticizing men I called it insight, women's liberation, high self-esteem, but when men were criticizing women I was calling it sexism, male chauvinism, defensiveness, men rationalizing, backlash. I think I did it politely but the men got the point. Soon the men were not expressing their feelings and I found that I was criticizing these guys for not expressing their feelings right after I was criticizing them for expressing their feelings.

Tom: Then what happened?

Warren: After listening to the tapes, I started listening a lot more to men. But then when women asked "why are men so afraid of commitment," or when feminists said that "men have the power" my answers incorporated a different perspective that I think was accounting for both sexes' perspectives, and I noticed that overnight my standing ovations started to disintegrate.

Tom: So you found that it must have taken more internal security on your part to speak on behalf of

men rather than speaking on behalf of women?

Warren: Or more accurately to be speaking on behalf of both sexes and not only on behalf of women. Yes, it did take more internal security and it also took some more financial security. There is another side to it, that although women's standing ovations had dropped off, there were also women that wrote to me that these perspectives were helping them feel much more loving to their husbands and their fathers and their men friends.

Tom: So, once they heard what you had to say, they had to think about it and come back to you?

Warren: Exactly. I remember one woman walking out of my lecture and writing me two weeks later that she ran by the things she objected to with her husband, and her husband said he never felt so understood by her before, so she came back to hear the lecture for a second time to get a different perspective.

Tom: And this is what probably what encouraged you to write more.

Warren: It was exactly that type of letter that encouraged me to write more. The women were usually more articulate about saying "put this stuff in writing more," and "I didn't like it at first but it's helping me a lot more than your praising of women."

Tom: Okay, then have we been misled by feminists?

Warren: Yes, but it is not feminists' fault.

Tom: How is that?

Warren: Men have not spoken up and women cannot hear what men do not say. I think that this has been the fault of men. Men have to take the responsibility to say what they want in order to change a war in which only one side shows up, to a dialogue in which both sexes speak up.

Tom: How do we do that?

Warren: By not assuming that an audiotape or a book about relationships, such as this, is for women. Men must take the responsibility to end the era about relationship issues as women's issues only. Women have contributed a ton and men must contribute too before we are ready for a real gender synthesis.

Tom: So, is the myth of men in power the flip side of feminism?

Warren: No, feminism says the world is patriarchal and male dominated. The flip side would be the world is matriarchal and female dominated. I will be explaining why it's both male and female dominated in different ways. I would be as strongly opposed to a view that the world is female dominated as to a view that it is male dominated because, as I will try to explain, I believe both are inaccurate.

Tom: Warren, are you a men's liberationist, a feminist, both, neither?

Warren: I guess like anyone else, I would rather be listened to than labeled. But I'm willing to calling myself a male liberationist or a masculinist as long as you define a male liberationist as for equal opportunity and equal responsibility for both sexes, and also a feminist when a feminist believes in equal opportunity and equal responsibility for both sexes. I oppose movements when either one of the sexes says our sex is the oppressed sex and therefore we deserve rights. That to me is

not gender liberation but gender entitlement. So ultimately I am not really in favor of a woman or men's movement, but a gender transition movement. However, I oppose skipping past a men's movement until men have equally articulated our perspective. I think that then and only then can it exist.

Tom: Do you see a need for women's studies or men's studies? Or do you take the feminist position that history is men's studies.

Warren: I see a temporary need for both studies where the principal studies of women studies are to question the traditional female role. I strongly support that we question the traditional female role. Nothing that we have now questions the traditional male role in society, least of all history. History is something that sells to boys the traditional male role, the male role of hero and performer. Every history lesson tells a boy that if you perform you will earn love and respect and that you will be seen on these pages, or if you fail you will be nothing, you will be invisible. To a boy, history is pressure to perform and not relief from that pressure. Feminism, to its credit, is relief from the pressure to perform the traditional female role and seeks to be outside its confines. To a boy, then, history reinforces that traditional male role and therefore because it reinforces the traditional male role it is the exact opposite of women's studies.

Tom: Women's studies is also about women's rights.

Warren: Yes, this is why we also need men's studies. Women's studies tell women that they have the right to what was traditionally the male role. Nothing tells men that they have the right to the traditional female role, for example, the right for a dad to have equal rights to be home with the children while the mother financially supports the children and the husband.

Tom: Before we continue the men's portion of gender transition, do you see the feminist movement being mostly positive or negative?

Warren: Actually, I cherish the feminist movement especially because it did many things to pave the way for flexible schedules. I love the area that it has allowed for flexibility in child care options. I love the fact that because we love women we have developed improved safety standards at work that we have never had before. When I see girls playing team sports like baseball and soccer it really moves me to tears because I remember girls in my day never having the opportunity to do that and as a result they did not understand how to separate the issue from the friendship. They took things personally, they didn't have the understanding that many girls have today. They didn't take the tough spots of losing to the other team and then winning.

Tom: So, you cherish the positive parts of feminism, but what about the negative parts?

Warren: It made us focus on the fact that working mothers worked more hours inside the home, but no one told us that working fathers worked more hours outside the home. In essence, feminism taught us that God could be a she but not that the Devil could also be a she. It showed us the shadow side of men and the light side of women but it neglected the shadow side of women and the light side of men. And it neglected to acknowledge each side, each sex, has the shadow side and the light side within it.

Tom: I know that the book and this tape are called *The Myth of Male Power*, but are there ways that a woman experiences a greater sense of powerlessness than her male counterpart?

Warren: Absolutely. For one thing, a woman's size leads to a greater fear of being overpowered and being vulnerable to especially rape, robbery and assault, and she is more likely to fear pregnancy and date rape and aging. She receives less socialization to take a career to support her husband and children and therefore often feels pressured to marry a man who earns more rather than choosing from all the available men. She has less exposure to team sports with that blend of competition and cooperation that team sports creates. We often think that team sports often focuses on competition. In fact team sports helps a woman know when to compete and when to cooperate.

Tom: I suppose that women have the little problems like the issue of walking into a bar without being bothered?

Warren: Exactly, and fortunately most industrialized nations have at least acknowledged these female experiences. The unfortunate part is that the conclusion is that women have the problem and men are the problem. What's missing from that picture is the acknowledgement that men have a different experience. Take for example a man's marriage that has become alimony payments or his home becomes his wife's home and his children become child support payments for children that have been turned against him psychologically. This man feels that he is spending his life basically working for people who hate him. He feels desperate to feel love but he also feels that another marriage will ultimately leave him with another mortgage payment, and more children turned against him and a deeper desperation. Then when he is called commitment phobic this man does not feel understood. When a man tries to keep up with these payments and works overtime and someone accuses him of coming home late or being a workaholic and he tries to cope by drinking and then someone calls him a drunkard, he doesn't feel powerful, he feels powerless.

Tom: What do you see as the most serious discrimination against men?

Warren: Draft registration of our sons, but not our daughters. In post offices across the United States, certain service posters put pictures of a man with these words posted across their bodies: "Register: A Man's Got to Do What a Man's Got to Do." Can you imagine if a post office had a poster of a Jewish person saying: "A Jew's Got to Do What a Jew's Got to Do?"

Tom: Ouch.

Warren: What if because we register men to be killed off in war, that's their role? What if we registered women to produce male children to replace those men killed off in war? What if we had selective service poster with pregnant women with these words written their bodies: "Register: A Woman's Got to Do What a Woman's Got to Do."

Tom: Obviously there would be a few women that would say that a woman's body is a woman's choice.

Warren: Exactly. A slogan for a woman is: A woman's body, a woman's choice. Our slogan for a man is: A man's got to do what a man's got to do. Now the question to me is this: How is it that if any other single group is singled out to register for the draft based on its characteristics at birth, be that group Black women Jewish or gays, we would immediately recognize it as genocide. But when men are singled out based on their sex at birth, then men are stupid enough to call it power.

Tom: Well, now that women are joining the military is that making things a bit more equal?

Warren: Actually not. Women have equal rights to join the military, but not equal obligations to register and once they are in the military women have increasingly equal rights to fight in combat

position but not equal obligations to be in those combat positions if they are needed.

Tom: If the President of the United States was to establish affirmative action lets say to the military, what might that look like?

Warren: Imagine a moment: music playing in your car radio and an announcer voice interrupts with a special bulletin from the President and for some reason you decide not to switch stations, and the President denounces that since 1.2 million American men have been killed in war, “as part of my new program for equality we will draft only women until 1.2 million American women have been killed in war.” The single largest barrier of getting men to look within is that what any other group would call powerlessness men have been taught to call power. We don’t call male killing sexism, we call it glory. We don’t call the 1 million men killed and maimed in one battle in WW I, the battle of the Somme—we don’t call it a holocaust, we call it serving the country. We don’t call those who selected those men to die murderers, we call them voters.

Tom: If I get this right, what you are saying is that power is the control of one’s life. First, elaborate on that a bit, and second, could you deal with whether men have the power we think they have in traditional ways that power has been defined—the power of money, influence, status, that type of power. Could you start with the “control of your life power?”

Warren: Sure. In 1920, women lived one year longer than men, but today women live seven years longer. We acknowledge that Blacks dying six years sooner than Whites reflects the powerlessness of Blacks in society, yet men dying seven years earlier than women is the reflection of powerlessness of men in society. If power means having control over one’s life then there is no better ranking in race and sex roles combined in power over our lives than the life expectancy figures. I will give you those figures in a second. At the top is females, White: average life expectancy 79. Second place is females, Black: 74. Males, White in third place: 72; males, Black in fourth place: 65.

Tom: So, men’s shorter life expectancy is one example of powerlessness when powerlessness is defined as control over one’s life?

Warren: Yes, and another is man’s greater tendency to commit suicide.

Tom: I know men commit suicide four times more often than women, but is that true in all age groups?

Warren: No, until boys and girls are nine, their suicide rates are identical. It’s from 10-14 when the boys’ rate becomes twice as high as the girls; from 15-19, four times as high; and from 20-26, six times as high. In absolute numbers as boys are exposed to male roles, their suicide rates increases 25,000%.

Tom: Wow, what about for older men vs. older women?

Farrell: The suicide rate for men over 85 is 1,350% higher than for women over 85.

Tom: Astounding. We never hear about those kind of figures. Now part of control over one’s life has to deal with being a victim of violence. We hear that women are victims of violence more than men. Is that true?

Warren: No. Overall men are twice as likely to be victims of violence over women, even when rape is included. And men are three times more likely to be victims of murder.

Tom: In a sense it sounds like you are saying that men are the invisible victims of murder.

Warren: I am. For example when Rodney King was beaten by the police, we call it violence against Blacks and not men, but if “Regina King” was beaten I think many people would have considered it as violence against women.

Tom: Before we get to the traditional forms of power, I am fascinated by these unconscious ways in which male powerlessness is invisible. Do you have any other examples?

Warren: I don't know if you remember Steve Petrix, a journalist who lived here in San Diego. Everyday he returned home to have lunch with his wife. One day he got to his door and heard his wife screaming. She was being attacked by an assailant. Steve fought the assailant off while his wife ran to call the police and the intruder killed Steve. Steve was playing an invisible role, the role of unpaid bodyguard. We think of men as being violent to women. The invisible role we never think of is a man's role to be expected to protect any women he is with any time she might be threatened.

Warren: You have a subtitle in *The Myth of Male Power* called *Why Men are the Disposable Sex*. Is this one way how the men are the disposable sex?

Warren: Yes. These involve the expectation of men to be the unpaid bodyguards, or of men to be the sex to register for the draft, or volunteer fire fighters, or to be almost 100% of the members of the most dangerous professions, the hazardous jobs. These are just a few of the ways that men are expected to be the disposable sex, and we don't recognize them and therefore they are invisible.

Tom: Okay, let's move on to the traditional forms, like who makes the bucks?

Warren: Let's get right to the nitty-gritty here. When it comes to money, what counts between the sexes is net worth—the money that's left after expenses and liabilities are subtracted. For example, if men make twice as much but are also expected to pay more for child support, alimony, mortgage payments, then it's the net worth, not the gross income that lets us know which sex is faring better financially. Interestingly, when I wrote *The Myth of Male Power* in 1993, the most recent net worth data available was based on the 1980 Census. The net worth of single women “householders” (the primary owners of homes in a non-married household) was 141% of their male counterparts; as of the 2000 census, it was 93%. A good litmus test for the degree to which we care about men and women is to ask this question: “Am I more concerned about single women having 93% of men's net worth in 2000 than I was when single men's net worth was only 71% of women's (based on the 1980 Census).”

Tom: So you are not saying women have higher gross income, but rather that more men are more likely to, for example, support wives rather than wives to support husbands and therefore that his income is more likely to be divided up.

Warren: Yes, and this is especially true after divorce and it often means that women receive the home a man pays for and also receives the children that men pay for. Its important to note though that the woman has a time obligation the man does not have. That is, she spends time with those children, but it is exactly this woman's time obligation that the man is paying for. When men earn more to pay for a home that they are not living in, they of course increase their gross income to pay for that, but not necessarily their net worth.

Tom: And when the man and woman start dating, he is more likely to pay and she is more likely to be paid for?

Warren: Yes. So he earns more money to pay for the dinner, the theater, the gas but he also has more spending obligations.

Tom: Now what about the wealthiest people, aren't they mostly men?

Warren: No. Surprisingly the IRS [in 1993] reports that the wealthiest 1% of the population, those with assets over a half million, among those people women's net worth is also more than men's.

Tom: How can so many of the wealthiest people be women when women hold none of the top corporate jobs?

Warren: In part by marrying those men that hold those jobs when those men die. Women compete hard for those men who compete hard.

Tom: Well, if women have more net worth so to speak, it would stand to reason that they would also have more buying power more spending power. Do they?

Warren: Yes, they do. A study of large shopping malls including men's shops and sporting goods stores found seven times more floor space is devoted to women than to men.

Tom: I've noticed that.

Warren: Both sexes buy more for women. The key to wealth is not how much someone earns but what we spend on ourselves, either by our own discretion or what is spent on us. Overall, women control consumer spending by a wide margin in every consumer category.

Tom: Are you implying that control of consumer spending by women gives women other forms of power?

Warren: Yes, it does. When women spend more and watch more TV in every timeslot, networks can't afford to bite the hand that feeds them. Women become to TV what bosses are to employees.

Tom: And what is the result of that?

Warren: Women as victim shows are becoming increasingly popular. For example, Law and Order, featuring both sexes as victims, was among TV's most popular shows for ten years--until Law & Order: Special Victims Unit came on the air. The "Special Victims" were 712% more likely to be women than men. It took only two years for the Special Victims version—with 121 women and 17 men as victims--to surpass Law & Order in the ratings. For the next nine years it surpassed Law & Order in the ratings every year. Finally, Law & Order dropped off the air (in 2010).

Tom: Its sounds like, Warren, what you are saying is part of male socialization for powerlessness is teaching men to spend more on women?

Warren: Yes. A fundamental form of sexism is called the spending obligation gap. In restaurants men pay for women 10 times more frequently than women pay for men, and the more expensive the restaurant, the more the man pays. Women say: "Hey wait a minute, Warren, men earn more!" But when two women go off to a restaurant they don't assume that the woman who earns more will pay the bill.

Tom: That's a good point.

Warren: The expectation of a man to spend more on a woman creates the spending obligation gap.

Tom: How do you think this expectation to spend more on women affects men's lives and their personalities? Let's get personal Warren. How did this affect you when you were younger?

Warren: I got the sense of the spending obligation gap as soon as I thought about my first date. As a teenager, I used to love babysitting. I loved kids, but it was also the only way I could raid a refrigerator for free and get paid and have no one holler at me. Then I got to the dating age and, alas, babysitting paid 50 cents an hour and mowing the lawn paid \$2 an hour. I hated mowing the lawn and the humidity of New Jersey and the bug biting and the noonday sun made it unpleasant, but as soon as I started dating, I started mowing lawns. For boys I think lawn mowing is a metaphor for the way we start taking jobs that we like less because they pay more. Then around the junior year of high school boys start to repress interest in foreign languages, literature, fine arts, sociology and anthropology, because we know that an art history major will make a lot less than an engineer and as a result in terms of spending expectations he knows that he might have to support a woman because he can't expect a woman to support him. Over 85% of students who take engineering as a major are men and over 80% that take art history are women, and the reason I am saying this is that spending obligations that lead a man to choose a career he likes less than one that pays more is a sign of male powerlessness and not male power. But when he takes that job, women will often assume he will pay because after all "he earns more" and because both sexes' expectations reinforce male powerlessness.

Tom: Okay, if men have lower net worth and greater spending obligations, don't they at least have greater influence power?

Warren: In business and government, for sure. But let me explain why influence power is not real power. For example, if we told mothers, "Hey listen, Mom, the more children you have the more power you will have," most mothers would be intelligent enough to laugh at us. But if we said the more children you will have the more the more people will love and respect you, she would legitimately feel pressure. She would not be feeling empowered. But we tell men, the more people you supervise, the more power we have, and we buy it. Men, we are really the stupid sex. Men call things power that any woman would be smart enough to call powerlessness. Real power, then, does not come from caving into pressure to expand our obligations. It comes from deciding what we want to do with our life.

Tom: But didn't a lot of men at least have the satisfaction of having influence over others, something that women didn't have?

Warren: Almost every woman had a primary role in the female-dominated family structure. Only a small percentage of men had a primary role in the male-dominated governmental or religious structures. Many mothers in a sense were the chairman of the board of a small company, their family. Conversely, most men were on the assembly line of their company, either a physical or a psychological assembly line. While theoretically the man was the master of the house, most men felt like they were a visitor in their wife's castle in the same way a woman would have felt as a visitor in their husband's place of work. From a woman's perspective, a man's home is his castle; from a man's perspective, a woman's home is his mortgage.

Tom: You know, Warren, we heard a lot about women working in two jobs and men working one. True?

Warren: No. Women do work more hours inside the home, but what we don't hear about is that men work more hours outside the home. The average man commutes farther, spends more time doing yard work, repair work and painting, and when all these are combined, as a University of Michigan study reported in the *Journal of Economic Literature* in 1991 found, the average man worked 61 hours a week. The average women worked 56 hours.

Tom: So, Warren, overall in the larger picture, this frequent comparison we hear all the time about women and minority groups such as Blacks, I would think that you say that's quite off base?

Warren: It's very off base and the off-baseness started right about the 1970s, when an article in *Psychology Today* said women were like "niggers" and started comparing the situation with Blacks with the situations with women. It got all these feminists, including myself, starting to compare the oppression of Blacks with the oppression of women and that is where this comparison started that made the use of the gains of the Civil Rights Movement to make women look like victims. Now not that the parallels didn't have a germ of truth, but what none of us realized was how each sex was, historically speaking, the other sex's slave in a way. Therefore neither sex was a "nigger" because a "nigger" implies that all the slavery was one-sided.

Tom: Well, in what way did men have an equivalent experience to Blacks and slaves?

Warren: Blacks were forced via slavery to risk their lives in cotton fields so that Whites might benefit economically, while Blacks died prematurely. Men were forced by the draft to risk their lives on the battlefields so that everyone else could benefit economically, and men died prematurely. The disproportionate amount of Blacks and males in war increases both Blacks' and males' likelihood of experiencing problems such as post-traumatic stress, of becoming killers in post-war civilian life, and of dying earlier. Both slaves and men died to make the world free, but it was someone else's freedom. Slaves had their own children involuntarily taken away from them. Men still today have their own children taken involuntarily away from them. We tell women they have the right to their children and we tell men they have to fight for children (in divorce). Blacks were forced via slavery into society's most hazardous jobs. Men are forced by socialization into the most hazardous jobs. Both slaves and men used to make up 100% of the death professions. Men still do. When slaves give up their seats for Whites, we call that subservient; when men give up their seats for women we call it politeness. Similarly, we called that a symbol of subservience when their master entered the room, but it is a symbol of politeness if men stand up when women enter the room. Blacks are more likely than Whites to be homeless; men are more likely than women to be homeless. Blacks are more likely than Whites to be in prison. Men are 16 times more likely than women to be in prison. Blacks die earlier than Whites. Men die earlier than women. Blacks are less likely than Whites to attend college or graduate from college. Men are less likely than women to attend college: 37% vs. 63%.

Tom: Some people are going to be surprised by those figures, but what about in the workplace?

Warren: Apartheid forced Blacks to mine diamonds for Whites. Socialization expected men to work in different types of mines to pay for diamonds for women. Nowhere in history has there ever been a ruling class who worked to afford diamonds to give to the oppressed class, hoping that the op-

pressed would like them more. Blacks are more likely than Whites to volunteer for war in order to earn money and to gain skills. Men are more likely than women to volunteer for war for the same reasons. Blacks are more likely than Whites to subject themselves to the child abuse of boxing and football in hopes of earning respect, money, and love. Men are more likely than women to subject themselves to the child abuse of boxing and football, also with the same hopes. It would also be very hard to find a single example in history in which a group that cast more than 50% of the vote got away with calling themselves the victim. Can you think of an example of a repressed group that chooses to vote for their oppressors rather than their own members taking responsibility for running for office? Women are the only minority group that is a majority, the only group that calls themselves oppressed who can control who gets into every office in every community in the country. Power is not in who holds the office. Power is in who chooses who hold the office.

Tom: Good point.

Warren: Blacks, the Irish and Jews never have had close to 50% of the American vote. Women are the only “oppressed group” to share the same parents as the oppressor, to be born in the middle class and the upper middle class as frequently as the “oppressor” and to own more of the cultures luxury items than their “oppressor.” They are “oppressed” group whose labor has enabled them to buy the \$50 million of cosmetics sold each year, the only “oppressed” group that spends more on high fashion brand name clothing than their “oppressors,” and the only “oppressed” group that watches more TV in any time period than their “oppressors.”

Tom: Well, feminists at one time were comparing marriage to slavery with females as slaves.

Warren: It really seems like an insult to women’s intelligence to suggest that marriage is female slavery when we have 25 million American females who have read an average of 20 romance novels per month, often with the fantasy of marriage. So, we have to ask if the feminists are suggesting that these 25 million women have enslavement fantasies because they fantasize about marriage, and this is the reason why Danielle Steel was once the best selling author in the world. Never has there been a slave class who has spent a lot of time dreaming about being a slave and purchasing books and magazines that told them how to get a slave master to commit. Either marriage is something different than slavery to women (and it is) or it is a ticket to female options. Or feminists are suggesting that women are not intelligent.

Tom: It sounds to me that you are saying intelligent women have seen that marrying up frees them.

Warren: Exactly. I’ll be explaining in a bit how the woman married to the successful man has often been the one to free herself to have options that men do not have.

Tom: So, bottom line is, what does all this mean?

Warren: By understanding that what we did to blacks was immoral we are willing to assuage our guilt by affirmative action programs and welfare. By thinking of men and what we did to men as not being consequential, and that men are the dominant oppressors and do what they do for power and for greed, we feel very little guilt when men die early in the process. By believing that women are an oppressed slave-like class, we extended privileges to women that had been originally designed to compensate for our immorality to blacks. For women and only women to take advantage of the slavery compensation is its own brand of immorality. For men to cooperate with this, is its own brand of ignorance.

Tom: Are you suggesting that men did all this because they were more altruistic and loving and less power hungry than women?

Warren: No. Both sexes made themselves slave to each other in different ways.

Tom: Tell me about that. What made the sexes slaves to each other, and what suddenly allows us to question this phenomenon?

Warren: For thousands of years, most marriages were in what I call Stage One marriages. They were survival-focused marriage. After WW II, marriages increasingly flirted with Stage Two marriages with a self-fulfillment focus. In Stage One, most couples were role mates. The women raised the children and the man's role was to raise the money. In Stage Two, couples increasingly desired to be soul mates. They could do this only if they were in the middle class though, and only once their survival needs were met could they up the ante and redefine love. In Stage One a woman called it love when a man was a good provider and protector. He called it love if she was beautiful and took care of the home and the children. Love meant a division of labor and that division of labor led to a division of different male and female interests. In Stage Two, love can mean common interests, common values. Love's definition therefore is in transition.

Tom: Well, then, did women begin redefining love first, or were they the most oppressed and most interested in love?

Warren: No. That would suggest that middle-class women were more oppressed than poor women and that middle-class women were more interested in love than poor women. Around the world it was middle- and upper-class women who were best able to redefine love because they were able to be free from the preoccupation with survival. But these women got free from the preoccupation with survival by being married to successful men.

Tom: So weren't these successful men not equally free to begin redefining love?

Warren: No. They were too preoccupied providing the success, the very success that freed the women. They could have protested, but when women showed men the type of love and respect they earned by succeeding they also chose the type of man that was more likely to be a money-machine than a loving dad. Ultimately, of course, it is men that have to take responsibility for changing this role.

Tom: Well, what exactly did the successful men do to that freed women?

Warren: First, successful men created the technology that allowed women to go from being a baby machine, cooking machine, and a cleaning machine to have time for love. If you think about it, a 1890's woman like Abigail had an average of eight children statistically. Cindy, a 1990's woman has options. She can have no children or ten children, but typically she has two children. She is no longer a baby machine. Abigail, the 1890's woman, cooked meals for ten people from scratch. She sewed clothes with callused hands without central air-conditioning and without heating. Cindy can put a pre-prepared meal in a microwave oven and expect help from a dishwasher, a washing machine, a freezer, a telephone, a car, and a 24-hour supermarket. All this led to a women's life span increasing by almost 50% since 1920.

Tom: What did male technology do for men?

Warren: It also increased men's life span, but not by as much. In 1920 women lived one year longer than men and today women live seven years longer than men. Men did a better job creating homes

and gardens for their wives than they did creating safer coal mines and construction sites for themselves. Men went from being a performing machine at home to being a performing machine away from home. In the process, men were disconnecting from their families, from love, and this created in men little deaths everyday.

Tom: You are saying that male technology - that is so criticized by the feminist movement - in reality led to the male role saving women more frequently than the female role saved men?

Warren: Exactly. Feminists sometimes criticized male technology for conspiring to constrict women's reproductive freedom, women's right to choose, for example; but male technology actually created women's right to choose. It created safe birth control and created safe abortions. Birth control for women did more than any other single thing to free women and it would do more than any other single thing to free men. Men invented the female pill, but no one invented the male pill.

Tom: So all this created a woman with a longer lifespan?

Warren: It created a woman who had more options, if she was married to a successful man. For example, when a successful woman meets a successful man they appear on the surface to be equals, but if they marry and consider children she almost invariably considers three options. Option one: work full time; option two: mother full time; and option three: some combination of working and mothering. He also considers three slightly different options. Option one: work full time; option two: work full time; and option three: work full time—or even work overtime or two jobs. So we are living in an era of a multi-option women and the no-option man. But remember, the woman can only have the multi-options if she is married to the successful man. And because women know this or they sense it, this has led to the continuing pressure on men to be successful in order to get female love.

Tom: So, it sounds to me that you are saying that men are kowtowing to this pressure rather than protesting it?

Warren: Yes. Society will never change until men speak up. But the important thing about women's options is that it allows a woman to tailor-make her life to her personality.

Tom: Tell me about that.

Warren: Some women prefer a career, some prefer children, some prefer to mix and match by being involved full-time with a child for a year or two with or without hired help and then returning to work part time for a while, then full time, then not at all.

Tom: There are all kinds of options.

Warren: Exactly. For men, children mean just more of the same: intensifying his commitment to the workplace. This allows very little variation to account for variations in a man's personality. The message to men is basically "Like it or lump it."

Tom: So feminism has not created equality, but it has created more than equality for women.

Warren: Yes. Had feminism focused on equality, its impact would have been more egalitarian and less politically successful. It would have had to emphasize women's responsibilities such as risking sexual rejection and taking sexual initiatives.

Tom: The kind of things men have to do all the time—risking rejection anytime they approach

women.

Warren: Exactly. The types of things that turn men into the jerks because they do the initiating too quickly or not soon enough and they appear like a wimp. That type of responsibility.

Tom: What other kinds of responsibilities?

Warren: The kinds such as: women must not just pay for dinners by option, but by obligation as often as men pay; or women, you should expect yourself to marry down economically as often as you marry up economically; or women, choose careers that you like less to support the families more, so you can marry a man who is earning less so he can support your living. These things would be far more egalitarian.

Tom: Because that would have emphasized the responsibilities as well as the options.

Warren: Precisely. It would have emphasized responsibilities, not just rights. But by emphasizing responsibility many women would have backed off and the movement would have been less successful.

Tom: If all these things were benefiting women, why did women become so angry at men?

Warren: Because the women married to successful men started to want from these men things that they didn't have, like time—time to love, time to come home early and pay attention to them, vulnerability—in order to become successful you can't be too vulnerable. Sensitivity. Characteristics which if a man had these characteristics would have prevented him, as a rule, from being successful, and therefore would have prevented these women from marrying them.

Tom: Sounds like a double-bind for men.

Warren: For both sexes.

Tom: So when the women did not get these things from men they became angry?

Warren: Yes, but that was just the beginning. The anger led to women initiating divorces. Two-thirds of divorces are initiated by women, and it was divorce that really created the anger.

Tom: How's that?

Warren: Divorce dumped women into the workplace without workplace skills. And it dumped women into the marketplace of men, but not with men who were addicted to a 40-year-old with two children but to two 20-year-olds.

Tom: So that men wanted two 20-year-olds instead of one 40-year-old. Well, I can see why some women would get angry about that.

Warren: Yes, and feminism grew politically by adding to this anger and feeding off it. It explained to women that you are segregated and put into lower paying and meaningless jobs without saying, "Wait a minute women. Men are also segregated into jobs, hazardous jobs, the 'death professions'" Feminism is so powerful that it blinded women to the men around them who are also segregated into different types of lower paying meaningless jobs: the short order cook for example, the dishwasher in the local coffee shop, the migrant worker that picks up the vegetables that are on her table, the custodian, the car washer, the busboy, the gas station attendant.

Tom: The invisible men.

Warren: Exactly, and by being blinded to these men, she missed the larger picture, that when either sex had minimal skills that commanded minimal wages in different types of meaningless jobs, by being blinded to this larger picture she became increasingly angry.

Tom: Did the anger also come from the fact that men as a group earn more than women as a group?

Warren: Simultaneously feminists focused on the fact that women as a whole earned less and did not focus on any of the thirteen reasons why women earn less. Since *The Myth of Male Power* was published in 1993, I did research for a book published in 2005 titled *Why Men Earn More: The Startling Truth Behind the Pay Gap—and What Women Can Do About It*. I was able to identify not thirteen but twenty-five measurable differences between men and women's work-life decisions. I discovered that each of men's choices resulted in men earning more; that each of women's choices resulted in women having more balanced lives—and therefore, usually happier lives. The main finding was that the road to high pay is a toll road: the tolls of working more hours, traveling overnight and weekends, moving to undesirable locations, hazardous jobs, unsanitary jobs, night shifts and so on. The pay paradox is that pay is about the power we forfeit to get the power of pay. You can see in this list of 25 ways to higher pay exactly how many are "tolls"—or tradeoffs. All 25 are in the endnote.

Tom: What do you think was the most important misrepresentation that feminism perpetrated leading to an unnecessary increase in anger among women?

Warren: Feminism encouraged women to interpret men's tendency to earn more for different work as an outcome of male dominance rather than as a symbol of male subservience.

Tom: Subservience.

Warren: Exactly. They didn't see it is an outcome of male obligation to go where the money was, not where the fulfillment was. For a man, following money was primary, following fulfillment was secondary. For him, divorce also created a change; he still followed money to support his family economically, but after divorce he had no family to support him emotionally.

Tom: In your view, Warren, are men doing anything other than being silent about this?

Warren: They are doing what most silent people do. They are becoming passive-aggressive. Rather than confronting the female anger, men are increasingly feeling that their only form of relationship power is not getting into a relationship. In my opinion this is really sad for both the sexes.

Tom: It puzzles me that men would be neither changing nor speaking up about this.

Warren: Divorce has led to women changing because divorce has changed women's source of income. It changed it from men only to some combination of men and work. Divorces did not lead to men changing because divorces only increase the pressure on men to focus on income. It led to millions of men taking on five payments that are rarely assessed to women. After divorce men take on child support, mortgage payments on a home they no longer live in, apartment renting, alimony and dating. This led to men doing more of the same and therefore being more of the same. Men did not complain because the very core of male socialization is that when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

Tom: That is so true and sometimes I wonder how much women understand the degree to which we as men feel that the essence of who we are involves not complaining. So both sexes are in transition, but women are handling the transition better?

Warren: Yes. Divorce led women to the primary fear of economic dependence and left men with the primary fear of emotional dependence even though both sexes experience an increase in both types of dependencies. But it is much easier for the government to help the women economically than it is for the government to help the men emotionally. It is easier for the government upon divorce to require the man to give the woman money than to require the woman to give the man emotional love or sexual love.

Tom: You mean there is no bill in congress to subsidize prostitution?

Warren: Right. At least I have not noted that as part of the health plan.

Tom: Do you have much hope in the future for the two sexes?

Warren: Yes, I do, because this is really the first time in human history that the qualities it takes to survive as a species is compatible with the qualities it takes to love. In the past choosing the killer male led to the survival of the fittest, in the future choosing the killer male may lead to potential destruction of everyone. So what was functional has become dysfunctional.

Tom: And choosing the killer male was not compatible with choosing the loving male.

Warren: Correct. In the past men had to be cut off from their feelings or they would not be willing to die to protect the family and the community. So women had to fall in love with people who were inherently incapable of loving. In the future women are able to fall in love less with the killer and more and more with the nurturer-connector. In the past, survival, marriage, and the family all required the killer male. In the future, survival, marriage, and family will all require the communicative male.

Tom: You said what was once functional has become dysfunctional. How does that relate to the whole idea of dysfunctional families?

Warren: Completely. We often think of our family, now what our therapists call our “family of origin,” as dysfunctional. I think it would be more accurate and also more compassionate to call our parents Stage One functional. For example, when divorce would have led to starvation, societies were forced to make divorce a taboo. So since a family had no option but to work together, co-dependency was viable. Stage One functional.

Tom: So what comes next?

Warren: The ability of men to create technology that allowed people to get beyond starvation problems allowed people to have the freedom to say, “Is my husband somebody who is paying attention to me? Is this really love?” which allowed women to initiate divorces. Divorces then allowed women and men to say, “Wait a minute. I have to prepare myself to not be co-dependent, but to be independent.”

Tom: So once divorces became allowed co-dependency was no longer functional?

Warren: Precisely. Now in Stage Two, co-dependency has become dysfunctional, but not understanding this has led us to blaming our parents rather than crediting our parents with having

worked so hard to create the conditions to allow us to ask questions like: Are we communicating, are we listening, are we loving each other? Our parents couldn't afford to listen because if our fathers were listening to their feelings, they would say I don't want to work at this type of job to get ten children through a Depression.

Tom: But what our fathers and those so-called dysfunctional families of the past that we are blaming, what they were actually doing is teaching us survival skills.

Warren: And they were teaching us survival skills for their time and even our own time, because if the great Depression comes again or that recession comes again we are going to need those survival skills of cutting off our feelings. Feelings, depression, things like that are luxuries of people who have taken care of their survival skills.

Tom: It sounds that you feel like we have been unnecessarily blaming our parents and blaming men.

Warren: We've ironically been blaming both groups that have freed the world to go beyond survival concerns and to get into things like we are doing today: going down the road in a car, listening with this technology to a tape that gets us to think more in a refined and better way about the world.

Tom: And there is something about a non-blame approach that you think is beneficial as we move into Stage Two?

Warren: The non-blame approach I would not suggest if there was really a need for blame; however, it is wonderful when there isn't a need for blame because the non-blame approach is very therapeutic. The blame approach is non-therapeutic.

Tom: You talk about in your book a non-blame approach allowing us to become much more loving and accepting and moving from Stage One to Stage Two in a way that makes life more fulfilling for all of us.

Warren: Instead of having the war of a women's movement and the war of a men's movement, we have the option of a gender transition movement where we are looking inside ourselves and saying, Yep, we're stuck in the past of what was functional for our parents and we have an opportunity we should be celebrating in a way we have never celebrated before. For the first time in human history we have the option to love each other and what we are doing. Instead, we are spending twenty-five years blaming men and that is sad.

Tom: I think that what I hear you saying is that in Stage Two successful men have freed women but forgotten to free themselves and that in Stage One both sexes were slaves in different ways. Okay, what about the feminist claim that women were treated as property?

Warren: Women were treated as property, but what the feminists missed was that men were treated as less than property. Men were expected to die before their property was hurt. They were expected to protect their property before themselves. If a woman committed a crime under English law, the man went to jail. Feminists never told us about that. Even if a woman spent too much in running her home, it was the man that went to prison.

Tom: Why property was often passed down through men and not down through women?

Warren: Property was passed down through men because men were not worthy of a woman until

they had property. It was the man's responsibility to provide the property.

Tom: So providing property was a sign of obligation, not a privilege?

Warren: Yes. This did not mean that the man had more obligations in the larger picture than women did. Women had the obligation and responsibility to provide for the children. Neither sex had rights. That is the misunderstanding of the last 25 years. It was expected that the sexes had rights. Both sexes did not have rights, but obligations and expectations, and if they fulfilled those obligations and expectations, they received status and privileges. The status and privileges were the bribes to get people to fulfill their obligations.

Tom: In other words they got status for being subservient?

Warren: Essentially yes. For example, men got the status of being a hero for being a good servant. The very word hero comes from the Greek word *sirow*, from which comes our word servant as well as our word slave, as well as our word protector. And that is perfect because that is what a hero was—a slave who was supposed to serve and protect. To protect the community in general was part of his job and to protect women and children in particular. In exchange, heroes received the respect and love of those who they protected. But appreciation is a tricky thing. Just as the appreciation we gave our mothers for cooking kept them cooking, so the money and medals we gave men kept them slaves to their role as hero. In some respects appreciation keeps a slave a slave.

Tom: Was it mostly in war that men were the disposable sex or less than property?

Warren: Mostly, but definitely not exclusively. Historically men have been the beast of burden, whether they built the pyramids, or the railroad tracks across America, in which thousands of men died, basically so that we could be served dinner in a dining car. In almost every country and every century, men were not thought of as animals or property. They were just used that way. In the 15th century the Incas did not have horses to speed messages up and down their mountain pathways, so they used men. They paid them money, which fed their families when the men died.

Tom: Hold on, weren't these rules made by men?

Warren: These rules were made actually by the needs for survival. The rules were technically made by men, but what does it say about men that they made rules to sacrifice themselves for their families? The rules were made not to serve men's needs, but the needs of survival.

Tom: The survival of the whole group?

Warren: Exactly. The survival of the whole group, and what was needed for survival was reinforced by both sexes. Women inside the home and men outside the home—they both reinforced it.

Tom: In our own country though, haven't women been more of the second-class citizens?

Warren: That has been the theory, but it is not correct. Both sexes have been second citizens in different ways. For example in the Civil War, two groups were able to avoid the draft, women and upper-class males. Any female was the equivalent of an upper-class male in this respect, except that even upper-class men had to buy their way out of death. Some upper-class men could do this by paying \$300 to a poor man. This allowed the poor man's family to survive, while over half a million poor men died in the war. So in total, 623,000 American men during the Civil War were killed. That is the equivalent of eleven Vietnam Wars. Try to imagine eleven Vietnam Wars in a row where

only women were drafted and killed.

Tom: Wait a minute, Warren, one of the things that I hear women say is that war is a “man’s thing” that men are the ones who create war.

Warren: It was the man’s role. For example, in the Civil War, even upper-class men would not run ads looking for replacements because the women would not allow it. In the North and South, women would hiss at men if they tried to avoid war. Both sexes still hiss and boo.

Tom: So, a man has a strong push to try and become a hero. Is this push for men to fight from women true historically and across different cultures?

Warren: Absolutely. There are no enduring legends of the beautiful princess falling in love with the conscientious objector. The princess falls in love with the prince who can provide for her or a warrior who can kill for her. Both the killer and the prince could protect her. The deeper purpose of violence against men was to prevent violence against women. Both sexes prepared boys and men, from everything from circumcision to games, to endure pain, to deny pain, and to continue protecting until they died.

Tom: So were the women always falling in love with the men who were invulnerable?

Warren: No. They were falling in love with the men who appeared to be invulnerable. In fact, though, the ability to kill always requires the vulnerability of being exposed to being killed. The irony of male eligibility is that it is created by a male vulnerability that is masked as invulnerability. To this day that is the male tragedy.

Tom: Okay. Warren, what incentive do women have to give up this power of having a class of people called “men” brainwashed into protecting them and at the same time being fool enough to call it power?

Warren: No incentive [laughs]! No, actually there are two incentives. First, when men are expected to protect women with their strength, the risk is that the very strength that protects them in one instance can be used against them in another. Second, the disconnection from feelings that is required to be shot at on the battlefield or hurt on the football field does not a loving man make. Thus the athletes that the cheerleaders cheer for are involved in one-third of the on-campus sexual assaults.

Tom: You are suggesting that we are still preparing men to be disposable?

Warren: Very much so. Look at football, boxing, wrestling, ice hockey, auto crashing . . . I mean auto racing. Yet the United States Senate is proposing to make violence against women a hate crime at the same time we are calling violence against men “entertainment.” The most attractive girls in high school are still cheering for violence against men. They even give their love for men being violent unto themselves. They give their love for people who play “smashface” (football) the best. Basically, you can think of junior high football as taxpayer subsidized child abuse.

Tom: Child abuse?

Warren: Well, perhaps more accurately taxpayer subsidized “boy abuse.” Every one of us, who pays taxes, contributes money to subsidizing this boy abuse and we pacify ourselves by calling this “education.” If we encourage girls to get male approval by getting spinal cord injuries, enduring con-

cussions and ruining their knees for life, we would have no trouble recognizing it as subsidizing violence against women. When girls do it, we abhor it. When boys do it, we cheer for it.

Tom: Very simply you are saying we celebrate violence against men.

Warren: Yes. Think of how we name our football teams after violent societies: Vikings, Aztecs, Trojans; or fierce animals: Tigers, Bears, Panthers. Even our cars are called Jaguar, Cherokee, Cougar, Fury, Stealth. Just imagine for a second, your daughter being picked up by a guy driving a Ford Fairy, or a Dodge Daisy, or a Plymouth Pansy. Imagine a grown man rooting for a team named not the Giants, but the Munchkins, and not the Atlanta Braves, but the Atlanta Sensitives.

Tom: Cute. But tell me this, almost all of us cheer for male violence in these sorts of situations. Why is this?

Warren: This is a really crucial question. The answer is because “our team winning” really meant “our society protected.” The loss of a man had to be risked to prevent the loss of a society.

Tom: Tell me this; do you think that male violence is inherent?

Warren: If male violence was inherent there would be no need to create a social structure bribing men to become violent. Fortunately there are three conditions that lead to men being non-violent.

Tom: What are these three conditions?

Warren: The society needs to have adequate food, it has to have adequate water, and it needs to be isolated from attack. During various times in their history these sorts of conditions prevailed in Tahiti, in Minoa on Crete and among the Central Malaysian Semai. When men were not needed to kill, women did not reward warriors with love and men did not try to obtain love by killing. This was neither women’s fault nor men’s fault. It was simply that killing was not needed to survive.

Tom: So the historians have been suggesting that matriarchal societies were superior because men and women worked in partnership. But what the historians are ignoring is that partnership was not the result of matriarchy, but the result of these three conditions being met?

Warren: Yes. When these three conditions were met, men did not have to be off killing, so that they could be back at home having a partnership. It is false to call that patriarchy or matriarchy. It was just different survival conditions.

Tom: Aren’t these historians calling it matriarchy because female gods were primary and not male gods?

Warren: Male gods were primary when protection was the primary need, but they were not primary when protection was not the primary need. The sad part about this matriarchal labeling is that it makes male sacrifice look like male dominance. It makes peace and partnership look like the product of women, instead of the outcome of adequate food and water and a good defense by the sacrifice of men.

Tom: Okay, how long do you think it takes for men to go from violent to non-violent?

Warren: Men adapt amazingly quickly when we give them new approval cues. The Japanese man

had no problem turning his sword into stock shares. After World War II we thought of the Japanese man as extremely violent, but now we think of the Japanese man as much more peaceful.

Tom: Feminists say that empire building is the proof of male greed, male violence, and male aggressiveness.

Warren: Both sexes have greed and aggressiveness as their shadow side. Both sexes needed greed in order to access supplies of food in times of shortage. But there are two important things to know about empires. First, empires were to countries what insurance policies are to individuals. They were for security, both to stave off attack and to have access to food and raw materials in times of famine and war. Second, we all complain about the killing that men do, then we choose to live in countries like the United States that were created by the killing that men did. Men often died for property. Women often live on the property that was their husband's grave. Major powers became major powers by the death of boys.

Tom: We often hear that women are nature's civilizing balance.

Warren: By taking care of the killing for women, it can be said that men civilized women.

Tom: Wow! That is a fascinating way of conceptualizing this whole thing. Let's deal with the issue of self-esteem. Feminists such as Gloria Steinem, for example, in her book *Revolution From Within* says that women were second-class citizens in the sense that they were the sex that developed low self-esteem.

Warren: Both sexes learned to define as high self-esteem what was really a high degree of conformity, the opposite of what we today hold as self-esteem. Conformity to what the society needed. Spartans, if they were preparing for war removed their boys from the home at the age of seven and put the boys through desensitization to feelings, floggings that were so fierce that many died in the process. Now preparing a boy to die at the age of seven does not create in him high self-esteem. In Stage One, we gave both sexes status and appreciation in exchange for making themselves subservient, a slave to roles necessary to perpetuate the species. That is a very different definition of self-esteem than we think of today, about having a high degree of internal security allowing people to be in touch with their feelings that would have allowed them to not be slaves to certain roles.

Tom: What about the argument of polygyny, of one man having many wives, that it was a sign of women as men's property?

Warren: Polygyny was a system by which a rich man had more than one wife so that a woman would not be stuck with a poor man. The man who was deprived was actually the man who was poor. He was deprived, in essence, because he could not afford a woman. Perhaps the greatest example of polygyny is among nuns who "marry Christ." While Christ promises to protect many women, the nuns take vows of celibacy. Polygyny is often thought about of a way to give men lots of sex, but Christ's wives would not have been celibate if the main focus of polygyny was the satisfying of male sexual desires. Polygyny was in fact for the protection of women by the best male saviors. Christ was the best of the saviors; priests were the human manifestation. Priests provided protection without the sexual demands. They provided the ability to listen to women without burdening her with having to listen to him.

Tom: If all of this protection of women is built into our psyches, should we even bother trying to change it?

Warren: Conservatives say this is the way it was in the past and this is the way it will be in the future. I say, no. The important question is not whether it is natural, but if it is functional. If a baby is born naturally with a handicap we don't say, "Listen baby, your handicap is natural. We are going to help you increase it." This is what we do in essence with men's aggressiveness and women's passivity. That division was functional in the past, but now for the first time in human history both sexes have the chance to be full human beings. In fact if we are going to survive we need to stop training men to be killers and to train women to be independent enough to not be dependent on the killer-protector, who with nuclear technology will really be the killer-destroyer.

Tom: Aside from violent sports and male-only draft registration, in what other ways are men being prepared for disposability?

Warren: The death professions are all almost 100% men.

Tom: I assume by death professions, you mean hazardous jobs?

Warren: Yes. Jobs like lumberjack, trucker, and construction worker, jobs that lead to 94% of occupational deaths occurring to men. A few people are aware that every day almost as many men are killed at work as were killed on the average day in Vietnam.

Tom: So, when the feminists said women were being segregated into all the worst jobs, what we didn't hear from them is that men were being segregated into the death professions?

Warren: Yes. Feminists, like myself, were also not accurate when we said that women were segregated into all the worst jobs. For example, when the jobs related almanac ranked the 250 jobs from best to worst based on a combination of salary, stress, work environment, outlook, security, and physical demands, they found that 24 out of 25 of the worst jobs were almost all males' jobs.

Tom: Some examples?

Warren: Truck driver, sheet metal worker, roofer, boilermaker, lumberjack, carpenter, construction worker or foreman, construction machinery operator, football player, welder, millwright, and iron ore miner. All of these jobs that I just mentioned have one thing in common: 95-100% are men.

Tom: And you are saying these are not just hazardous jobs, but jobs that have the worst of everything, from salary, to stress, to outlook, to security and so on. Why are professions like this likely to have such a high percentage of men?

Warren: Remember what we said about men having higher gross incomes, but lower net worths because, for example the woman may have the burden of caring for three children but the man has the burden of supplying the income to those three children, himself, and his wife? So he is more likely to have a job that will take care of providing the income for all those people.

Tom: A job under desperate situations.

Warren: Exactly. Just as women are likely to wake up at three in the morning to breastfeed a crying baby, so is a man likely to be driving a truck at three in the morning to be able to supply the money to feed them.

Tom: When you suggest the death professions pay more as a sort of "death professions bonus" as you call it, are you also implying that jobs with a high percentage of females pay less because they have more desirable conditions?

Warren: Professions that have 85% or more females have in common seven of eight characteristics, what we may call the female occupation formula. What are common to these eight characteristics are two things. One is that they are desirable and, second, because they are desirable, they are much more in demand and because more people want them, employers can afford to pay less.

Tom: I think it is my job here to ask you what these eight characteristics are.

Warren: (1) First, the ability to psychologically check out at the end of the day. For example, a department store clerk can check out, a lawyer can't.

Tom: You mean not taking the job home with you?

Warren: Exactly. (2) There is physical safety: a receptionist more likely to be female has physical safety, versus that of a fire fighter. (3) Indoors: a secretary is indoors, a garbage collector is outdoors. (4) Desirable hours or flexible hours: a nurse, more likely to be female, has more desirable hours than a medical doctor who is more likely to be male and has less desirable hours. (5) No demands to move out of town, "or else" (that is, it means it's time to "move it or lose it"): a corporate secretary does not have a demand to move out of town, a corporate executive does.

Tom: Which is why IBM used to be called, "I've Been Moved."

Warren: Right. The seventh and eighth desirable characteristics are: (7) High fulfillment relative to training. This would be a woman who is a child care professional versus a man who is a coal miner. Most people would say that the child care professional has a little more fulfillment; and (8) an ability to work close to people in a pleasant environment is the eighth; for example, restaurant hostess versus a long-distance trucker.

Tom: So it is a myth then that women are segregated into the worst jobs?

Warren: Yes, it is a myth. The worst jobs are almost all male jobs, which they take because on average they have more mouths to feed.

Tom: Well when it comes to these hazardous jobs is there an effort to make them as safe as possible?

Warren: No. The United States has only one job safety inspector for every six fish and game inspectors. We have a work death rate 3-4 times higher than Japan's. If we had the same rate we would save the lives of 6,000 men and 400 women each year. To put it in another way, we kill 6,000 men and 400 women each year unnecessarily as a result of our lack of attention to work safety.

Tom: Many people are going to say that this is the first time they have ever heard this kind of thing. Why do we hear so little about the plight of these men?

Warren: Partially because men don't speak up and partially because of the location of men's work. Think about the garbage man. The garbage man works outside. You don't go up to him and ask him his name and say to him "What is your life like?" or "What is your experience with women like?" If you didn't go up to your secretary and get to know her a little bit as a person and ask her what her experience of men was you would be considered a sexist, you would be considered aloof—you would be considered arrogant. So we find out a little about our secretary's experience with men, but not about our garbage man's experience with women. That is because the place of man's labor is frequently so distant and outside the home. The logging, the trucking—we don't stop the logger, the trucker, or the construction worker and ask him what his experience of the world is.

Tom: You know, Warren, that reminds me of something else that I have heard you say, that when a woman meets a doctor we often overhear her saying to her woman friends that she met a wonderful doctor, but we rarely hear a woman say to a woman friend that I met a wonderful garbage man.

Warren: Yes. The garbage man is much more likely to be invisible in her life. Invisible to her, and she does not seek him out, so she really does not see him.

Tom: What are the consequences of these “second choice men” being invisible?

Warren: We hear, for example, things like the “glass ceiling”; women’s experience of discrimination, but we don’t hear about men’s experience of discrimination because no one talks to these men, and no one sees these men, and no one hears these men. So we don’t hear about the equivalent of the glass ceiling, what I would call the “glass cellar.”

Tom: The “glass cellar.” What does that mean?

Warren: Meaning, the invisible barrier that keeps men in 24 out of the 25 worst jobs, and these are what I call the “glass cellar” jobs.

Tom: In the book version of *The Myth of Male Power*, you take the reader on a journey around your neighborhood and try to make the experience of these invisible men more visible. Can you take us on that trip here?

Warren: I remember how I had just finished researching how about 70% of the garbage collectors in San Diego suffer job related injuries in the past year alone. As I was finishing up my research on that I heard the roar of the garbage truck go by my house. For the first time in my life, as I went to go take the garbage out, I actually allowed myself to look in the face of the man picking up the garbage. It was not until two or three weeks later that I allowed myself to talk to him, to make a connection with him as a human being. Then I was starting to see things that I had never seen before, I saw the lumbar support belt he was wearing, and it reminded me of the disproportionate chance for back injuries I had read about. Hernias, rectal cancer, cirrhosis of the liver or plain being hit by a passing automobile.

Tom: Many people have no idea how much hazard there is in that profession.

Warren: This recalled to me the story of a garbage collector that I just finished reading about, named Terry Hennessey. This is a real story. He had been compacting trash in San Diego and several bags of human blood splattered into his face while he was compacting the trash. Just a few weeks later he found a World War II hand grenade with a pin in it (it’s pretty hard to find a hand grenade without a pin in it) and some months later, Terry picked up a load of radioactive waste. His colleagues tell similar stories. One of them tells the story of battery acid exploding on their clothes and faces and of the compacting process causing chlorine to shoot out of an exploding container, setting a man on fire. Others tell of experiences of hot fireplace ashes being dumped into the trash and igniting the backs of trucks, or of liquid cyanide being poured over them.

Tom: Why don’t we hear about any of this?

Warren: In part because men never speak up and they tend to turn each other’s misfortune into humor. If they have an experience with cyanide, they start calling each other the “Cyanide Man” or the “Radioactive Man” and so on. The result was that I never really felt anything for these men because I had never heard how they were feeling. The first time I remember myself actually smiling

at my garbage man, frankly, it was a self-conscious smile. It was like an effort. I was aware of what I was doing. And it wasn't until later that day when I saw a pregnant woman I just reflected back on how automatically I smiled and connect to her. Inside of my smile was sort of an unstated statement that I was appreciating her joy, her adventure, her contribution, and I really became aware of the contrast between the self-conscious smile of the garbage collector and my automatic, loving, connecting smile to the woman.

Tom: It came so easily.

Warren: It came so easily, yeah. And I realized how I never in my life supported any garbage man's smile that expressed appreciation for his contribution. Although when I thought about it, here he is, supporting what the pregnant woman creates and carrying a different load.

Tom: I like that. He supports what the pregnant woman creates and carries a different load. But what else did you see differently?

Warren: Well, as I got to the supermarket and was sorting through chicken breasts, I always remember normally speaking being more aware of the crimes committed against chickens than the crimes committed against the workers that were preparing the chickens. You probably remember the incident of the 2,000 workers at the Morale Meat Packing Plant that 800 of them had become disabled in one year. Some of the workers at the Morale Plant were chopping and carving at a rate of a thousand movements per hour. And then I thought about 40% of these workers being disabled, disabled enough to leave their jobs for a year and each worker's hand essentially being a time bomb.

Tom: Now are you implying here that most of these workers were men?

Warren: In the 57 highest risk jobs at Moral almost 90% were men. But I think what was most astonishing to me was that dozens of these men who had to undergo surgery, surgery that required one to two months for their hands to heal were instead required to work immediately after the surgery.

Tom: Not to make light of any of this, but Warren it sounds like enough to almost make you a vegetarian.

Warren: Yes, until you start thinking about the vegetables. If you think about vegetables being sprayed with Parathion and the Parathion is sprayed on the vegetables by about 90% men who are flying planes or are in tractors. And as they fly the planes over the vegetables and the Parathion gets sprayed over the vegetables wind usually blows it right back into their faces, which is why they die so early. And that's in a sense the microcosm of the entire agriculture industry. I used to think of the agriculture industry as being one where you know the farmers and the women work side by side. In fact 24 out of 25 people who are killed in agriculture are men, and agriculture is the second most dangerous industry.

Tom: What kind of impact did this have on you personally when you go to have a meal at night?

Warren: Well, it's almost embarrassing because even if I have a microwave dinner, I will literally be—I'm probably the only person in this country that has this reaction—but I literally feel thankful about the vegetables and the dinner and the sacrifices that were made, the meat, also the way the dinner was packaged and the people that trucked it to me. I mean I just think to myself, "Here I am in three minutes preparing something costing me very little of my time and very little of my

money and all these people have, in a sense, worked for me, and in many cases, risked their lives for me." I just feel this enormous amount of gratitude.

Tom: You have a picture in *The Myth of Male Power* of men migrant workers, sleeping on the hillside in your town of Encinitas outside San Diego.

Warren: Yes, the picture struck me after I came back from shopping the local supermarket on Encinitas Boulevard near San Diego and I counted about 30 migrant workers in less than a six-block period. Each of them was looking soulfully into the eyes of every passerby. I'll never forget the look on a man's face as the two men he was standing with were picked up as he was left behind.

Tom: And almost all of these migrant workers standing out there waiting to be picked up were men, right?

Warren: Of the thousand or so that I've seen in my ten years of living in Encinitas, all of them have been men. I see some of them sleeping at night in the hills and I'm very touched how most of these men are sending a good part of their wages back to their children and wives back home in Mexico, whom they see only once or twice a year before they once again risk imprisonment by illegally crossing the US boarder. We have no men's movement calling these men oppressed for providing money for women from whom they're receiving neither cooking nor cleaning and for providing their wives with homes while they sleep on the ground.

Tom: When a field worker is radicalized he is taught to see the classism.

Warren: Exactly, but he remains blind to the sexes. When we call Mexican men patriarchs as if their roles of their society serve them at the expense of women it is really we who are being the sexists.

Tom: Yeah, I see your point. Okay, well, this has been quite a trip so far. But I think what I learned most from the section of the book *The Myth of Male Power* was what you were called when you encountered the fire truck.

Warren: When I heard the siren of the fire truck it was like it allowed me to recall how firefighters' death rate from cancer has increased 400% more than for the population at large, and how the average age for cancer death rates among fire fighters is 52.

Tom: You know, I think all of us had always figured that the danger for firefighting, what fire fighters were dying from was the smoke and from the fire.

Warren: Me, too, but when I read about the cancer rate I remembered how back to the MGM Grand Hotel fire in Las Vegas in the 1980s and how it left 70 people lying dead and rooms untouched by fire and unclouded by smoke. That was my first awareness that it was really plastics that created more danger when it went to fire because of the toxic emissions. That created more danger than the fire or the smoke per se.

Tom: Well, wouldn't oxygen tanks and breathing equipment reduce that danger?

Warren: Yes, but breathing equipment reduces communication and oxygen tanks take about a minute to put on. Flames can move as fast as a thousand feet in one minute.

Tom: You're saying that many firefighters choose to forfeit their own lives to save others.

Warren: Yes. Especially volunteers. Feminists said 'volunteerism' was a women's issue--that women

were the sacrificers who under-valued their worth. Disregarding the fact that many husbands work to support women to do fulfilling work, 80% of firefighters in America are volunteers and 99% of those are males. If we acknowledge women's contribution as volunteers I think it would also be helpful to appreciate the uniqueness of a million men exposing themselves to death to save the lives of strangers and all for no pay, except the 'social bribe' of our appreciation.

Tom: Yes, a little appreciation balancing here.

Warren: Yes, and actually the balancing reminds me of probably the last insight I had on the trip. I pulled into my driveway and I saw some movers balancing this large couch through a neighbor's doorway. And I could hear what I gather was a father warning his son. The father was saying, "Watch the way you lift. You're going to end up with a back like mine." As I walked into my house, I had a different appreciation for my refrigerator and how all my file cabinets were moved.

Tom: So these were all the services performed by men that were invisible, which is interesting because we think of women traditionally as doing all the invisible work.

Warren: Yes, in fact a friend of mine who read a first draft of the first chapter of *The Myth of Male Power* chastised me for leaving out the contribution of coal miners, and when I said I didn't see the evidence of that around me every day, he corrected me and said, "No, no, you see the evidence of mining around you all the time, every day. It's just the miner who's invisible to you. You don't see him around you every day."

Tom: Explain.

Warren: He told me to look in the mirror while I was shaving and check out the fillings that contained not only gold and silver but mercury and petroleum composite. He corrected my tendency to think of mining as coal mining rather than metal mining and oil and gas extraction. He then explained how my eyeglasses contain not only metal but also plastic and the plastic contained metal and coal, and how every time I turn the light on it is shining through glass bulbs containing tungsten, mercury, and phosphorus and even the electricity to produce the light comes through copper and aluminum wires from generators, and the generators are also made from copper and they're spun by tungsten turbans which are powered by steam that is produced from uranium or from coal or from oil.

Tom: Okay. So, the next thing that you're going to be telling me is that your clothes are made from miners.

Warren: Well, as a matter of fact, in many of our clothes there are bits of iron and/or limestone or coal.

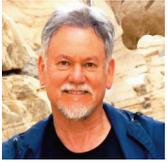
Tom: Okay, what makes mining so dangerous?

Warren: Rocks falling from mine ceilings that cause concussions, dangling wires that electrocute miners. You can just imagine if in an office situation we had ceilings falling in that were killing secretaries and if the electrical wires that were dangling were electrocuting secretaries. Imagine how much in this country we would be caring about workplace safety and how much the secretaries would be suing the companies if they were the victim of electrocutions rather than dirty jokes.

Tom: Well, you know, being aware of all these things now how do you sleep at night?

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About the Author



Dr. Warren Farrell has been chosen by the *Financial Times* as one of the world's top 100 thought leaders, and by the Center for World Spirituality (in 2011) as one of the world's spiritual leaders. His books are published in over 50 countries, and in 15 languages. They include two award-winning international best-sellers, *Why Men Are The Way They Are* plus *The Myth of Male Power*. He can be reached at warren@warrenfarrell.com

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Health Status and Behaviours of Australian Farming Men

STUART WILLDER AND SUSAN BRUMBY



The Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) program in Australia has been researching the state of health of farming men and women over the last six years throughout Australia's agricultural industries. Health data gathered have been instrumental in providing industry partners with insights into the current health status and relevant health issues of farming men and women. This paper focuses on the outcomes of research relative to the male cohorts and their clinical indicators over the course of the research. Male participants across varying ages and farming sectors gained information and knowledge, and received clinical assessments and intervention in the course of the research. Positive effects were experienced by male farmers of different ages and across farming industries. The qualitative and quantitative results reveal that regardless of prior attitudes, both

men and women learned and changed the way they think about and act upon their health, wellbeing and safety.

Keywords: men's health, farmers, agriculture, families, Australian men



Introduction

The current health issues affecting men in Australia appear to be glibly accepted as normative. For the last two decades, even with “men’s health” on the healthcare radar and the release of the Australian National Men’s Health Policy¹ efforts to address health disparities amongst men have achieved little in addressing the disparity of life expectancy or morbidity of Australian men compared with women living in rural areas. The reported statistics relating to the health of men across the nation are discouraging, with lifestyle related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancers becoming more common.² Health issues affecting rural men are even more disconcerting, as highlighted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW): “The general health of rural people is, by urban standards, very poor. Rural populations have above average rates of premature mortality through heart disease, cancer and suicide.”³ The Australian Federal Government reports that obesity rates within Australia are now increasing, in particular for male youth between the ages of 15-24 years. This is a demographic where exposure to alcohol and drugs, decreased physical activity, and poor nutrition are prevalent.⁴ Obesity rates in adults have also risen to record levels, with the greatest increase in weight for males between the ages of 35-44.⁵ Lifestyle related diseases in men, including diabetes, coronary heart disease and hypertension, are also at levels placing extra burden upon the health industry and the economy.⁶

Further examination of relevant data indicates higher rates of clinical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and hypertension in men compared with women and with a significant disparity existing between rural and metropolitan men. The National Rural Health Alliance reports that “rural and remote areas have ageing populations with high rates of chronic disease, health workforce shortages, an extensive drought and other problems affecting the social, economic and environmental sustainability of their communities.”⁷

The development of the National Men’s Health Policy by the Australian Federal Government has acknowledged the significant issues relating to men’s health, their unique needs, and the requirement for appropriate access to healthcare for all men.⁸ This was also emphasised at the 10th National Rural Health conference in Cairns, where the Department of Health and Ageing summarised their key areas of focus with the release of the National Men’s Health Policy. Their statement notes: “Specific health status measures illustrate the generally poorer health of people living in rural and remote areas. Life expectancy decreases with increasing remoteness . . . Life expectancy in regional areas is 1-2 years lower and for remote areas it is up to 7 years lower.” The Government also stated it would focus on men with the lowest levels of health including rural men, lower socioeconomic and marginalised men within locations or by occupation.⁹

International studies of both rural health and men’s health reflect a similar trend across the world^{10,11,12}. The health of men within an agricultural setting has yet to be fully explored and thus warrants investigation. To date, national data collection services such as the Australian Bureau of

Statistics (ABS) have failed to differentiate between a rural male and the rural male farmer in their reporting process, and the lack of evidence relating to farmer health has been the norm. Researchers such as Todd (2004) reports: "Farming families are unique and exhibit specific characteristics that identify them within their industry. [They are] working harder, longer, and increasingly rely on family members to provide the extra labour needed to survive in today's environment of climatic change and agricultural strain".¹³ Even political sources highlight this situation: "Farmers experience higher death and morbidity rates than the Australian population, they are over represented in injury statistics, and have varying levels of socio-economic disadvantage."¹⁴ Psychiatric mortality is also an issue of serious concern with farming men and farm managers implicated in twice the rate of suicide as compared to their urban or rural counterparts.^{15,16}

These data on male farmers' health prompted the authors of the current paper to research and report on the current health status and resultant health changes made in relation to an education and assessment program, Sustainable Farm Families (SFF). Research was carried out over a period of three years. Although previous publications and reports have highlighted the significant health outcomes and benefits relating to this program^{17,18,19,20,21}, this paper aims to highlight the specific health issues relating to the male cohort of four projects initiated within dairy, broad acre, remote, sugar, and cotton farmers in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Background

The SFF projects are initiatives developed by the Western District Health Service in Hamilton, Victoria, through a process of intersectoral collaboration involving health services, universities, agricultural agencies, training bodies and farming communities. Partners in this collaboration have joined to address the health, wellbeing and safety of farming families across Australia, including dairy, broadacre, remote, and sugar and cotton farmers. The four projects were coordinated and delivered over the period of 2003-2008 with funding received from five bodies: the Joint Research Venture on Farm Health and Safety (managed by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), the Department of Health and Ageing, (DoHA), the Gardiner Foundation (Dairy Industry), the Department of Primary Industries Victoria, and WestVic dairy.

The SFF program provides participants with information on personal health, wellbeing and safety whilst exploring attitudes to personal health and providing opportunities for improving health and farm safety outcomes²⁰. The program aims to address the health disparities within rural and farming populations through education and assessments over the course of the research. This process linked with peer education and industry collaboration provides participants with the opportunity to learn with and from others in kindred industries and in a supportive environment.

Participants were self-selected and recruited via collaborative linkages with industry partners within each agricultural sector. All participants consented to the project and were found to be willing supporters of the research. Ethics approval was granted from the South West Health Care Multidisciplinary Ethics committee and areas of clinical significance were outlined and complied with.²² Rec-

ommendations included the need to refer participants with fasting cholesterol or blood glucose levels greater than or equal to 5.5 mmols to their general practitioner and to use the Heart Foundation's (2002) minimal requirements for exercise.²³

The SFF projects were designed by two health professionals with nursing, agriculture and gender studies backgrounds in collaboration with a social science academic supporting the development of adult learning and education programs. The two health professionals who facilitated the sessions remained on the team from the commencement of the program. Participant retention rates of farmers who completed all workshops ranged from 72% for participants in the remote farming sectors to 76% for the broad acre farming sector, 72% for Dairy farmers, and 85% for the cotton and sugar industry.

Theoretical Framework

The SFF programs were developed using theories and frameworks from the health promotion and adult learning literature that aimed to inform and obtain valid information from the participant sample. The education content and delivery modes were specific to the industry and intended to assist the learning of the participants. Azjen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of "reasoned action and planned behaviour" was used to guide the learning experienced by participants in the SFF projects.²⁴ Their theory focuses on the belief that behaviour changes occur when individuals and groups:

- share values and beliefs;
- share a common commitment to their new found knowledge;
- discuss with peers how best to respond to the information delivered in their daily lives; and
- share an understanding of the possible negative effects of poor health behaviours within their business.

Kolb's (1984) model allows participants to become active members of the learning cycle by experiencing the concept, reflecting on the learning, comprehending and then planning to use this new information within their life which becomes part of their experience base²⁵. This type of learning model is integral to the project, worked well with men, and enabled learning through different mediums such as videos, training models, and experiential learning examples. All learning styles are catered to on this model including of those participants who have minimal linguistic and writing skills. Working in groups aimed to assist the learning process so that participants could learn from each other, especially from other farmers with similar agricultural interests, share new information, and conceptualise how the new health information could be used in the context of farm family and business.

Physical Assessment

One of the most successful aspects of the project (which may have also contributed to the high retention rate) was the “one on one” physical assessment process. Participants were offered an initial five-minute assessment where fasting blood samples were taken and anthropometric indicators measured. An individual thirty-minute “one on one” assessment followed the first day of the program and focused on the initial indicators measured. A more in-depth full physical assessment was also undertaken. Pivotal in the adult learning process was the individual assessment. It allowed participants to reflect on what their results meant and to discuss openly in a private and confidential manner, key areas of health concern. This also provided a focus for individuals to develop an action plan to address any health concerns for the forthcoming year.

The initial physical assessment took place on arrival of the farming participants following a minimum of ten hours of fasting to aid in accuracy of the testing procedures and included the following recorded tests:

- Fasting total cholesterol and blood glucose
- Weight and height measurement
- Body mass index
- Body fat percentage
- Blood pressure and pulse
- Waist and hip circumference measurement

Table 1: SFF workshops and data collection description

Variable	Base line ^A	12 month ^A	24 month ^A
Body weight (Body Mass index)	✓	✓	✓
Height	✓	✓	✓
Waist circumference	✓	✓	✓
Hip circumference	✓	✓	✓
Blood pressure	✓	✓	✓
Pulse rate	✓	✓	✓

Fasting blood glucose	✓	✓	✓
Fasting blood cholesterol	✓	✓	✓
Kessler K 10 psychological distress		✓	
Farm Safety Survey	✓	✓	✓
Behaviours and conditions survey	✓	✓	✓
Focus Group	✓	✓	✓
Pre and Post knowledge	✓	✓	✓

A “one on one” private assessment was offered to all participants in the workshop to allow for follow-up of the initial 3-5 minute screening. This fuller assessment took up to thirty minutes and included the gathering and discussion of the following information:

- Genetic evaluation and family history assessment
- Respiratory assessment
- Skin and integumentary assessment
- Cardiovascular assessment
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Gastrointestinal, social and mental health assessment
- Discussion of results and referral

Risk factors and health indicators of concern or within the ethically determined range requiring intervention were referred to their nominated health professional or medical practitioner for follow-up.

Results

In all 257 men participated in the SFF program from 2003-2008. Both men and women participated

and a total of 54% of the overall participants were males. Health and demographic data from the men within provides insight into the current health and behavioural status of the male farmer samples. In each of the cohorts the majority of men were Australian-born with the exception of a small sample of men within the sugar industry who were of Italian descent.

Smoking rates were below the Australian average within all four cohorts, with remote farming men having the highest rate of 18%.²⁶ The average age of farming men was between 47-49 years, which is younger than the current reported average age of farmers reported by the ABS.⁵

Table 1. General Health Demographics for Men across SFF Project.

<i>Factor Year 1 comparisons only</i>	<i>SFF (Broadacre)</i>	<i>SDFF (Dairy)</i>	<i>CSFF (Cotton/Sugar)</i>	<i>Remote Men</i>
<i>Total sample 257 men</i>	<i>Men n=70 (27%)</i>	<i>Men n=109 (42%)</i>	<i>Men n=28 (11%)</i>	<i>n=50 (19%)</i>
Australian born (%)	97	93	96	94
Speak English at home (%)	100	98.2	100	100
Average Age (years)	48	49	47	47
Currently smoke (%)	6	8.3	3.6	18
Drink alcohol once per week (%)	86	67	71.4	90
Drink at high-risk levels at least once a month (%) ²⁷	54	44	46.5	76
Retention rates over program course* = 3 years	76*	72*	85	72

Ninety percent of men consumed alcohol at least monthly with ten percent indicating they did not consume alcohol. 77% of men reported drinking alcohol at least weekly; 56% reported drinking at high risk, short term, at least monthly (as defined by the National Health and Medical Research Council) ²⁷ with rates varying between 44% and 76% for the cohorts. National health data reveal that this rate of alcohol consumption is higher than the Australian average of 31% for men and 17% for women.²⁷

Table2. Clinical indicators and range for all male participants n =257.

<i>Statistics for all male participants</i>	<i>Mean indicator Indicator maximum and minimum</i>
Age	48.37 (range 20 - 76)
Waist circumference cm Ref: less than 102cms ²⁹	98.65 (range 72 - 135)
Body Mass Index (Weight in Kilograms/ (Height in Meters x Height in Meters) Less than 25. ²⁸	27.76 (range 19.6 - 45.2)
Cholesterol level (mmols) less than 5.5 ²²	5.08 (range 3.50 - 7.90)
Blood glucose level (mmols) less than 5.5. ²⁹	5.26 (range 3.6 - 15.7)
Blood Pressure (Systolic) (mmHg)less than 140. ^{22,23}	131.16 (range 100 - 170)
Blood pressure (diastolic) (mmHg) less than 90. ^{22,23}	82.51 (range 60 - 105)

Clinical findings highlighted in Table 2, give the reference ranges for all clinical indicators assessed within the sample of men and also highlight the upper and lower values recorded across male participants.

The baseline clinical indicators taken in the assessment highlight the prevalence of indicators outside the ideal and recommended healthy range and are shown in Table 3

Table 3. Clinical Indicators for Participants at Risk in Baseline Year

Clinical indicators for male participants at risk in baseline	% of participants
Body mass index ≥ 25 (n= 201)	78.2
Total cholesterol > 5.5mmol (n=85)*	33.1
Total blood glucose > 5.5 mmols (n=67)	26.1
Waist circumference > 102cm (n=76)	29.6
Blood pressure (systolic) > 140 (mm Hg)(n= 99)	38.5
Blood pressure (diastolic) > 90 (mm Hg) (n=81)	31.5

* Four of these 85 men had previously been prescribed lipid lowering medication and a further 13 not included in this group were also prescribed lipid lowering medication.

Elevated BMI readings of ≥ 25 were found in 79% of the men, with a total of 202 men above the recommended level indicated by the World Health Organisation.³ Ten-hour fasting total cholesterol and blood glucose samples were recorded for all men, with 33% (cholesterol) and 26% (glucose) of men recording levels above the ethically recommended and approved levels requiring further referral and assessment.²³ Lipid lowering medication was already being taken by 17 men in the baseline year of which 4 had elevated cholesterol at assessment.

Systolic and diastolic blood pressures were recorded on two separate occasions during the assessment phase of the program with an average result recorded for each participant. Greater than 31% of men had readings elevated for both systolic and diastolic pressures.

Table 4 shows clinical indicators for participants at risk in the first year and their indicators assessed over the following two years. A paired test was undertaken with clinical indicators of those who had attended two years of the program with $P > 0.05$ being significant. All indicators other than blood glucose showed statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) improvement over the course of the research period and were sustained during that time. Blood glucose had reduced but was not significant. Most significant values were found for systolic blood pressure and fasting blood cholesterol levels.

Table 4. Clinical Indicators for Participants at Risk at Baseline and Year 1 Who Returned

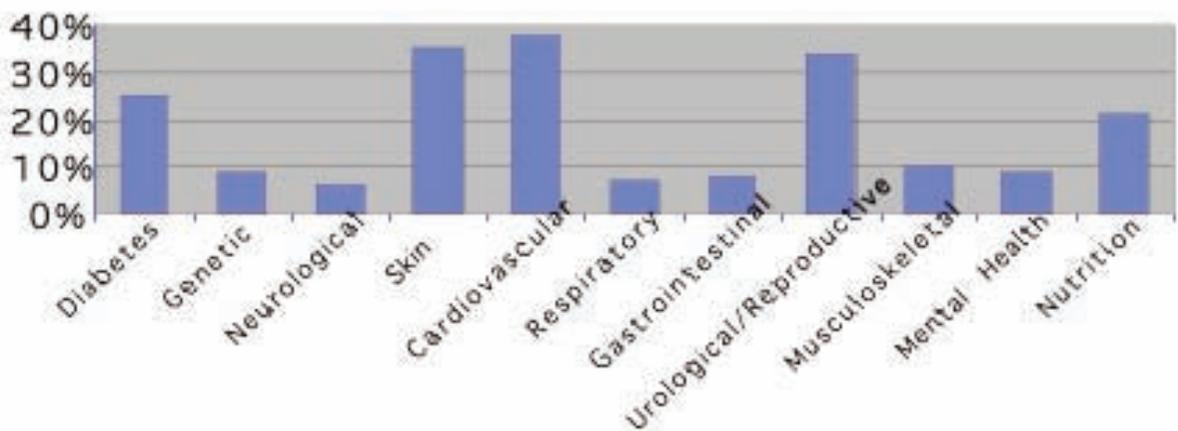
Clinical indicators for male participants at risk	Mean (+standard error)
Body mass index ≥ 25 (n=169)	-0.205 (.0744) **
Total cholesterol ≥ 5.5 mmols (n=78)	-0.631 (.104)***
Total blood glucose ≥ 5.5 mmols (n=52)	-0.135 (.091)
Waist circumference ≥ 102 cm Men (n=63)	-2.09(.652)**
Blood pressure (systolic) ≥ 140 (mm Hg)(n=89)	-7.19 (1.036)***
Blood pressure (diastolic) ≥ 90 (mm Hg) (n=72)	-5.23(.741)***

Significance values *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$ (based on two-tailed significance tests)

Participant referral rates and reasons for referral were also measured, with 74% of the men requiring referral in year one, reducing to 67% in year 2, and 38% in the final year of assessments.

Table 5 indicates the primary reason for referral in percentage terms. Participants were referred for multiple indicators over the course of the project and, as noted, the most common indicators requiring referral included skin and integumentary, cardiovascular risk (such as elevated cholesterol or blood pressure) diabetes risk, sexual and reproductive issues, and diet and nutrition assessment.

Table 5. Reason for Referral for Participants in Baseline Year.



Discussion

The results obtained relating to men's health, and in particular, farming men across Australia, reveal significant areas of concern. Anthropometric measures including weight and body mass index were found at levels above national and global recommendations for the general population²⁸. Body mass results ≥ 25 were recorded in over 78% of the sample with 22.4 % of this group having BMI's ≥ 30 , placing them in the obese range. Indicators with the potential for clinical conditions and disease development are also of interest, in particular diabetes, cardiovascular disease (stroke and heart attack through hypertension and elevated cholesterol), and weight-related cancers linked to abdominal adiposity.

The level of alcohol consumption was also of concern, especially the level reported amongst remote farming men. Self-reported data indicated that 71% of men drank alcohol at high-risk levels at least once per month. These data were calculated using the National Health and Medical Research Councils 2001 recommendations, which have since been revised to lower consumption guides.²⁴ Smoking rates in three of the industry groups were reported below the Australian average.

In terms of responding to the educational and assessment intervention, there were positive results revealed by the data. Table 4 highlights the level of risk reduction for key health indicators for men noted to be at risk in year one. As noted, all indicators including systolic and diastolic blood pressure, body mass, waist measure and cholesterol were statistically significantly reduced over the course of the project.

Reduction in indicators relating to diabetes, cardiovascular, and nutrition education (such as blood glucose level (BGL), cholesterol, blood pressure and BMI) was very positive. What surprised the research team was the need for referral for other health issues including integumentary issues, reproductive health and incontinence. These referral indicators were similar across the four projects with the need for mental health counselling required in areas where environmental hardship such as drought and floods had been evident.

The clinical indicators for health obtained from the farming men, should be of interest to health workers, policy makers, rural professionals and the medical profession. For many of the participants this was their "first ever physical assessment" and was reported as the most thorough assessment process they had experienced. Men felt informed and empowered with the new knowledge that came with the assessment and education process, which appears to have supported significant changes in the clinical indicators over the research period. Retention rates were impressive over the course of the research, with rates of greater than 80% returning for the two and three year timelines. Men also showed their support with 100% of them recommending the programme to others within the agricultural sector.

Family units (husband and wife) participating in the program reported benefits in completing the program as a family unit rather than on their own. An independent external evaluation of the program undertaken in 2010 (eight years since the commencement of the program) measuring a randomised sample of broad acre and sugar and cotton producers, confirmed that the men subse-

quently pursued regular check-ups in order to maintain their current level of health, and to mitigate the risks associated with increasing age .³⁴

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study was that participants were a self-selected sample and that the program was preaching to the “worried well.” With referral levels being greater than 75% in the baseline year this appears non-conclusive given the clinical health needs of these men. The baseline measures for weight, body mass index and waist measures do place the sample group at high risk, especially for preventable lifestyle diseases. Conversely, given the lack of bulk billing in rural communities and access, it is also possible that those with the greatest risk factors and the most unwell attended. This could be the subject of further research.

Finally, due to relatively small sample size these results have not been age standardised, and as such the result may not be transferable across all farming groups.

Conclusion

The clinical health indicators revealed by the SFF program illustrate the need for both concern and celebration. Concern should be directed at the raised health indicators above both National and International clinical indicator levels. These results need to be taken into account when considering policy, program development and interventions related to farming men across all sectors of agriculture.

Celebration may be justified from the evidence supporting the effective intervention of education, assessment, and group learning with appropriate and timely referrals to improve and sustain positive outcomes of health in farming men. The SFF approach of working with industry and other partners, using education, empowerment through knowledge and a structured review process, reveals potential for future initiatives in the area of rural men's health.

As the data presented have demonstrated, men across rural and farming industries are at significant risk for lifestyle related diseases. However, as the program has shown, men can be successfully engaged in personal health assessment, improvement and remediation. Changes in key health indicators achieved by the program have shown that the health of farming men can be improved. Such an approach merits broader and more comprehensive investigation. Farming men were interested in their own health, their partner's health, and the ultimate health of their families and farms. The Sustainable Farm Families program has demonstrated that men are willing to address health concerns and maintain positive health behaviours through education, assessment, and group learning practices.

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About the Authors



Stuart Willder is the Men's Health Educator for the Western District Health Service based in the Western District of Victoria, Australia. He can be reached at stuart.willder@wdhs.net.



Susan Brumby is Clinical Associate Professor at the Deakin Univeristy School of Medicine and the Foundation Director of the National Centre for Farmer Health based at Western District Health Service, Hamilton, Victoria, Australia. She can be reached at susan.brumby@wdhs.net.

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Parental Alienation as an Outcome of Paternal Discrimination

JOEP ZANDER



Parental alienation syndrome (PAS) in children is studied using a case study of a father, mother and daughter and the restoration of a child-father relationship after PAS. Three in-depth interviews provide insight into the dynamics of parental alienation and the way they can be further investigated. Paternal discrimination is seen as a critical variable.

Keywords: Parental alienation syndrome; parental alienation disorder; fatherhood; paternal discrimination; children



Introduction

In 2002 and the years following, the author interviewed a father, mother and daughter who had been living in a situation of ongoing alienation since 1985. In 2004, the interviews together with an analysis of the case were published in Dutch (Zander, 2004) as a study of the restoration of a child-father relationship. This study is built around three in-depth interviews with a grown up daughter, her mother and her father. That all involved parties were willing to speak out so candidly was quite unique.

The initial publication played an important role in the discussion of parental alienation syndrome (PAS) in the Netherlands. In 2011, the syndrome was presented in the perspective of paternal discrimination as well as paternal care and responsibility (Zander, 2011). This Dutch research has implications for fathers throughout the world.

It is important to analyze the dynamics of PAS without prejudice to either parent. Accordingly, where we see discrimination against fathers as a cause of parental alienation we should not deny it. It is true that mothers also often find themselves as alienated parents. Here we will focus on the experience of fathers.

Gardner (1998) was the first to describe PAS as a pattern of emotional abuse leading to severe problems for children. Related phenomena had already been described by the mid-20th century (Bernet, 2008). Gardner's definition of PAS is as follows:

Parental alienation syndrome (PAS) is a disorder that arises primarily in the context of child-custody disputes. Its primary manifestation is the child's campaign of denigration against a parent, a campaign that has no justification. It results from the combination of programming (brainwashing) of a parent's indoctrinations and the child's own contributions to the vilification of the target parent.

When true parental abuse and/or neglect is present the child's animosity may be justified, and so the parental alienation syndrome explanation for the child's hostility is not applicable. (Gardner, 1998, p. xx).

Gardner described eight important symptoms of PAS that appear in the child. They include a campaign of denigration and hatred against the targeted parent. Weak, absurd or frivolous rationalizations for this deprecation and hatred are used. There is a lack of the usual ambivalence about the targeted parent. Strong assertions are made that the decision to reject the targeted parent is the child's alone (the "independent-thinker phenomenon"). There is reflexive support of the favored parent in the conflict. Lack of guilt over the treatment of the alienated parent is typical. The child makes use of borrowed scenarios and phrases from the alienating parent. Denigration of the targeted parent extends to that parent's family and friends.

When Gardner described PAS, he originally made a clear distinction between the role of fathers and mothers. He tended to prefer the assignment of custody to the mother, despite the fact that, in his opinion she was most often alienating parent. Much later he tended to emphasize the equal contribution to the problem by both parents. This view seemed to be inspired by a strategy to convince powerful organizations supporting mothers that it was in their best interests to acknowl-

edge PAS.

In the aforementioned article (Zander, 2011), the author tried to design a vision of PAS as not only being a question of one parent opposing the other, but rather of a more structural matter. Gardner (Gardner, 1992, p. 1) had already emphasized the role of the judicial adversary system in the pathogenesis of parental alienation. He also points to the tender years presumption¹ as a part of the sociological and historical embedding of the problem. He also argued against equal parenting, thinking that this invokes conflicts since it has the potential to threaten the primary position of the mother.

The main elements of PAS have been proposed for inclusion in *DSM-V* and *ICD-II* as Parental Alienation Disorder (PAD). The definition of PAD contains a wider vision of pathogenesis. In that case, it is less necessary to attribute the cause of parental alienation to just one parent. The diagnosis is based on the manifestation of the syndrome in the child (Bernet, 2008, p. 362).

In one sense, this can be seen to support the views of those who still refuse to acknowledge the syndrome even exists and who often state that it is not always one parent who is the victim (often taken to be the father). The situation is sometimes not what it appears to be.

On the other hand, this leaves room for socio-judicial dynamics to be seen as a main cause of parental alienation. First is the discrimination against fathers by existing legislation and among the legal and social work professions (Baskerville, 2002). Second is the principle of “the most fit to fight parent can win,” a principle that goes against the wisdom of the Solomon verdict which rejects the concept of “owning a child.” The combined effect of those two dynamics often causes a father who is desperately trying to stay in touch with his children to adopt the compensatory tactic of choosing to “fight to win.” Although both parents have responsibility for the means they use to retain closeness with their children, this reaction can well be an effect of discrimination against fathers.

We should not ignore that discrimination in general has many side effects such as creating negative behavior by those discriminated against (Dion, Earn, & Yee, 1978). Self-fulfilling effects of discrimination are mostly studied starting from the hypothesis of the stigmatization of woman, but it is reasonable to believe that gender-stigmatization can occur in men as well (Heatherton, 2003, p. 382). The perspective of losing one’s children feels like an upcoming amputation for most parents. Some children use that metaphor when looking back at the loss of their father. In the dynamics of family law, it is quite understandable desperate contests occur.

When the mother becomes an alienated parent this often originates with understandable fear of the father who took extra measures to prevent himself from being alienated. Sometimes the alienation of the mother is secondary and starts with a real threat from her. That being the case, it might be useful to consider PAS in the context of a paternal discrimination system. This also applies in cases where the mother has lost her children to the father.

Insofar as PAS is acknowledged (and it is quite widely), the discussion about the mutuality of “programming” the child is important (Darnall, 2011). Is it both parents who contribute? This differs in various cases and situations, but often one parent is still in the position to influence the child

and the other is no longer. Blaming one of the parents for quarreling is often the adopted position of institutions and politicians since it is an easy way to bypass their own responsibility, which is to create a healthy climate for both parents and children.

Denigration and discrimination of fatherhood can be a factor in the onset of PAS with the loss of fatherly care. Children need unconditional parental love and care to grow and to gain trust in their social environment. The occurrence of PAS in the Western world seems to fit in with a history of fading fatherhood, including the diminishment in general of parental status and responsibility, which seems to have been gradually replaced by the growing importance of “the best interests of the child” as determined by institutions and the state. Despite the growing awareness of the importance of recognizing and responding to the immediate needs of the child, their needs are in fact apparently being neglected, especially in situations where the child loses contact with one of his or her parents.

Paternal Discrimination

It goes beyond the scope of this article to highlight all elements of paternal discrimination. However, it will be useful to indicate all the social elements that are included in it. Some extreme samples of discrimination within the judicial have to be recognized. Some have been acknowledged for more than a century, but they have not been eliminated (Zander & Smulders, 2006).

Discrimination of fathers occurs in all countries (Zander et al., 2009). Many of the examples that follow are based on European situations, but it can be assumed that it happens everywhere:

Judicial Discrimination and Prejudice

Several courts used standard preprinted forms that determined mothers should always get custody. Others provided forms indicating that fathers could get joint custody if mothers agreed, but not the other way around. The father’s agreement was of no importance.

“The Best Interests of the Child”

Embedded in the law is the pseudo-scientific presumption that it might be best for children in cases of conflict with the mother that the father would humbly disappear in the dust. This was advised in public and in scientific publications (Duindam & Vroom, 2001, p. 105; Spruijt, 2011)

Stigmatization by Language

There exist many definitions of fatherhood that exclude the emotional and social aspects of fatherhood, definitions that fit seamlessly into the practices of law (Zander et al., 2009, p. 140).

Motherhood Ideology

Questions are raised whether there are emotional ties between fathers and children. Can fathers love their children? This is given as a reason to deny contact between father and his child. (Zander

& Smulders, 2006, p. 101; Nathanson & Young, 2012, p. 73).

The “Tender Years Presumption”

Questions are raised whether fatherhood is needed at all. Fathers are asked to justify their role, with the need of the mother being assumed (Zander, 2011, p. 109).

(Baker & Darnall, 2006) already summarized behaviours and strategies that are employed in Parental Alienation. Goudard constructed a model based merely on those social psychological mechanisms (Goudard & Université Claude Bernard (Lyon), 2008). One could give such a model a multidimensional character by adding along with those micro-strategies (inter-personal) their meso (institutional) and macro (political) counterparts.

Strategy Baker&Darnall	Strategy Godard	micro-behaviour	meso mechanisms	macro mechanisms
Interfering with information	Almight (exclusion)	Give no information about child	School refuses to give information, no entrance	School is not informed on law
Badmouthing	Negative messages	Warning: “He might beat you”	Involvement cops, handling false accusation	Wrong information on domestic violence prejudiced against men
Unhealthy alliance	Cohesion symbioses	Child demanded to support parent in procedures	Mother victim appeal at environment, care institutes	Support care-structures for mothers
Symbolic interfering	Almight (contempt)	Not using word daddy for him	Courts name father 'ex spouse' instead of 'father' in child cases.	Exclusively use “mother” for parenting positions

Case Study

Three interviews and their analysis follow to illustrate the occurrence of PAS. A more elaborate and systematic analysis of multiple cases is needed, but this will serve as an example of triangulation², using multiple and diverse kinds of data sources, methods and observers engaged in social research (Yin, 1987, p. 99).

The interviews with mother, child and father were held separately. The author tried to prevent any interaction and did not confront the interviewees with what any of the other two had said. However, the author did sparingly share with them contents of the case files of the mother and the father.

The interviews were held during multiple sessions with both father and daughter, and one session with the mother. The sessions were recorded only for the father and daughter. The tapes were transcribed. The transcriptions were checked by the interviewees. The story of the mother was also confirmed by a letter from her. The stories are summarized in English.

The Father ("Peter")

Peter is a 56-year-old surveyor in municipal service. He lost contact with his five children after divorce, but in his view that process started during the marriage³. The mother did not allow him to be more active in the rearing of the children. It was painful for Peter to be interviewed and to be confronted with the old pain of losing the care of his five children.

The marriage was not really his preferred choice, but he chose the opposite of what his parents liked. During the marriage many quarrels became unbearable, so he decided to initiate divorce. Hearing of this, his spouse urged him to leave immediately. She would not let him say goodbye to the children; however, he managed to do so, notwithstanding. She blackmailed him with the children. Her children were used as a weapon against him. She said she wanted to have peace and quiet without him around and that meant breaking contact with his children.

With difficulty, the children visited him in the first months after the divorce. After he found a new relationship, the older children (then aged 13 and 15) no longer visited him. For a year and a half more, he had contact with the younger ones (then aged 5, 9 and 10) but never for a holiday or an overnight stay.

They were not allowed to call him "Daddy." The mother feared losing contact with the children, in case they might also want to live with him. Two years after the physical divorce, the mother's lawyer declared the end of visitation rights. The reason given was that he showered together with his children as he used to before the divorce. This was put forward as a kind of accusation against him.

There was a judicial procedure in which only the youngest child declared that he still wanted to visit his father. The other children refused, which hurt the father badly. After that he was threatened with a restraining order. child protective services said they saw this as unjust, but refused to change. "You remain dependent on the kind of judge and the mood he is in," he was told.

He could not accept what happened. Sometimes he saw his children by coincidence. He had a contact with a group leader of the child care institution to which his daughter was assigned because the mother could not handle her. The father expressed his astonishment that he himself was never considered instead of the institution. Much later this daughter was also surprised: "I could have stayed with you then?" she asked.

Some contact with Karel, his eldest son, was restored after a court fight regarding alimony. This court session took an unexpected turn because of a compassionate, interested judge. Nevertheless, the mother's lawyer tried to restart the conflict by writing a new demand. Peter added: "Lawyers have obvious interests in keeping the conflict going." Two other children restored contact

during the two years afterward.

The contact with Ans (then 28), his oldest daughter restored after she read the first Dutch book on PAS (Zander, van Altena, & Theunissen, 1999) and had an interview about this in a national newspaper. It was not easy. Peter first thought he would not be able to cope with his daughters' efforts, being afraid of further disappointment. His new partner insisted he try. He set some demands going into the new confrontation. "You are my daughter; I can't just act as if this is not the case. I talk to you as a father, after all, I am your father." She wanted open, unrestricted contact with him.

Despite the difference of their goals, contact restored and the daughter was even able to call him "Papa" once in an email. He now has three grandchildren.

Peter does not want to be confronted again with the kind of distress he felt in those times. He expects that all will turn out well. Nevertheless, it remains a negative life experience for him with much pain and negative effects on his psychological and physical health.

Asked for the lessons he learned from those experiences, Peter emphasizes the role of the social environment. Such estrangement from one's children is unacceptable. Society should not accept it. He states that it is also important that grown-up children read about the experiences they have had. In Peter's opinion, society committed a crime in the enforced estrangement from his children.

The Mother ("Elly")

It took some time to convince her to agree to being interviewed. It takes courage to look back in a critical way. She hopes this will make others look at the problem and that it will provide some relief to all involved.

When heading for proceedings or court sessions she was always extremely stressed and used many sedatives. "I was not really aware of what was happening. My lawyer supported me very well; I relied on him".

The marriage was not really one of her free choice. Her husband was busy a lot of time studying, and so he did not have much time left for his children. Her husband left suddenly, and there was no way back. It felt disastrous. "Now my focus is on the upbringing of my children."

There was a great deal of unrest in her children's behavior. "I just wanted things to be quiet." She then told her children that a father is not really a necessary person. The procedures, court, child protective services were too much. "I just could not handle it."

Only her general practitioner and the school refused to take a position. The rest of the world chose to support her. It would have been better if they had not done that. "It might have been better if they told me the truth instead of repeating bad things about my ex. Perhaps that is what I hoped in my heart. But I shut off such thoughts." She never knew what her children said in the proceedings about visiting their father.

The rearing of one child, “Trude” (age 10 at the time of divorce) was quite problematic. The child care institution helped her and the daughter, who was in a bad physical and psychological condition. She tried to press her daughter to see her father. However, she admits that “to be honest, this was more an angry reaction to the child.” She did not want the child to be around.

Karel, the oldest son (age 15 at the time of the divorce) had always been the scapegoat of his father. She always had to back him up. It was shocking to her that he was the first to return to his father when he was 25.

After the restored contact between the children and their father, she neither avoids nor seeks him. “He was not even interested in me when I was very sick in the hospital.” The return of the oldest son to his father, seemed a bit sneaky to her in contrast with the open maneuvers of Ans.

She thinks it might have been better if she had been forced to let the children remain in contact with the father. The child protective services did not push for that and just let it go. “If I had been forced to, I would have arranged for the children to see their father.” She recently tried to change another mother’s mind about this: “You might regret it later on.”

The Child (“Ans”)

She is 30 years old. She was estranged from her father for more than fifteen years. After reading a book (Zander et al., 1999) on this subject, she discovered that she was a victim of Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS). She recognized the symptoms and got in touch with the editor of this book. The book played an important role in recovering from PAS and restoring the relationship with her father. Ans made notes in her copy of the book in which she highlighted the relation between her own story and the general dynamics of PAS pathogenesis. She considers herself a moderate case of PAS.

Ans thinks that “of course” her parents once loved each other. Her father had great authority in the family. In case of problems with the children, her mother often passed the matter on to her father. Her father kept a warm and active relationship with his children. She felt that when she was nine years old the tensions between her parents intensified. Seeing the pain on her mother’s face made her immediately choose to support her mother. Her father just left the scene temporarily during those moments. So it was not discussed with him. “I was made responsible for my mother’s well-being.” At times she advised her parents to divorce, so it was not really a surprise that this happened at a certain moment. When her father left, he promised her youngest brother (then age 4) to come back. However, he could not keep that promise because his mother wanted him to stay out and keep a distance of three streets away from her house after his decision.

In the beginning, Ans made some visits to the father. It made her feel to be “siding with the enemy,” though, because it hurt her mother when she told her about a nice weekend with him. “He has left us,” her mother said. Then her father entered into a new relationship. He would have done better to wait longer. “After all, this was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Finally, I stopped the contact with my father”.

After that she had almost no contact with her grandparents on her father's side. Granddad thought it might be better to first make contact with her via her father. Grandma regretted that. When she sent gifts, Ans returned them, although Ans knew that even just the act of unwrapping the parcel itself would have given her great joy. She visited them one time when she was 16. Grandma was quite nervous.

Her mother's mother was critical about her daughter. "Both have issues," she is reported saying.

The child protective services, school, the general practitioner all said it was all right this way. She should leave things alone. Consequently, she did so: "I was convinced that the resistance against my father was my own."

She became subject to parentification⁴. She helped her mother read the long texts from judges and lawyers, and even was a spokesman for her. After a court session, she needed some care. All the children, were invited to the child protective services office and asked, if they would like to meet their father again. They were forced to betray him and acted as a group. She saw her proud father crying about it. The child protective services somehow expected Dave, the youngest child (then 6) to visit his father, but the older children blocked that. "We were afraid that he wanted to take Dave away from us." The children no longer used their father's family name.

"Deep inside, my father was not absent. Otherwise, it would not have been possible to get back to him." She thinks her father never knew that her sister was in a childcare institution for some time. Her father could have helped her, but he did not stand a chance.

The first crack in the alienation "shield" was when her mother mourned about the death of her grandfather. "I felt I had a father, too, but I had no chance to mourn for him. And he was still alive!"

Ans decided she did not want to live with hate anymore. Her mother had not been aware of the importance of this black hole for her. She therefore blames the social workers for not having made that point in the past.

When she met her father again, it first felt as if she would thereby choose against her mother. At a certain moment she had the feeling that she had no parents at all. On the surface, her mother accepted that she was in touch with her father again, but at the same time Ans felt an icy disapproval from her mother. She and her father had three meetings in which anger and other feelings were dealt with. He coped with the old grief, and she tried to find her present feelings. She is afraid that full normal contact will remain problematic although she feels no hate toward father anymore. "He did not know me from my adolescence, from my growing up. He has not met my first love." She is afraid to hurt him again.

Finding truth is an important issue in the meetings with her father. However, it will remain quite difficult to agree upon what really happened just before the divorce decision took place.

After two years, the relationship with her father improved. He got in touch with his grandchildren. However, using the word “Papa” is still a problem. What she misses is the blood tie, and the unconditional parental responsibility. “The natural way is blocked.” “My father needed therapy to deal with his powerlessness, but my mother should have had that therapy for her behavior.”

If she would be estranged from her own children, she would react hysterically. That is her main reason for giving this interview: to bring awareness and to prevent this from happening to others. “First, I was angry with both of them; later on, I blamed the social workers for it.”

When she moved out of her mother’s house, her mother felt like her daughters’ partner took her away from her. Her mother cried. Her father finally cried, too. “I myself was never allowed to cry, I had to stay strong.” “How could this happen in the so-called best interests of the child?”

She hopes other children in a similar position will seek help when they read her story. “Free yourself from hate. Take your time, open your heart.”

The Case Files

The case files for the father and mother were analyzed for the presence of known dynamics of alienation and other notable details.

The files cover a four-year-long “jurisdictional” debate. There is too much information to make an adequate comprehensive summary of them here. Some details of interest to an international audience are given, however.

In general the files show that the lawyers in this case sometimes did not hesitate to bring to the case more conflicts than there really were. Just at the moment the father agreed to a view on visitation as suggested by the mother, the lawyers tried to give new fuel to the conflict by misinterpreting the viewpoints of their clients, ridiculing and even inverting them. At certain moment, the clients mediated for their lawyers.

The lawyers’ self-promoting and fire-fueling started with advice from the father’s lawyer to the mother to seek her own lawyer. This irritated the mother. The mother’s lawyer attacked the father for not leaving her and the children alone by writing letters and making phone calls. The lawyer stated that this led the two oldest children Karel (age 15) and Ans (age 13) choosing to avoid further contact with their father. After the visit of Dave, the youngest child (6), his behavior is described as very difficult, for which the father is blamed. He is accused of intentionally creating two different worlds for the child.

The children were asked to give their opinion about visitation twice. First, the four eldest were invited to court and one year later they visited child protective services.

Statements were made in the name of the mother that she encouraged her children to go to their father but that the children themselves did not want to go. She did not want to force the chil-

dren. On the other hand, she refused to give permission to Dave, the one child who wished to continue his visitations. The latter was not allowed by the mother however because, she said the child was spoiled by the father. This would make the other children jealous, although they themselves refused to go to the father.

Although the child protective services, after much delay, came to the conclusion the children had a right to meet their father (notwithstanding that there was no such legal right enshrined in Family Law at that time), the mother refused to cooperate with an “enforced” visitation. Finally, the services were not active and in the end the court rejected visitation rights and a request for changing the custody arrangement.

In general, there is not too much confusion about the dynamics of what happened during the four years of judicial fights. All actors emphasized different elements and causes of problems. The description of the basic dynamics and elements of the case are coherent and meet the standards of triangulated case research.

Discussion

The interviews provide a clear description of the pathogenesis of PAS, confirming what has already been described by other researchers. The stage can be set early in a marriage. That is the way the father Peter sees it. Denying the father autonomy in a marriage can play a role in creating and increasing conflicts. In this case, the father had his own parenting style that might have been quite appropriate for the children. The mother was not able to handle the situation without his contribution, and the unexpected return of the oldest son to the father makes clear what he missed.

The case occurred during a time when there was no explicit law on maintaining of visitation rights in the Netherlands. The theoretical but half-hearted improvement of the law since then may not have changed things very much but may have made them worse when it legalized exceptions in general terms.

The slight remorse shown by the mother gives some insight into the importance of the social setting and institutions, which might have prevented her from alienating the children from their parents. Although the mother states that the school stayed neutral, that was not what the father claimed.

The strategies of the mother described in the interviews can be recognized in Goudard (2008) and Baker & Darnall (2006). They include “interfering with information”, “bad-mouthing,” forming an “unhealthy alliance” with a child, and symbolic interfering. Those mechanisms correspond with components on the meso-level (where mothers appeal as victims at childcare institutions) and at the macro-level (prejudice against men).

Further Research

Follow-up work was done, including more interviews with the family members and with newer cases. Recent cases suggest even harsher battles and much more judicial inconvenience. New laws on vis-

itation and custody are more detailed and provide more opportunity for struggles as well. Many of the laws are openly opposed by judges and judiciary institutions so that cases often become even more complicated and difficult to interpret.

It is important to try to get all parties in such conflicts to describe their point of view properly. Sometimes it can help parties to step off the treadmill of a conflict that not only takes too many years of one's life but can obsess generation after generation. What makes this research quite difficult is how to reach people who are so frustrated they just do not want to be reminded of the case (Kodjoe & Wiestler, 1994). This kind of coping is often advised by psychiatrists, psychologists and other caregivers.

Much quantitative research has the major problem of reaching fathers, who are neither well organized nor have much motivation to cooperate with researchers. Mothers are perhaps afraid of criticisms. It must be made very clear that looking back critically is difficult, and should be rewarded by researchers. Reconciliation (Gardner, 2001, p. 407) should be the goal.

Case research such as this gives rejected parents some relief and helps them to be heard. But extreme cases will be difficult to reach. Among them are those men who dealt with rejecting their own father and are now confronted with being a rejected parent.

Often, researchers have no interest in digging that deep but such research prevents the possibility of finding solutions. Researchers are often not capable of seeing the case in depth and make statements that hurt fathers unnecessarily (Zander, 2003).

The reality of alienation and paternal discrimination is not only hidden behind the lace curtains (Farrell, 2001) but is sometimes buried away in deep cellars of our society and our minds.

Conclusion

More understanding of structural matters such as paternal discrimination leads us to more knowledge of PAS. Personal conflicts between mothers and fathers can be understood. Negative attitudes towards fatherhood in media, science and politics affect fatherly care. It is therefore important to examine PAS not just in a context of patterns between parents in conflict, but also as a result of the denigration of the parental, especially paternal, responsibility in society. We should not avoid controversial research.

Footnotes

¹The tender years presumption (or doctrine) is a legal principle that has existed since the late nineteenth century. Under the tender-years presumption, the assumption is made that mothers, by virtue of the fact that they are female, are intrinsically superior to men as child rearers. (Gardner, 1992, p. 30)

²By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical materials researchers can

hope to overcome the weaknesses or intrinsic biases and problems of single method, single-observer and single-theory studies.

³Farrell uses this word in a double sense implying a bad kind of mothering (Farrell, 2001).

⁴Parentification is misuse of parental authority (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986, p. 124). A role shift occurs between parent and child in which the child is burdened with responsibility for adult tasks in a destructive way, effectively taking over the positions of the other parent. Minuchin (1974) uses the term “parental child.”

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About the Author



Joep Zander is involved in the founding of fatherhood-centers, political lobbying, and was one of the founding fathers of the declaration of Langeac on equal parenting. He gives lectures on art and fatherhood, family rights issues and on Parental Alienation. He is also a member of the international Parental Alienation Study Group. He can be reached at joep@joepzander.nl.

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Men Together Questions of Men's Experience in Sheds

K.C. GLOVER AND GARY MISAN



The behaviour of men has long been under scrutiny in academia, focusing on the outward action of men throughout history without trying to understand the underlying psychological experience behind these actions. What is needed is to listen to the experience of those males who have come together in groups to seek out friendship and to instil meaning in their lives after a time in which the men-only group was deemed politically incorrect and the dangerous world in which misogyny and homophobia are born. What is presented here is a brief glimpse into the world of the Australian Public Men's Shed, a place for men to gather and socialize as well as work and organize for the greater community. Also presented are possible health benefits to the individual males as well as the community in which the sheds are present. By looking behind-the-scenes at the experience of the world of males, it is hoped that we will gain a better understanding of their fragile psychological and biological life. This in turn will allow for a more understanding discipline of study based around the complete human life. In the place of the Australian Men's Shed we begin to ask questions of what in

the world men are experiencing.

Key Words: men, men in groups, men's experience, men's sheds, male studies



It has been said, “Men in men’s groups are men in bad company.” Unfortunately, misandry¹ of this type is prevalent in literature regarding males meeting in groups. Sociological theories dominate the field of men’s studies, observing the behaviour of males but never delving into the realm of their experience. A search of scholarly journals finds a strong divide between those who think that men in groups are responsible for war, rape, murder and a majority of the ills of civilization, and those who think that men’s groups can be used to “cure” men before they do these things. Neither is a positive position for males and moreover groups of males have rarely been asked about how they see the matter. In these rare occasions of inquiry, ill-equipped observers or analysts have alienated males with research methodology and clinical practices originating in our apparent culture of misandry (Ashfield, 2011). Contrary to popular belief, males will talk about their personal experiences of the world but in a non-hostile environment and with people who are there to understand them. Frankenstein’s Monster could hardly tell us what he was experiencing when the aggrieved community had already made their own determination of his intentions and the tools of understanding him were a pitchfork and a torch.

Misinformed by the bias these sorts of ideologues introduced (Nathanson and Young, 2001, 2006, 2010), in our western civilisation, men-only groups have become politically incorrect to the point where they are either disallowed or paradoxically, only allowed to operate if they include women. How can one allow males their own meeting space when the next despot is sure to arise from its depths? With this in mind it is perhaps beneficial to present evidence (hard evidence rather than psychological projections) that males in groups can not only be civilized and social, but also offer benefits to each other and their communities. In the seemingly unique setting of the Australian community men’s shed, we may have found such evidence.

The community men’s shed is said to have originated from the backyard shed or farm shed of rural Australians. The rural or individual shed was a space where a man was his own master, where he could retreat from his paternal, occupational and social responsibilities, where he could take solace in his own company or with that of a few, usually male friends, and engage in largely positive pursuits, tinkering, mending or building things. The shed is said to offer men “...a safety valve that allows the pressure of organisation, appearances and expectation of daily life to be released.” (Thompson, 2002). The community shed, defined as a “...workshop type space in a community setting ... [that is] a focus for regular and systematic, hands-on activity by groups deliberately and mainly comprising men” is a space where typically older men gather to engage in workshop activities such as wood-working and perhaps most importantly for the company of other men (Golding et al., 2007). It has been called a place “...where retired men take advantage of the quietude to work yet not work” (Thompson 2007), in the company of other men. The homosociality of males – or “male bonding” as Lionel Tiger coined the term in *Men In Groups* (1969) – in such spaces may in fact benefit the community, since these settings offer the potential for the improvement of male social and emotional wellbeing, of physical and psychological health and for community (re)engagement (Fildes et al., 2010, Misan and Sergeant, 2009, Ormsby et al., 2010) The understanding of males’ experience in these places may also lead us to further explore the oft misunderstood realm of men’s intent or experience. This will require us to let Frankenstein’s Monster speak for himself.

Who are the men in these sheds? The most useful profile of them was compiled in the Golding surveys of 22 men's sheds throughout Australia (Golding et al, 2006). A look at the report reveals that 89% of the respondents were 45 years of age or older and 47% were 65 years of age or older. Other important data indicate that 63% were currently married or with a partner, while 81% had been married or with a partner at some point; 79% were fathers and 57% were grandfathers. In terms of education, 39% had completed Year 9 or lower with Year 10 being the most frequent level of education (28%) attained. Upon leaving school 35% of the men had completed an 'apprenticeship or traineeship' while only 14% had completed a 'university or higher degree.' Most of the men pursued careers outside of further education, with 41% being qualified tradesmen, while others joined the military as 20% were returned servicemen. In general, sheds cater (but are not exclusive) to older men who had chosen careers that did not require higher education and who had eventually settled down to have a family. This provides us with a good beginning to understand something about the men who meet at sheds.

Most important we want to understand why men would want to come to a shed. Men are generally stereotyped as loners, who, by virtue of the power of their rugged individualism, are able to overcome any task thrown their way. Is this true, or is it a view of men that is produced by sociologists who describe males who seem to be that way? A look at an important facet of why men meet at sheds may provide a clearer understanding of what is going on in general with them. According to Golding, during the five years before joining a shed, 55% of the men had retired; 45% had had a major health crisis; 30% had experienced a new impairment or disability; 27% had experienced "an inability to get paid work"; 19% had separated from a partner, 11% from the family home, and 10% from their children; and 19% had experienced a financial crisis. Obvious overlaps occurred between the crises, but what the data tell us is that a majority of the men who came to the sheds had experienced a crisis or what in psychological terminology we refer to as an 'existential change.' An aspect, or multiple aspects, of their life and identity had altered substantially. After the experience of a crisis there is evidently a desire among men for male companionship such as that provided by a men's sheds.

This is not to say that a crisis or major change is needed for males to seek out the companionship of other males. This is most likely rooted in their evolutionary history. There is evidence that males have been forming groups since the proto-hominids and continuing on to the species *Homo sapiens*. It is very likely that males formed groups for the purpose of hunting when conditions required them to supplement the diet of their tribes or clans in addition to sustenance from vegetative sources. The wordless communication that men have between one another may also have developed on the hunt since they needed to keep quiet around prey and show others how to hunt simply through doing it. We see examples of this in the hand signals used on the sports field or in the case of one man showing another how to use a piece of equipment by taking charge and performing the action, instead of asking if he needs help.

Tiger (1969) makes a case for these hunting parties being the initial groups that over time formed the basis of our political, religious, sporting, and other groups. Thus, from an evolutionary perspective, it may be surmised that the formation of male groups is rooted both in the biology of modern males and from those original all or mostly male hunting groups (Marlowe, 2007). These traits perhaps also provide clues to the development of the sexual-division of labour and the need for both males and females to have segregated spaces or activities that corresponded with these divisions. Tiger has said that the process of male bonding or the way in which males choose their work-mates is "analogous to sexual selection" and "that the bond established generates considerable emotion" (Tiger, 100). We see this in the (recently forgotten in the West) initiation/coming of age/manhood ceremonies that have existed for millennia in some cultures around the world for

males, which are similar to courtship rituals between males and females. This would postulate a similar function between a courtship ritual such as dating, where males and females begin the process of getting to know one another as well as ensure viability as a mate, and hazing, where males in fraternities or the office place tested whether incoming members could stand up to the rigors of either environment. Examples of the intimacy that developed between males in unisexual environments are usually from the military, prison, or even whaling ships, and abounded for a time in American 19th and early 20th century literature (Armengol-Carrera, 2009). These unisexual bonds were the “glue” which allowed for ever more complex groups to form within society. Tiger postulates that these groups were the “spinal cord” of society that provided the structural foundation for the beginnings of culture.

As noted above, recently much emphasis has been placed on the destructive things that males do in groups. We are sure to find literature that describes the corruption of all-male political groups or the violence of gangs of young males. Certainly these groups do occur and they do have negative effects upon communities both small and large. Women too have been shown to be corrupt, to bully and to demonstrate antisocial behaviour in groups but to characterize females in such a negative way is socially unacceptable and poorly tolerated.

There are corrupt political parties, usually comprising predominantly males, but that they act this way is an affectation of greed, avarice, the desire for power and the perception that collectively they are above the law, not because they are male. To say that the conduct of such aforementioned groups is a result of groups being comprised of males is sexist. Political office is a service to the public, but politicians are representative of our (collective) ignorance, not only our good intentions. Yes, there are male gangs but there are female gangs too. Gangs often are comprised of youths who are rejected by a social and educational system that is unwelcoming and prone to medicate or incarcerate rather than to graduate. Their actions are consequential of their environment not of their sex or gender. The criminals society spawns are the criminals it deserves, especially when we perceive an entire sex to be criminals in waiting. Yes, we are angry at Frankenstein’s Monster, but we have remained ignorant of what created him. We have ignored the complex relationships between males and females of our species that began millions of years ago, preceded by an evolutionary process that began with life itself (Sykes, 2004). To ignore this in favour of purely sociological theories of male behaviour is to study a tree without studying the soil that it feeds upon, the light that shines on it and the atmosphere that it breathes.

It seems that the notion of males who meet in groups for what are deemed more “noble” purposes, is generally met with hostility from some outside observers. “Even (profeminist) men’s groups have oftentimes been accused of excluding and/or ignoring women, thereby promoting more *male bonding and sexism* (emphasis mine)” (Armengol-Carrera, 200). He continues: “Predominantly heterosexual, anti-sexist men’s groups have also been confronted at their national Men against Sexism conferences by gay men accusing them of heterosexism and of doing little to undermine gay oppression” (Armengol-Carrera, 201). It would seem that to their detractors the intention or aim of a male group is not questioned and that the outside perception of all-male (mostly or completely heterosexual) groups is negative regardless of whether they are gangs of hoodlums or feminist men looking to change the concept of masculinity. The stereotype prevails in either case, “men in bad company” indeed.

Misandry is prevalent in Western culture, although it is well-disguised. History was “*history*,” or so it seems. More likely it is the story of a few groups of powerful men, men who have become the straw men, the affectation of which all males burn to this day. It is forgotten that society itself would not exist without the initial male bonding of hunting groups, the establishment of monogamy, and

the creation of the father. Fatherhood (Zoja, 2001) and monogamy are at risk of disappearing under a torrent of ill-informed criticism, along with the society that they created. Groups of males created and preserved civilization, (Gilmore, 1990) which in the West now allows the meek to survive by virtue of what the “strong” do. It is mostly groups of males that are sent to war to preserve human rights, democracy or freedom, who fight and die thanks to males and females who have chosen leaders who seemingly willingly send them to their doom. Groups of males sustain civilization through their work in the most hazardous professions, including law enforcement and emergency services or in industries that provide us with the creature comforts that are now often taken for granted. Ironically, groups of males also created the reproductive technology that allowed women to begin feminist movements around “My body, my choice.” Yet some of these groups criticize that very technology and the men who freed them to effectively control the conditions of reproduction and make their criticisms in the first place. A more balanced view of how the sexes have interacted throughout the years will be beneficial to all (Farrell, 2001).

All this requires a study of macro as well as microscopic proportions, which is beyond the scope of this paper. What can be offered here is a statement that seems obvious in the experience of most people, that men in groups are more often than not a good thing – not only for the large-scale implications such as described above, but for also for benefits for community that come from men who group together in the space of men’s shed.

Before exploring the experience of the men themselves, impact upon the community will be briefly assessed. Exploration into the benefits of the sheds for the larger community will have to be carried out on a larger scale as the shed movement grows, but initial small-scale reports are promising. “Sheds are seen as a community resource by many stakeholders. The sheds offer support for school resisters, young children, and men with disabilities both mental and physical” (Misan, 2011). Things made within the sheds go towards helping the elderly as well. Projects have been done for schools, libraries, childcare centres, hospitals, and aged care facilities. They have also organized local community events such as barbecues, tourism events, and local pageants. Interviews within the community of shedders revealed a mostly positive outlook:

- “...draws in people that are lonely, bored...”
- “...community more healthy...”
- “...great work done...”
- “...they do things for old ladies, provide help around town where needed...”
- “...community garden well known in the town ... sell flowers/vegetables...”

What of the positive experiences of males in groups? We have plenty of questions about male behaviour in groups and hopefully these will revive interest in questions of male evolutionary history and biology, but more importantly we need to ask questions about what males are experiencing. Until we allow males to speak for themselves and discover what it is that they are experiencing we will only continue to (mis)understand them in terms of questionable theories and projections. In Atticus Finch’s famous plea for empathy he let us know that we will never understand someone “until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” If this is so then we have committed an egregious error against males, continuing to vilify them under false assumptions of patriarchy, male power and hegemony. In the so-called “war of the sexes” only one side showed up and dominated the conversations about sex and gender. It is now time for males to speak up and for all of us to listen.

We don our empathic shoes in the men's shed. The history of the shed offers us clues to the place it holds in the world of Australian men.

In Australia a shed can be anything from a 'dunny-size' construction to an aircraft hangar covering an acre or two. A shed might be defined as a building outside or away from the main domestic living space. However, this doesn't go far enough; a rumpus room can demonstrate shed-like qualities, even though it's part of the house. Perhaps what really makes a shed a shed is the value placed on it by its owner (Thomson, 2002).

The key ideas to take from this are that the shed exists apart from the domestic living space and that it becomes a shed by virtue of the value the owner gives to it. We should keep this in mind as we move forward from the individual shed of Aussie blokes to the community sheds.

Firstly we shall look at the importance of the shed being away from the domestic space or main household. Being rural in origin, the shed has since made its way into the lives of Australian men from all walks of life. Males, whether they work on the farm, in a factory, or in the city, spend most of their waking time outside of the home. Traditionally, the home, domestic or private part of life, was the domain of women. When men returned from working all day it was to a world that may have been foreign to them, a world of routine they were not directly privy to, as well as to relationships with their children that were not as close as that of the mother who had spent more time with them. It may be an underestimated psychological factor that the men who returned from long work days away from home may have felt like strangers and alienated in the house. It would be a mistake however, to think that the shed was a way for a man to completely escape his family, for although it is his domain it remains close to the family unit (Thomson, 2002). Thus the shed could be that sanctuary from the stresses of the public work place and the alienation of the private home space. That the shed exists away from or outside of the home is psychologically fascinating, since it represents a different place of being in the world for the male.

The shed is a middle ground between the public and private. It is representative of a male attempting to maintain his individuality in the face of its loss in both spheres, for each shed is as unique as its owner. The lone shed, not quite here or there, full of spare parts of no seeming consequence save to its occupant and full of an apparent chaos that only he can discern with any understanding, is his world. It is a shaman's hut on the outskirts of town where when some piece of equipment or appliance needs repair, he can heal it with a method only he knows as a product of his creativity and ingenuity and then safely return to work in the mundane world he seeks respite from. It is also a proving ground, but not to others, since he answers only to himself there. He proves to himself again and again through his agency that he is different from the women and children in his home, and that he is not dependent upon them for his survival, as he was when he was his children's age. He has made it sacred ground. To others it may be a room full of junk, but to him it is one of the most valuable parts of his world. (Thomson, 2002)

If this romanticisation has not turned you sour then we are perhaps making progress in our understanding. The sheds most pertinent to this paper are the communal sheds that men attend. The history of the sheds, with their rural and individualistic origin, must be kept in mind as a vital part of their psychological history, but they have taken a new form in the present day. The community sheds were established by grassroots organizations in their respective communities and are diverse in their development, structure and function. They have a common purpose in that they provide a space for men (Misan, 2011). As was stated above, the sheds provide a safe space for men who have undergone drastic changes in their life, but also for men who are looking for camaraderie. Groups of men have always been important to society and no doubt have been important to the men who com-

prise these groups.

In a study of sheds in rural South Australia (Misan, 2011) several factors were found to be nearly ubiquitous among men's reasons for visiting a shed. Most of these reasons coincided with a desire to improve their social and emotional well-being. Social well-being could mean anything from feeling more accepted in the community to actively working towards improving the community through shed work. Emotional well-being was measured by categories such as "get[ting] a sense of belonging" and "feeling better about oneself." The interest of the study was to see if sheds could promote better health in males. Given that social connectedness, security, and control over one's circumstances are important social determinants of health, it is not a stretch to see that the improvement of male social and emotional health is a benefit to the community at large. One of the key observations of the study was the literature positing a correlation between a lack of social connectedness and morbidity and mortality.

Of significance to the Men's Shed movement, is a growing body of evidence to support the premise that lesser social connectedness is associated with poorer health outcomes. Conversely, having increased social supports is associated with better mental and physical outcomes. For example in a 10 year follow-up of The Australian Longitudinal Study on Ageing (Giles et al., 2005), investigators found that stronger friendship networks are associated with lower levels of mortality. Similarly, having close friends and relatives was found to be predictive of better physical functioning in older women in the American Nurses' Health Study (Michael et al., 1999). Likewise, greater social networks and the corresponding improved emotional support improved cognitive function in older men and women in the MacArthur Studies of Successful Ageing (Seeman et al., 2001).

These findings are important for the many older retired men or unemployed men, where social networks are limited and the resulting social isolation can lead to diminished social and emotional well-being and reduced physical and psychological health and where coming together with other men in a shed environment may promote friendship and social support (Misan, 2011).

Mentioned previously was the concept of existential change and how men who had experienced a crisis or major shift in their experience of the world had sought out the camaraderie of the sheds. This is consistent with the Golding et al. (2008) report. Others who joined the sheds expressed a desire for camaraderie as well. Consistent with this desire is a need to be validated as a human being and to have purpose in one's life. From an existential viewpoint these two factors are important in maintaining one's psychological and physiological health. The medical evidence that is in the study supports this (Misan, 2011).

In males who have experienced an existential change, whether it is loss of job, retirement, death of a partner, or divorce, there may be a need to establish a new way of experiencing the world with the assistance and camaraderie of other males with whom they can share experiences. In the case of employment related issues, a man can have been so associated with his profession or workplace, that upon losing it, he may have difficulty adjusting to life and himself outside of this association. This could be exacerbated by an increase in hours spent in the household, difficulty integrating into the routines of the partner and children, as well as social isolation caused by a loss of friendship networks from the workplace. The man may become an obstacle in the way of domestic life and feel increasingly alienated from his partner and the home that they share. This may lead to becoming more closed off or adopting a silent and serious demeanour.

With respect to the ramifications of losing one's partner through divorce or death, males have been shown to fare far worse than females. It is evident that since females are more likely to have strong social networks, they can deal with the loss of a partner more easily than a male who has depended solely on his wife as his social and emotional network (Zwicker and DeLongis, 2010). Even for males who are seen as "hard" emotionally, the impact of losing one's partner should not be underestimated. Even if the emotional side of life was minimal, a partner and children represent who he has worked for throughout his life as provider. The loss of a person with whom his experience of the world was so firmly tied may leave him feeling lost or even more alone. Especially among older males it has been shown that if the partner dies, the man is soon to follow (Bowling, 2009). An inability to cope with change and its stresses, especially later in life, may have negative repercussions for the health of males.

The change of experience in the world and a sense of purpose in the sheds along with the mutual validation of males possible there may be the greatest benefits they provide. As was seen in the report by Misan (2011), socialisation was perhaps the most consistent reason voiced why the men attended a shed. The most valuable part of this socialisation is the ability for the men to establish or maintain an experience of the world with other men that is more in harmony with how they feel, without having to play roles, such as "Employee" or "Boss" or "Father." In this case I think that "boys being boys" is the best scenario for them. In interviews with some shedders various thoughts about benefits were voiced:

- "... reason to get out of bed in the morning ..."
- "... makes you feel useful again..."
- "... gives you a feeling of self-worth ..."
- "... feels like I'm back at work again, but better ..."
- "... sense of pride ..."
- "... sense of achievement ..."
- "... sense of belonging ... to something good, useful ..."
- "... gives me something worthwhile to do ..."
- "... am doing something for/giving to the community ..."

I think we would be well served by trying to understand the subjective experience of these males while being a part of the shed community and how it can lead to better health. Our understanding will be further deepened by studies into how the social determinants of health, such as losing one's social network, affect the male. We can see that in male-friendly environments such as the sheds the dissemination of health information to men is easily achievable, dispelling notions of males not caring about their health. Further understanding of the link between emotional well-being and health will be useful for further study. Examples of the shedders speaking for themselves are few to find at the present moment, but studies such as those of Misan (2011) and Foley, Golding, and Brown (2008) are good places to start to read about men's experience in sheds. The benefits of the individual shed to Australian men are documented and stories of alienation and the darker side of the individual sheds also exist (see stories such as "Men and their sheds: the dark side" in Thomson, 2002). As sheds move into the wider community and as they gain interest in other countries such as the United King-

dom, Ireland, and New Zealand we will have to begin a new study of the benefits of sheds and the experience of males who visit them.

Questions remain. For example, what does the start of this shed movement signify in the lives of men who know about it? Males in the Western world since the end of World War I have been subjected to some of the world's worst horrors on the battle front as well as being marginalized in the home front. Our culture, from politics to the media, is filled with misandry, sending messages of "not welcome" to males both young and old. The male, lonely and alienated, may be awakening once again to the possibilities of his banding together with his fellow men. As we heard from Tiger, males have banded together since the dawn of Man and it was their engaging in an aggressive process that built, maintained, and at times partially dismantled civilization. In the banding together of males in various groups such as the Mythopoetic Men's Movement (Bly, 2004) and College Men's Groups in North America (Kellom & Groth, 2010) as well as the Men's Sheds in Australia, we are seeing males young and old coming together once again for the company of other men. They come together not to be corrected or fixed, but to be able to express themselves to other men while not having to fear being judged.

It was not my hope that this small essay would answer many questions, but only lead to raising questions, in turn leading to exploring more diverse avenues of thought. The study of the male has only just begun and in studies such as those of Misan, Golding and Tiger we are just scratching the surface. It is fitting then that we end with another question. As civilization continues to falter, what is it that brings males together to work and play beside one another as they did when they were boys?

Footnotes

¹ Misandry is the hatred of men. The more well-known counterpart is misogyny, or the hatred of women.

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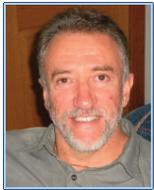
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About the Authors



K.C. Glover is the Assistant Editor of *New Male Studies: An International Journal*. He is a graduate of Wagner College where he was Student Coordinator of the Wagner College Student Men's Center. He is also the Editor of International News and Male Issues Commentary for the Australian Institute of Male Health and Studies. He can be reached at kglover@aimhs.com.au.



Gary Misan is an Associate Research Professor for the University of South Australia and the Centre for Rural Health and Community Development. He is also Adjunct Associate Professor (Research) at the Spencer Gulf Rural Health School (SGRHS), University of South Australia at Whyalla, South Australia, Australia. He can be reached at gary.misan@unisa.edu.au.

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First Postgraduate Courses in *Male Studies* To be Offered Internationally in 2014



The University of South Australia, in a joint initiative with the Australian Institute of Male Health and Studies and with the support of a group of American, Canadian, and European colleagues, is currently proposing to develop two postgraduate courses in Male Studies to be offered internationally in 2014. These will be a Graduate Certificate in Male Studies and a Graduate Diploma in Male Studies. These offerings will be followed by masters and doctoral level options as additional parts of a nested and comprehensive Male Studies Program.



Rationale

Discussion of gender in the last half-century has often been characterised by a polarisation of the sexes, making it very difficult to engage with issues of vital importance to health and healthy interpersonal and social relationships. Accordingly, key themes of the proposed Male Studies courses will include the context and factors that influence health and wellbeing outcomes for males, and

will bring analysis to bear on the many common and culturally embedded assumptions that negatively influence male experience and wellbeing, and consequently community health and wellbeing.

The Male Studies Program will endeavour to pursue a different approach to gender issues, one open to constructive dialogue and guided by available evidence of a range of different academic disciplines. Consideration will be given to both men's and women's particular cultural experience and circumstances and the indispensable contribution both genders make to the quality and viability of family and community life.

Why "Male Studies"?

Male Studies is rapidly becoming the most widely accepted term to describe a new discipline, one that recognises the need to pursue new approaches to understanding gender issues and the contemporary experience and roles of males in society.

In contrast to the current discourse regarding "men's studies," which has a largely speculative sociological basis, Male Studies will:

- avoid intellectual reductionism, political partisanship, and ideological advocacy, instead openly encouraging constructive academic dialogue, and enquiring and dynamic multidisciplinary scholarship; and
- be guided by principles of equity, intellectual integrity, and a view of human experience, society, and ethics that is inseparable from biological, psychological, cultural, and economic realities;

The *Male Studies* program will be a suite of offerings that redeems the pursuit of an understanding of health, human psychology, and social relations for contemporary males, using bases of evidence, reason, and interdisciplinary enquiry suited to academe and the proper preparation of graduates for health and human service professions.

Program Aim

The *Male Studies* program will be largely vocational in focus. However, it will also be suited to students with a more general interest in male psychology, sociology and experience, and the roles of males in culture and society. Award offerings will aim to equip allied health, human service, educational and industry professionals with knowledge and skills to work with and engage males more effectively, and to improve the health, psychological, educational and social outcomes for males. Accordingly, the target groups are health, human services, educational and industry professionals who work extensively with men and boys and/or in male preponderant industries.

Program Structure

The aim is for a nested postgraduate program of *Male Studies* that will incorporate award offerings that include a Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, and coursework eventually leading to a Masters degree. Each stream will comprise core subjects and a series of electives which will be offered under a general stream, practitioner stream, health promotion stream, or research stream depending on the background, interests and needs of students.

Each program component will articulate with the next. For example, the Graduate Certificate will progress to the Graduate Diploma and then to the coursework Masters, enabling students several entry and exit points. The programs will be offered wholly on-line on a fee-paying basis commensurate with other postgraduate programs offered by the University of South Australia and Open Universities Australia. Assessment will incorporate best practice principles for on-line evaluation of student learning. Examples include assignments, work related projects, individual or group video presentations, participation in moderated on-line forums and discussion groups, case studies, peer evaluation exercises, and on-line evaluations by faculty.

International Scope

Male Studies is a relatively new discipline and one that is both diverse in scope and scholarship, requiring the expertise of academics and practitioners knowledgeable in this field. Consequently, an international collegial community of contributors who are most discerning of the quality and interdisciplinary coherence of the required curricula will be assisting in the development and delivery of the program. The *Male Studies* programs will be international in content, scope and availability.



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