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NEW MALE STUDIES – AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

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INTRODUCTION

This issue of *New Male Studies: An International Journal* publishes four refereed articles on the manosphere, on fathering, and on false rape accusations; an analysis and opinion piece on male disposability; a brief article on male alienation and rejection syndrome; and a collection of photographs explore embodied art.

Nathan Beel's "**Academic critiques of the manosphere: Analysing themes and narratives**" undertakes a "thematic analysis of 29 scholarly articles" that discuss "male-oriented online communities." From his research he identifies "three main themes: the manosphere as dangerous and evil, wrong and deluded, and emotionally reactive," and he suggests "the academic discourse predominantly frames the manosphere negatively, highlighting its potential threats to gender equality and societal norms." He concludes, "a more balanced and objective approach in academic evaluations" is needed "to avoid reinforcing social prejudices."

In the first of two refereed articles about fathering, "**Single fathers, family structure and adolescent male delinquency**," Nate Juda expands on his research concerning fathers and delinquency published in this year's first issue of *New Male Studies*. He finds "while single fathers may provide distinct advantages in terms of involvement and support, the absence of a biological father can still correlate with elevated rates of delinquent behavior in adolescents." Juda observes that his findings "underscore the critical role that parental involvement plays in shaping behavioral outcomes."

Edward Andrew Kruk examines "the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence, and fathering after parental separation" in "**Going beyond the gender paradigm: A new perspective on interparental conflict, family violence, and fathering after separation**." Kruk's findings enable him to "discuss recommendations for socio-legal reform, as well as for therapeutic practice, aimed at the reduction of interparental conflict and prevention of family violence during and after parental separation," with the goal of allowing "fathers to share parental responsibility in the best interests of children and the post-separation family."

The last of this issues' refereed articles, Steve Moxon's "**False rape reports to police form a very large proportion of cases, and this is amply explained**," argues, because of "ideologically-driven, thereby scientifically-compromised claims through misrepresenting data, rape reports to police in large proportion are false." Moxon suggests, "the measures in law and guidance that try to engineer more rape convictions would need to be reversed if there is to be at least some degree of fairness to defendants in rape trials, thereby to reduce what must be suspected is an alarming rate of wrongful or unsafe conviction as well as unwarranted

trials, charging and arrests on the basis of no or insufficient prima facie evidence.”

Peter Wright’s analysis and opinion piece, “**Presumption of male disposability is based on flawed hypotheses,**” critiques *male disposability*, “the notion that humans are an inherently male-sacrificing and female-preserving species that broadly prioritizes women’s needs and wants over men’s in order to maximise reproductive success.” Wright methodically evaluates “several prominent theories circulating in academia and social media” that justify male disposability, and he finds them wanting. He “advocates for a discarding of male disposability theories in favour of approaches that more accurately and compassionately contextualise the lives of men and boys.”

Jerome Teelucksingh’s brief article, “**Male alienation and rejection syndrome,**” argues that males “regularly experience [...] rejection and alienation as a result of societal pressures, stereotypes and failed relationships,” which in turn “exacerbates mental health issues.” He concludes, “Caribbean and other countries urgently need a reunification program so the traumatized child can spend time with the alienated parent to repair the damaged relationship.”

Jan H. Andersen returns to New Male Studies with a selection of photographs titled, “**Antibodies.**” Andersen explains that the discovery of ancient art “in Spanish caves inspired [him] to create a series of photographs that explore the human body as a painting tool. The resulting works were body imprints - a human negative - crafted with various materials.” These photographs are “a series of digital paintings that depict the human body as both subject and canvas, while simultaneously serving as the tool for creating its own negative.”

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

We appreciate the authors’ thoughtful contributions to this issue. This journal is made possible through the generous support of our donors. If you would like to donate to *New Male Studies: An International Journal*, please contact me at dgouws@aimhs.com.au.



Dennis Gouws
Editor



Photograph by tpsdave: https://all-free-download.com/free-photos/download/ship_sailing_sailingship_237630.html

ACADEMIC CRITIQUES OF THE MANOSPHERE: ANALYSING THEMES AND NARRATIVES

Nathan Beel



ABSTRACT

This study examines the portrayal of the manosphere in contemporary academic literature. The manosphere, a collection of male-oriented online communities, is often critiqued for its anti-feminist stance and perceived social dangers. Through a thematic analysis of 29 scholarly articles, this research identified three main themes: the manosphere as dangerous and evil, wrong and deluded, and emotionally reactive. The findings suggest that academic discourse predominantly frames the manosphere negatively, highlighting its potential threats to gender equality and societal norms. This study calls for a more balanced and objective approach in academic evaluations to avoid reinforcing social prejudices.

Keywords: academic discourse, gender equality, manosphere, social prejudices



INTRODUCTION

“When patterns of inequality and injustice shift, individuals and groups, particularly those advantaged by the status quo, resist” (Flood et al., 2021, p. 393).

The manosphere is a collection of movements of men who use the internet to communicate gendered concerns, social understandings, mutual support, and aspirations whilst challenging feminist ideologies and society’s treatment of males (*Manosphere*, 2022; Sugiura, 2021). It includes groups such as Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs), Incels, Red Pill, Men Going their Own Way (MGTOW), and other male-oriented communities. The manosphere is known for its critiques of feminism and society, claiming that both devalue and discriminate against men (Sugiura, 2021). The communities that make up the manosphere provide spaces to enable men to self-determine and discuss their own concerns, philosophies, and practices from a vantage point of male experience and voice without concern for social censure. It has become, to greater or lesser degrees, a collection of taboo groups in larger society and specifically in academia, governments, and mainstream media.

The manosphere, like feminism, has diversified understandings about men’s issues (*Manosphere*, 2022). Some individuals contributing to manosphere groups (MGs) discourses lean towards similar goals to men’s liberationists, in seeking to free men and boys from restrictive gender norms that negatively impact men. Others are more supportive and affirming of traditional masculine norms, while still others are what might be considered more centrist, who see the strengths and weaknesses of traditional and ‘progressive’ masculine norms. A common thread in MGs is a belief that society devalues, discriminates against, and neglects the wellbeing and human rights of men and males as a group and fails to recognise and care about their concerns. They believe feminism provides the ideological and moral justifications from which to mistreat men, both by framing men (and masculinity) as problematic, dangerous, and privileged, and framing women as underprivileged, inherently innocent, and oppressed. In their view, society takes a one-sided approach to gender (Seager & Barry, 2019), treating women and girls as deserving of support, encouragement, resources, and special privileges. In contrast, they believe feminism views males as socially overly privileged and excessively powerful, which lends itself to equity strategies designed to adjust, redress, and realign the patriarchal power imbalance. For the manosphere, society is not patriarchal, but gynocentric, built from society systemically exploiting men’s resources and labour, and sacrificing their wellbeing, and lives, for the benefit and wellbeing of women and society as a whole (Han & Yin, 2022).

The manosphere is regarded by some as both a fringe (Mamié et al., 2021) and a populist movement (Nesbitt-Larking, 2022). There are concerns it is potentially politically influential (Jordan, 2019) and there have been calls to regard various manosphere groups as potential terrorist threats (O’Donnell & Shor, 2022). Contrast this with the feminists and allies (including modern men’s liberationists), of whom have been accepted at the highest levels of international community – from media, academia, government, and popular discourse (Messner, 2016). While feminists and pro-feminists (i.e., male feminists) are still addressing areas of concern on representation, violence against women, the gender wage gap, and numerous other fronts, they are also concerned about the impact of the manosphere groups for their willingness to challenge feminist orthodoxy and influence. Feminists and pro-feminists actively advocate to address inequalities for women and girls, problematise disapproved masculinities and men, and actively attempt to recruit men and boys to join in their fight against toxic masculinity, for the sake of gender equality that is intentionally aiming to benefit women and girls (Greig & Flood, 2020).



Both pro feminists and feminists are highly critical of the manosphere, minimise claims of male victimisation, or if they acknowledge men's issues, claim that it is patriarchy, not feminism, which is to blame (Messner, 1998).

The manosphere has caught attention in academia. While manosphere theories on gynocentrism, and criticism of feminism are treated by pro-feminists as inaccurate and invalid (Allan, 2015), academics are mindful that with the openness and accessibility of the internet, that manosphere ideologies can be spread and popularised (Rafail & Freitas, 2019). Some fear popularisation may impede, disrupt, and reverse the social progress towards gender equality for women and girls (Vingelli, 2017). While manosphere movements have no broader institutional support, there is a perceived potential their ideas could gain political traction (Maddison, 1999), so they are deemed a threat to gender equality for women and girls. As such, academics have been publishing texts to understand, review, and critique the manosphere or groups categorised as belonging to it.

This research undertook to review scholarly articles and book chapters that report manosphere groups, their behaviour, and their discourses. The writing of scholars will influence how other scholars, researchers, and downstream, society, understand and perceive the manosphere, the people that contribute to it, and by extension, the concerns they express, particularly if these secondary sources are relied upon in place of primary source information. This research seeks to explore how manosphere movements and actors are portrayed in contemporary academic literature.

METHODS

This qualitative research adopted a thematic analysis approach (Clarke & Braun, 2016) to identify and analyse meaningful patterns within the data to answer the request question about how manosphere movements and their actors are portrayed in contemporary academic literature. Thematic analysis was adopted, given its clearly established structure that enables a well-defined approach to coding and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The sampling was based on articles and book chapters from a University of Southern Queensland library searches on "men's rights" or "manosphere", and included other articles previously downloaded to the author's own reference database before the commencement of this study. As the research is within a qualitative framework, sampling of data does not require a large or representative sample, and it does not aim to make conclusions that are considered representative of the phenomena being studied. The articles selected from this pool addressed men's movements associated with the manosphere. The sampling was partially convenience, and partially purposeful.

Twenty-nine texts were selected for analysis, listed in Table 1. This included one book chapter, one conference proceeding, and the remaining were from scholarly journals, with the oldest published in 1997 and the most recent in 2022.

**Table 1**

Reference	Type
(Allan, 2015)	Theoretical article
(Alschech & Saini, 2019)	Research article
(Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016)	Research article
(Burke & Black, 1997)	Theoretical article
(Coston & Kimmel, 2013)	Theoretical article
(de Boise, 2019)	Editorial article
(Dickel & Evolvi, 2022)	Research article
(Edley & Wetherell, 2001)	Research article
(Evans & Riley, 2020)	Research article
(Flood et al., 2021)	Theoretical article
(Flood, 2004)	Book chapter
(Ging, 2017)	Research article
(Hopton & Langer, 2021)	Research article
(Jones et al., 2019)	Research article
(LaViolette & Hogan, 2019)	Research article
(Maddison, 1999)	Theoretical article
(Marwick & Caplan, 2018)	Research article
(Messner, 1998)	Theoretical article
(Messner, 2016)	Theoretical article
(Mills, 1997)	Theoretical article
(Palmer & Subramaniam, 2018)	Research article
(PettyJohn et al., 2019)	Research article
(Rafail & Freitas, 2019)	Research article
(Salter, 2016)	Theoretical article
(Van Valkenburgh, 2018)	Research article



(Venäläinen, 2020)	Research article
(Vingelli, 2017)	Book chapter
(Wright et al., 2020)	Research article
(Yun, 2018)	Theoretical article

The author downloaded all the articles and imported them into NVivo for coding. Each article was scanned for sections that directly referred to material related to the manosphere, or online communities recognised as being part of the manosphere. Utilising the six-step process of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2016), the codes were developed alongside the reading, rather than having pre-existing codes. As the codes expanded, the author developed categories that would assist in identifying common themes and commenced developing initial names of themes. As the themes were written up, the author re-read the data in each theme to check that the theme name and its description aligned with the data. As a final check after themes had been developed, all articles were uploaded into Google NotebookLM to double check for potential misrepresentations. The prompts and responses are included in the Appendix.

REFLEXIVITY STATEMENT

The researcher is an adult male, an academic gender researcher, a therapist, and identifies as a Men's Rights Activist. He believes in the importance of supporting both men's and women's rights without partiality.

RESULTS

A total of three themes and three subthemes were developed from the literature surveyed. These included the first theme, and three subthemes introduces the manosphere as socially dangerous and evil, made up of morally bad people who display bad behaviour, of which has negative impacts. The second theme notes the manosphere as people who are misguided and wrong, and the final theme portrays adherents as emotionally reactive. All of the themes combined show a pervasive problematising of the manosphere, implying that they are a socially undesirable movement requiring strategic countering.

THEME 1: MANOSPHERE AS DANGEROUS AND EVIL

Twenty-five of the sources portrayed the MGs as dangerous, hostile, harmful, and/or evil. MGs were portrayed as morally bad, who act in hateful and illegitimate ways, and cause harm.

CATEGORISED AS BAD PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Twenty-six of the articles portrayed the manosphere, either generally or specific sub-branches, as dangerous, harmful, and morally corrupt. The most regular portrayal and accusation was that MGs were misogynist, sexist, and antifeminist in their attitudes, actions and intentions. They are constructed as an enemy of feminism, women, and society.



The most common characterisation of MMOs was that of being hateful, evil, and harmful. Most criticised their anti-feminism and accused them of being anti-women and misogynistic. Feminism was portrayed as a common target of MG's, whereby they direct antagonistic reactive energy, and were often descriptively portrayed as linked with misogyny and the hatred of women.

This finding reflects those of other MGTOW studies, which report that a defining characteristic of the community is their distrust, deep-seated hostility and dislike of feminists and women more broadly (Jones et al., 2019, p. 1916).

The online community of the manosphere uses social media channels such as Twitter to promote a misogynist agenda... They serve to cast men as victims, construct women as a monstrous other (Hopton & Langer, 2021, p. 1).

The online collection of various MRAs websites and blogs consists of extreme, misogynistic viewpoints that blame women, particularly feminists, for the downfall of society. (Vingelli, 2017, p. 5)

One third of articles accused MMO's of being anti-minority, including homophobic, racist, transphobic and Islamophobic. Two thirds of articles focused on general anti-social qualities such as being violent or potentially violent, harassing, hateful, threatening, sinister, and predatory. The following quote lists of several of these accusations succinctly.

Indeed, the problem with the men's rights movement, or one of many of its problems, is its fundamental commitment to homophobia as essential to its definition of what it means to be a man. (Allan, 2015, p. 27)

...the manosphere can produce narratives and actions that are harmful to society at large. Aside from cases of physical violence such as the aforementioned attack perpetuated by Rodger, the manosphere is also connected to neo-Nazi, alt-right, and white supremacist groups, and often includes Islamophobic and racist ideologies. (Dickel & Evolvi, 2022, p. 2)

There are several motivations ascribed and assigned to MGs. These include the aforementioned misogyny, but also hatred, smugness (Evans & Riley, 2020), to maintain male dominance over women (PettyJohn et al., 2019), attempting to maintain privilege (Palmer & Subramaniam, 2018), to reverse women's gains (Vingelli, 2017), to seek revenge (Flood, 2004), and to punish women for challenging patriarchy (Dickel & Evolvi, 2022).

Their discourses mainly blame women for the socioeconomic situation in which men find themselves, thus accrediting the "scapegoat thesis" (Blaisand Dupuis-Deri 2012) as a means to gain power by subjugating and marginalizing women and legitimating the global subordination of women to men (Connell; Messerschmidt 2005). (Vingelli, 2017, p. 4)

Incels and MRAs who are driven by a desire to enforce hegemonic masculinity and reclaim power in society. (Jones et al., 2019, p. 1913)



What the Men's Rights Movement really wants, then, is a return to men's unchallenged, unquestioned dominance-but more than that, a dominance that each individual man feels he shares. (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p. 380)

17 of the 29 articles categorised and stereotyped the MGs sympathisers based on various social identities. The most common descriptions in order of usage were White, then male/men, middle-class, and heterosexual. These terms are promoted in social justice literature as representing privilege and power. The implication of using these as descriptors for MGs might be to underline to the reader that these White, middle-class, heterosexual men are not in a minority or oppressed group but represent privilege and unearned entitlement. The articles either focused on directly describing MMO's ["MRAs are generally comprised of white, heterosexual men who argue that 'men are in crisis because of the feminization of society.'" (Vingelli, 2017, p. 3)], or criticising the dominance of their characteristics in underlying ideology, as in the following quote.

The ideological machinations of the manosphere serve as a stark demonstration, therefore, of how reduced homophobia can happily coexist with extreme expressions of misogyny and racism, indicating that inclusive masculinity theory's concept of inclusivity is limited to white, middle-class men (Ging, 2017, p. 652).

IDENTIFIED WITH BAD BEHAVIOUR

MGs are presented as demonstrating problematic behaviours. While one article accused men of digital manspreading into women's online spaces (Hopton & Langer, 2021), and antisocial behaviour.

MRAs actions take a variety of forms: insults proffered in discussions, systematic denigration of feminism, publication on the Internet of unauthorized photos of feminists... (Vingelli, 2017)

The latter is evident in a vitriolic smearing of women in public that includes on- and offline rape and death threats, hostility from Men's Rights groups and online trolling of well-known and less well-known feminists. (Evans & Riley, 2020, p. 2)

Most criticism for MG behaviour was that they were essentially reactionary and misappropriated concepts that did not apply to men. The manosphere was accused of being engaged in backlash politics, transforming their personal pain, grievance, and sexism into a political grassroots movement. The word backlash was regularly used, implying destructive and illegitimate kneejerk reactivity fueled by sinister motives noted before.

Backlash can be defined as any form of resistance men exhibit towards policies, programs and initiatives undertaken by organizations to promote the hiring and advancement of marginalized employees (e.g., women, people of color, the handicapped, aboriginal people). (Burke & Black, 1997)

The MGs are also criticised for "co-opting discourses of oppression" (Hopton & Langer, 2021, p. 1). The literature expressed incredulity that MGs could claim that men are victims as a desperate attempt to gain legitimacy to their concerns.



They manufacture victimhood as a legitimate, angry and attention-demanding response to the erosion of their “rights”, masking a deep-seated fear of becoming feminised by passivity (Allan, 2016). (Hopton & Langer, 2021, p. 9)

Authors expressed criticism that MGs cynically appropriated “the ideal of gender equality” (Alschech & Saini, 2019, p. 371). This appropriating of victim language was deemed as a ploy to utilise the language and rhetorical strategies of recognised minority groups and feminism, while using it to attack feminism.

What is so striking is how affective the men’s rights movement has become, how it has co-opted the language of affect, emotion, feeling, and the personal being political to meet its own ends. The men’s rights movement, we might say, has appropriated the language of feminist consciousness-raising. (Allan, 2015, p. 26)

For the authors, males were not oppressed, victimised, or systematically disadvantaged by society, and their attempts to paint themselves in this light equated to a false equivalence. The men’s group identity disqualified them by default to make these claims, hence such claims were viewed with scepticism and criticism. MGs framing men as victims was deeply problematic and inappropriate to these writers.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Articles tended to emphasise the negative effects the MGs bring or may potentially bring. Areas flagged include normalisation and the spreading of misogynistic beliefs and attitudes (Hopton & Langer, 2021; Jones et al., 2019), the spreading harmful stereotypes about men who do not conform to traditional masculine norms (Jones et al., 2019), suppressing of women’s voices and undermining feminist activism (Evans & Riley, 2020; Ging, 2017), the undermining of legitimate men’s issues (Salter, 2016), and the manipulation of language to turn the public against feminism (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). The MGs have also been implicated in potentially leading to extreme violence, with five of the 29 articles referring to Elliot Rodger’s killing spree.

The manosphere may even “radicalize” men into committing acts of anti-woman violence (Marwick and Lewis 2017). Indeed, mass shooter Elliot Rodger (2014) wrote that certain manosphere websites “confirmed many of the theories I had about how wicked and degenerate women really are” (p.117–118). (Van Valkenburgh, 2018, p. 2)

THEME 2: MANOSPHERE AS WRONG AND DELUDED

The writers of the articles adopted a worldview, explicitly or implicitly, that women and feminism were to be sided with and was inherently good, that gender equality should prioritise women and girls, that criticism against feminism was wrong, that men as a group are powerful, privileged, and are not systemically victimised, and that male suffering is localised and due to patriarchy, not feminism. Any attempts to criticise feminism, call for rights for men, highlight systemic mistreatment or neglect of men, call for more balanced discourse on gender, was deemed to be wrong, deluded, or a front for a sinister agenda. MGs are deemed to display ignorance (PettyJohn et al., 2019), inherent contradictions (Wright et al., 2020), misperceive feminist communication and terminology (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Flood, 2004), would side with men accused of sexual assault (Norocel et al., 2018), cherry pick evidence to support



their beliefs (Vingelli, 2017) and are the holders of inaccurate beliefs such as men being hidden victims of domestic violence (Venäläinen, 2020).

...men's rights discourse most often displayed a blatant disregard for widely accepted sociological, economic, and psychological studies. Instead, men's rights discourse tended to rely on anecdotal stories, combined with a few highly questionable studies, that provided an emotionally charged basis for the development of an ideology of male victimization. (Messner, 1998, p. 265)

Although the men's rights movement has certainly advanced an interesting narrative, it is a narrative that cannot, in fact, be demonstrated. Indeed, one of the greatest weaknesses of the men's rights movement is that it simply lacks any claim to method or theory. (Allan, 2015, p. 37)

I admit that I am utterly fascinated by the men's rights movement for a number of reasons, ranging from their seemingly sudden presence to the kinds of arguments that are made, the so-called villain of their ideological framework and, perhaps most especially, because of how violent and aggressive its politics are while simultaneously denying, repeatedly, that it is misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, phallogocentric, and patriarchal (Allan, 2015, p. 23).

THEME 3: MANOSPHERE REFLECTS EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY AND VULNERABILITY

The third theme shifts from MGs being wrong and misguided, to framing them as emotionally vulnerable, hurt, scared, and angry, as additional explanations for those attracted by the movements. Some men in MGs are described as disenfranchised (Hopton & Langer, 2021), vulnerable to being manipulated (Coston & Kimmel, 2013) by more educated and financial men (Messner, 2016) leading the various MGs. Allan (2015) argued there was a deeper fear at play, in his article titled *Phallic Affect, or Why Men's Rights Activists have Feelings*:

Returning to the task at hand, we have, I believe, established that castration anxiety is central to the men's rights movement. (Allan, 2015, p. 34)

MGs men are framed as anxious and insecure about coping in a complex modern world (Mills, 1997), of losing masculinity and becoming feminised (Hopton & Langer, 2021), and of women taking advantage of them (Allan, 2015). However, discussion of men's emotions were most commonly highlighting men's anger, rage, and bitterness (Vingelli, 2017).

The basic narrative across readings that refer to the emotions of MGs are that men may be hurt due to individual personal circumstances or worry about men's changing place in the world (Messner, 2016). They see the gains of women as costs to men, and that instead of blaming their own masculinity, or wishing to support women's progress and the dismantling of patriarchy, or recognising the asymmetry of gender rights that women experience, they are influenced by problematic leaders to mistakenly blame feminism, and women, and become bitter, angry and rageful, in a desperate and selfish desire to reclaim male power.

As a result, men's rights websites and pamphlets are clogged with howls of anguish, confusion, and pain. And this anguish, confusion, and pain, we believe, is real, and well grounded. Real, here, is not to be confused with true. These men do feel a lot,



but their analysis of the cause of those feelings is decidedly off-especially when we see that the howls of pain have been transformed into rage and the Men's Rights movement has become a movement of re-appropriating power at all costs, no matter who gets in the way. (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p. 373)

DISCUSSION

All 29 articles problematised the MGs, including their philosophical viewpoints, their adherents, and their motivations. Overall MGs were portrayed as illegitimate, reactionary movements of dishonourable men of privileged demographics, based their movements on gender and power ignorance, motivated by anger, control, and misogyny, demonstrated through hostility and harassment, and with potentially violent social ramifications. MGs were cast in a universally negative light, with problematic attributes, characteristics, behaviours, motivations, and impacts. They were presented as disqualified and unworthy participants in the gender and rights discourses.

AD HOMINEM GROUP ATTACKS EMBEDDED IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Many writings examined framed MGs as enemies to feminism, gender equality, and women. Problematic behaviour and beliefs of individuals within the group was specifically sought out for and selected for attention and criticism. The authors also contextualised their writing by negatively portraying both the groups and those aligned with the groups as inherently problematic.

Given the writers represent institutional scholarship and enjoy scholarly support and governmental funding to support the development and propagation of their ideological commitments, how might they morally justify vilifying mainly public internet groups that have much less social, governmental, and institutional power and resources comparatively? They did this through several means. They positioned the targeted outgroups as socially toxic, linking with various social evils such as sexism (Flood, 2004), racism (Ging, 2017), homophobia (Allan, 2015), even terrorism (Wright et al., 2020). Dog whistling was utilised to activate additional prejudice by appealing to social characteristics that are socially acceptable to criticise. Flagging or emphasising racial, gender, and sexual characteristics such as whiteness (Ging, 2017), maleness (Hopton & Langer, 2021), heterosexuality (Vingelli, 2017) and other identities as proxies to stereotype with privilege, power, oppressiveness, and moral insensitivity, enabled the authors moral justification to stigmatise and criticise their targeted outgroup and its members. The MGs were portrayed as both socially evil and invulnerable to damage from prejudice and stigma applied to them from the academics. Some authors attempted to balance with recognition that some men were genuinely hurting on an individual level, and that these men were vulnerable to being exploited and misdirected (Messner, 2016). The implications were that the target outgroups and that which was associated with them, were inherently problematic.

Some articles examined data from various social media platforms to describe and articulate problems that the groups perpetuate in their discourse (Hopton & Langer, 2021; Venäläinen, 2020). In framing the rationale for ferreting and amplifying the problematic elements, evidence would be presented that the group was suspicious or problematic already or could potentially cause social problems or lead to hate or hurt of vulnerable groups (Mills, 1997). While seeking to expose problematic patterns in discourse is not problematic in itself, if the academic discourse solely focuses on illuminating the group by its problematic elements and



failing to present more balanced, accurate, and nuanced understandings of the group, such an approach may both be intellectually misleading and dishonest, and also reify or increase social prejudice against the groups.

IDEOLOGICALLY BASED CRITICISMS: DEPARTURE FROM FEMINIST ORTHODOXY

The criticisms of the MGs were often based on their distancing from feminist commitment and ideology. Feminist ideology emphasises patriarchy, female disadvantage, problematises men and traditional masculinity, emphasises male power, and promotes that feminism is the answer to gender equality for women, and as a byproduct bring gains for men too. MGs challenge many of these assumptions in that they emphasise that both sexes have social advantages and disadvantages, benefits and harms, and that it is important that society addresses issues for both sexes rather than disproportionately allocating support for only one sex. MGs also highlight that society has historically prioritised women's wellbeing and safety, that it relies on male disposability, and that feminism, rather than being a solution, contributes to male disposability and is inherently hostile towards the rights of men. Much of the criticisms of MGs reasserted feminist 'truths' and framed and dismissed MGs claims as made in bad faith, as untrue, and ultimately destructive. The rhetorical strategies used to discredit those who criticise feminism or express concerns for men are similar to those noted by Macnamara (2006): feminist scholars may frame any challenge of feminism or disapproved advocacy of men, as (a) backlash and (b) accuse the challengers of misogyny; both of which were employed by most articles.

DISQUALIFICATION OF MALE VICTIMHOOD

Modern social justice discourse emphasises group identity and perceptions of vulnerability and experience of historical injustice linked with such identities, as central to making moral and general claims of disadvantage and social injustice. It provided theoretical and moral justification to disenfranchise voices that do not fit its own criteria of worthiness. Groups that are deemed to be vulnerable, are to be protected from criticism and negative stereotyping, in case it leads to further injustice and oppression. However, identity groups deemed to be powerful, and hostile are treated as immune from criticism and negative stereotyping, and if negatively affected, may be viewed as a positive decrease of power and disparities important for equity in society, or rhetorically blame targets for their reactivity, and seek to delegitimise their reactions (Caplan & Nelson, 1973).

MGs, particularly MRAs and Father Rights groups, present men as being systemically disadvantaged socially and legally, and therefore in need of justice. By claiming social vulnerability, symbolically they contradict the binary narrative of male social power and oppression, and female oppression and victimisation that feminism relies on. To counter the claim of males also being vulnerable to social neglect, damage, and injustice, and of females being beneficiaries of social protection and support for their wellbeing, the authors have used several strategies to disqualify males from claiming victim status. The first is to recast men's issues, pain, and advocacy as done in bad faith (e.g. rights as a trojan horse to re-oppress women, and reactive backlash), misdiagnosing the cause (i.e. faultily blaming feminism instead of patriarchy), and misdiagnosing the scope (i.e. reflects localised pain, not systemic injustice). In addition to these, they accuse men of misappropriating rights and victim language, of which are



deemed appropriate for some people to use, but for men, it is improper for them to use language of vulnerability, despite the gravity of the issues they may raise.

HOW MIGHT NON-FEMINIST MEN INTERPRET THE MESSAGING ABOUT MEN FROM THESE ARTICLES?

The articles' attitudes towards the MGs, overtly or covertly, appeared antagonistic by portraying them in unbalanced, unfair ways likely to evoke prejudice from readers. For men who align with ideologies sympathetic to men's interests on men's own terms, the articles seem to lend support to male disposability theory proposed by Warren Farrell (Farrell, 1993). Farrell claimed that societies treat male interests, health and wellbeing as disposable for the greater good of society by protecting women and children. Men are socialised to protect and provide, especially for women and girls. They are socialised to not complain about their concerns, to deal with problems independently, or using awareness of their concerns to motivate a commitment to helping women and girls (United Nations, 2014). The Manosphere breaks many of these rules in that they may prioritise what men's interests are, and they do not demonstrate the gynocentrism that feminism promotes (Crowe, 2011). The manosphere breaks traditional gender norms and it may appear that this may in part explain the academics backlash towards them.

Collins (2019) highlights what he calls the empathy gap that society has towards men. Based in the same traditional expectations that men have less social value than women, he notes how internationally enhancing protection and wellbeing for women are prioritised over the human rights of men. While he and other men's rights activists have listed many areas where men and boys are disadvantaged, neglected, and ignored (for examples, see Nuzzo, 2020a; Nuzzo, 2020b; Siddiqi, 2021; Whitley, 2021), society continues to almost entirely ignore men's rights when addressing gender rights. Collins notes that the common response to men expressing their concerns will be some version of 'it's all men's fault' or 'blame men'.

All the articles reflected demonstrate support for, or at least, complicity with feminist ideology. Feminist ideology, its narratives and its equity morality, forms a gender hegemony in society and academia, where specifically men's gender ideologies are condemned, and different groups who challenge the hegemony are scrutinised and marginalised. Within feminism, men as a group, on the basis of their social status, and the privilege, power, and oppressor stereotype ascribed to them, are denied in academic discourse, access to fair and equal representation, denied the right to have concerns fairly and accurately understood, and are vulnerable to being stigmatised and vilified by partisan scholars. The tone taken towards men who do not comply with feminism, and the dismissal of 'grievances' without fair, complete, or accurate consideration, makes it understandable that MGs would mistrust and voice concerns about feminism and view it as colluding to keep society antagonistic and neglectful towards men as a group. For men in these groups, feminism provides the ideological framework and political influence that devalues and dehumanises men as a group, whether feminist allies or not. The portrayal of MGs in these articles merely reinforces perceptions that feminism fuels anti-male sentiment and prejudice.

Feminist scholars have every right to analyse and criticise movements, ideologies, and behaviour. Academic scholarship should strive towards objectivity, and balance, rather than appearing to incite prejudice, polarisation, and sectarianism. It should avoid using the tools of propagandists, such as vilifying those they study, invoking stereotypes, ascribing motives,



applying hostile interpretations and meanings, scapegoating, and appearing to speak from ideological partisanship rather than academic objectivity and curiosity. They need to be careful that their academic advocacy and allyship does not slip into political and emotive propaganda that might intellectually and emotionally prejudice readers against the population being studied. They need to be careful not to slip into a form of academic imperialism and ideological sectarianism when studying outsider groups who they do not culturally align with or understand. Ideological sectarianism is the assumption that one's group's beliefs, values, and perspectives are inherently true, and those who do not align, are essentialised as a type of ideological and moral 'heathen'.

Writers need to understand reflexively their own ideological biases and prejudices lest these biases motivate, distort, and shape the discourse. Peer reviewers should assist in moderating, and ensuring appropriate balance is maintained and bias be challenged. The findings in this study raise ethical issues about scholars using their influential positions to target and vilify public groups, based on gender status, to vilify and stoke social prejudice for a group that is already socially stigmatised (Macnamara, 2006). There is perhaps a fine line between advocacy and hate speech, irrespective of how eloquently it is expressed.

CAPACITY FOR SELF-REFLECTION

There were three articles that showed some critical self-reflection and concessions, though these were written in the context of instrumentally considering how to convert men and boys to become feminist allies. One highlighted that men and boys who have been sexually victimised do not get the same priority or recognition as women (PettyJohn et al., 2019). Another admitted that by criticising MGs at a macrolevel, this has created an "empathy wall" (Alschech & Saini, 2019, p. 376) to distressed fathers. Another author admitted that the feminist approach to interacting with those in MGs may be counterproductive (though ironically named his chapter: Backlash: Angry men's movements).

I think pro-feminist men (myself included) have been too quick to stereotype as committed woman-haters and sexist dinosaurs all men who raise typical "men's rights" issues. We have been sometimes influenced by the dominant model of oppositional politics, in which all such men are "enemies", to be approached (if at all) with disdain, hostility and self-righteous zeal. We have focused sometimes on the negative and we have attributed motives to men's actions which are not necessarily accurate. Such approaches limit our political effectiveness, making it very difficult for us to reach anyone but the almost-converted. (Flood, 2004, pp. 277-278)

Each of these show some concessions as part of their larger agenda, to reduce resistance and impact of MGs rather than to listen with openness and respect to the concerns and criticisms, and to engage in genuine intellectual debate or movement towards building consensus and dialogue. Until this happens, and while both implicit and explicit vilifying descriptions were a common style of portrayal in this literature, trust is unlikely to develop quickly, leaving MGs aligned men more likely to consider feminists enemies of men.

CONCLUSION

The academic portrayal of the manosphere consistently vilified its groups and adherents, depicting them as socially dangerous, misguided, and emotionally reactive. This study highlighted the pervasive negative framing and lack of balanced representation in scholarly



literature. While a minority of articles show critical self-reflection, the overall discourse remained antagonistic, reinforcing mistrust between the manosphere and feminist scholars. For genuine intellectual debate and progress towards gender equality, academic scholarship should strive for objectivity, balance, and avoid ideological sectarianism. This approach will foster a more inclusive and respectful dialogue on gender issues.

APPENDIX

All articles were uploaded into Google's NotebookLM as a second source to cross-reference. The prompts and answers are provided below:

Question: What attributes were assigned to manosphere adherents?

Reply:

The sources, while highlighting the diverse and often contradictory nature of the manosphere, predominantly assign negative attributes to its adherents. These attributes centre around a shared anti-feminist ideology and a perceived need to reclaim male dominance in response to feminist progress.

- **Anti-feminist and Misogynistic:** A core finding across the sources is the characterization of manosphere communities as fundamentally anti-feminist and misogynistic [1-5]. This manifests in their belief that feminism is harmful to men and that men are disadvantaged in society due to feminist policies and ideologies [2, 5-7]. The sources portray manosphere adherents as seeking to undermine feminist progress [2, 4] and blaming women for societal problems and their own personal failings [5-9].
- **Networked Harassers:** The sources consistently describe manosphere adherents as engaging in online harassment, particularly targeting women and feminist voices [1-4, 10]. They are portrayed as coordinating attacks [2, 4], employing tactics like doxing and revenge porn [11], spreading misogynistic language [1-3], and creating a hostile online environment for women [2, 5, 12-14].
- **Driven by a Sense of Victimhood:** A prominent attribute assigned to manosphere adherents is a sense of victimhood, often rooted in a belief that men are disadvantaged in society due to feminism [2, 6, 15-17]. They are depicted as claiming that men's rights are being eroded and framing themselves as victims of a "gynocentric order" that privileges women [5, 7, 18]. This sense of victimhood, as portrayed in the sources, often serves as justification for their misogynistic views and harassing behaviours [10, 19].
- **Strategic Use of Language and Logic:** The sources describe manosphere adherents as strategically employing language and logic to legitimize their views and mask their anti-feminist agenda [4, 17, 20, 21]. They point to the use of terms like "misandry" to construct a narrative of male victimhood and demonize feminism [4, 10, 15, 20]. Additionally, the sources note their attempts to appeal to rationality, science (particularly evolutionary psychology) [1, 22, 23], and even neoliberal economic principles [24] as a way to give their misogynistic views a veneer of credibility.



- **Embracing Contradictory Masculinities:** The sources depict the manosphere as rife with contradictions in their constructions of masculinity [25-27]. They highlight the tension between their claimed victimhood and their desire to assert dominance [27-30]. They also note the conflicting ideals of traditional, hegemonic masculinity, which they claim to reject, while simultaneously policing the boundaries of that masculinity through their rhetoric and behaviours [26, 31-33].

The sources, while acknowledging the heterogeneity of the manosphere, present a largely unified portrait of its adherents as driven by anti-feminist sentiment, a sense of male victimhood, and a desire to reclaim a perceived loss of male dominance. They achieve this through online harassment, strategic manipulation of language, and contradictory constructions of masculinity.

Question: Provide examples of the sources presenting the manosphere adherents in a positive light?

Answer: The sources provided do not contain information on how many articles portray manosphere adherents in a positive light. All of the sources discuss or analyze the manosphere and its adherents in a neutral or negative light.

Question: Do any of the sources offer any positive attributes to adherents of the manosphere?

Answer: The sources provided offer a largely critical perspective on the manosphere and its adherents. There are very few instances where positive attributes are ascribed to members of these groups. However, some sources do acknowledge ways in which certain manosphere groups or individuals attempt to present themselves positively, even if those attempts are ultimately viewed as superficial or disingenuous by the authors.

- **Potentially Positive Traits Framed Negatively:** Some sources highlight traits that could be perceived as positive but ultimately frame them within a negative light. For example, [1] notes that the MGTOW group has been "growing rapidly," suggesting that they have been successful at attracting members and propagating their ideology, even if that ideology is presented as harmful. Similarly, [2] acknowledges that MRHAs (Men's Rights/Health Activists) make "stated commitments to sexual and racial diversity," which contrasts with the perceived homogeneity of other MRA groups. However, the source ultimately argues that this apparent inclusivity is a tactic to gain legitimacy and obscure their anti-feminist agenda.

- **Strategic Use of Positive Language:** Source [3] observes that Greg Andresen, co-founder of the "One in Three" campaign (an Australian MRHA group), admits to strategically using less aggressive language in his advocacy, stating that he has "chosen to play nice and 'toe the line' to get a foot in the door." This suggests a calculated attempt to present their views more palatably to a wider audience. However, the source frames this tactic as manipulative, aiming to advance an anti-feminist agenda under the guise of men's health concerns.

- **Positive Descriptions of Pro-Feminist Men in Contrast to the Manosphere:** Several sources discuss pro-feminist men's movements as a distinct and generally positive counterpart to the manosphere. For example, [4] describes pro-



feminist men as those who "believe that they can work as allies with women in a struggle to transform traditional masculinity and our patriarchal society." While this does not directly praise manosphere adherents, it implies that their opposition to feminism is a negative trait.

It's important to note that the sources predominantly focus on analyzing the negative aspects and impacts of the manosphere. Any seemingly positive observations are often interwoven with critiques of their underlying motivations or framed within a larger narrative of anti-feminist harm.

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SINGLE FATHERS, FAMILY STRUCTURE, AND ADOLESCENT MALE DELINQUENCY

Nate Juda



ABSTRACT

This follow-up study expands upon the work of Juda (2024) by further exploring the relationship between household structure and delinquent behavior in young adolescent males, with a specific focus on the absence of a biological father. Utilizing data from the Add Health Wave 1 dataset (n= 2,798), this research examines delinquent behavior across three household structures: traditional families (both biological parents present), single-father households (no resident maternal figure), and single-mother households (no resident paternal figure). The study aims to address the following hypotheses: (H₁) males living with a biological father will exhibit lower rates of delinquent behavior; (H₂) those in single-mother households will demonstrate higher rates of delinquency; and (H₃) there will be no significant difference in delinquency rates between males from traditional families and single-father households. The results indicate that males in traditional families exhibit significantly lower levels of delinquency compared to their peers in single-parent households. Supporting Hypothesis 1, the presence of a biological father is associated with reduced delinquency ($\beta_1 = -0.25, p < .05$). Hypothesis 2 is confirmed, as males in single-mother households show the highest delinquency rates ($\beta_3 = 0.38, p < .01$). Contrary to Hypothesis 3, males in single-father households also demonstrate higher delinquency compared to traditional families, although less so than those in single-mother households ($\beta_2 = 0.15, p < .05$). The findings will contribute to the existing literature on family dynamics and adolescent behavior, providing valuable insights into the influence of parental presence on youth outcomes.

Keywords: adolescent behavior, biological father absence, delinquency, household structure, single-parent families, youth outcomes Add Health.



INTRODUCTION

The structure of families plays a fundamental role in shaping the development and behavior of children and adolescents. Over the past few decades, there has been growing interest in how variations in family structure—particularly single-parent households—impact children's well-being. While a substantial body of research has focused on single-mother households (see Amato & Keith, 1991; Demo & Acock, 1988; Juda, 2024; McLanahan & Booth, 1989), the experience of children in single-father households remains comparatively understudied. As single-father families become increasingly prevalent in the United States, a gap in the literature persists, leaving much to be understood regarding the absence of a mother versus a father—or rather how the influence of a masculine authority figure/role model differentially affects children's development, particularly regarding delinquent behavior.

Single-father households represent one of the fastest-growing family structures in the United States (Shipe et al., 2022). In 1960, only 1% of households with minor children were headed by single fathers, but by 2020, this figure had surged to approximately 3.3 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). This increase, primarily fueled by the rise in single-parent families headed by divorced or previously married fathers, underscores the evolving dynamics of American family life. Nevertheless, children living with single fathers still constitute a significantly smaller segment compared to those residing with single mothers—about 3.05 million versus 15.09 million in (Pew Research Center, 2019). Furthermore, single fathers exhibit notable demographic differences compared to single mothers (Shipe et al., 2022). These variations could profoundly influence the developmental outcomes for children raised in these households, yet they remain underexplored in the existing literature.

Research consistently demonstrates that children raised by both biological parents fare better across several domains of well-being than those raised in single-parent or divorced families. This advantage is particularly pronounced in adolescent males, where the absence of a biological father is strongly associated with increased delinquency (Amato & Keith, 1991; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Juda, 2024). Fathers are often viewed as crucial figures in the family unit, providing discipline, guidance, and emotional support that may reduce the likelihood of delinquent behavior. Conversely, adolescents growing up in single-mother households have been found to exhibit higher rates of delinquency compared to those in traditional families or with resident stepfathers (Juda, 2024). However, the exact relationship between family structure and delinquency, particularly in single-father households, remains unclear due to the paucity of research focusing on this family type.

The present study aims to address this gap by investigating the impact of family structure on delinquent behavior among adolescent males, specifically focusing on four household structures: traditional two-parent families, stepfamilies, single-mother households, and single-father households. By exploring differences in delinquent behavior across these family types, this study seeks to offer new insights into how the presence or absence of a biological father or mother affects adolescent male behavior.

This study hypothesizes three potential outcomes: (1) adolescent males residing in households with a biological father present (traditional families and single-father households) will exhibit lower levels of delinquent behavior compared to their peers in single-mother households; (2) males in single-mother households will engage in higher levels of delinquency than those in single-father households; and (3) there will be no significant difference in delinquency rates between males living in traditional families and those in single-father



households, suggesting that the presence of a father—whether in a single-parent or dual-parent household—provides similar protective effects.

This study draws on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), a comprehensive dataset that allows for the exploration of family structure and adolescent outcomes across a diverse and representative sample. By focusing on the often-overlooked single-father household, this research contributes to a more complete understanding of the relationship between family structure and delinquent behavior, offering insights that could inform interventions aimed at supporting at-risk youth. The findings of this study have the potential to inform policies and programs designed to strengthen family environments, particularly for single-parent families, and reduce the incidence of delinquency among adolescents.

STUDY FOCUS

Purpose:

This study aims to explore the relationship between delinquent behavior in adolescent males and their household structure. Four household structures examined are:

- 1 **Traditional Family:** Both biological parents are present.
- 2 **Stepfamilies:** Resident biological mother and stepfather
- 3 **Single-Mother Households:** Only the biological mother is present, with no paternal figure in the household.
- 4 **Single-Father Households:** Only the biological father is present, with no maternal figure in the household.

Research Question:

What differences in delinquent behavior are observed among adolescent males based on household structure: traditional families (both biological parents), stepfamilies (biological mother and stepfather in the home), single-mother households (no resident paternal figure), and single-father households (no resident maternal figure)?

Hypotheses:

- **H₁:** Adolescent males living in households with a biological father present will be significantly less likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those without a resident biological father.
- **H₂:** Adolescent males in single-mother households will be significantly more likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those in single-father households.
- **H₃:** There will be no significant difference in delinquent behavior between adolescent males from traditional families and those from single-father households.



DATA AND METHODS

Data Source

This study utilizes data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Add Health is the largest and most comprehensive longitudinal survey of adolescents ever conducted, comprising multiple waves of data collection (Harris, 2019; Juda, 2024). Wave I (W1) was administered between September 1994 and April 1995, involving 20,745 nationally representative adolescents in grades 7 through 12 (ages 11-17). An in-school questionnaire was distributed to every student attending one of the 132 sampled U.S. schools, from which a random sample of approximately 200 adolescents per school was selected for in-home interviews (Harris, 2019; Juda, 2024). This analysis focuses on data from W1, with a mean participant age of 15.9 years (95% CI = 15.7 to 16.1) and a response rate of 79%.

The initial sampling frame included 26,666 schools, stratified by factors such as urbanization, school type, size, ethnicity, and census region. Participating schools were asked to identify feeder schools with a 7th grade, from which a minimum of five students were sent to each high school. The top feeder school for each high school was selected to participate in the study, with replacement schools chosen as necessary. This recruitment process resulted in 132 core study schools, including 80 high schools and 52 middle schools.

The primary objectives of Add Health were to gather comprehensive information on the health, family, social, and individual characteristics of U.S. adolescents and to explore various risk and protective factors (Harris, 2019; Juda, 2024). Given its in-depth focus on adolescent health and risk behaviors, Add Health is particularly suited for this research. Each wave includes detailed questions regarding involvement in delinquent behaviors. The longitudinal design allows for an examination of the long-term relationships between family structure and delinquent behavior, effectively accounting for baseline differences in empirical analyses. After excluding female respondents and cases with missing data, the final sample size consisted of 2,798 respondents.

Dependent Variable

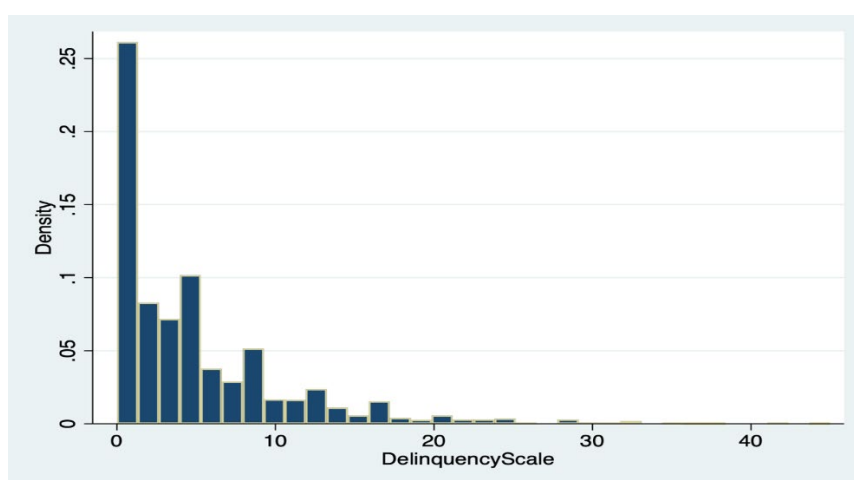
The dependent variable, *delinquency*, was derived from the Self-Report Delinquency (AHSRD) scale in W1 of Add Health. Following established methodologies (see Beaver, 2010; Pechorro et al., 2019), delinquency was assessed using AHSRD's 15-item scale that evaluates both aggressive and violent behaviors alongside non-violent delinquency. This scale combines 11 items of the nonviolent factor and four items of the violent factor, rated on a 4-point ordinal scale. Higher scores reflect greater levels of delinquency. The questions are consistent with those found in other research (see Pechorro et al., 2019; Sieving et al., 2001; Vazsonyi et al., 2006) and comply with the official definitions of "crime" used by government sources such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). This study focuses on five delinquent behaviors reported over the past 12 months categorized as follows: (1) property crime, (2) violent crime, (3) drug-related crime, (4) defiance of parental authority, and (5) unruly public behavior. These behaviors encompass a significant portion of delinquent actions undertaken by adolescents (Beaver, 2010).

Specifically, participants were asked in the past 12 months, how often have they engaged in the following activities: (1) "paint graffiti or signs on someone else's property or in a public place?"; (2) "deliberately damage property that didn't belong to you?"; (3) "lie to your parents or



guardians about where you had been or whom you were with?"; (4) "take something from a store without paying for it?"; (5) "get into a serious physical fight?"; (6) "hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or care from a doctor or nurse?"; (7) "run away from home?"; (8) "drive a car without its owner's permission?"; (9) "steal something worth more than \$50?"; (10) "enter a house or building to steal something?"; (11) "use or threaten to use a weapon to get something from someone?"; (12) "sell marijuana or other drugs?"; (13) "steal something worth less than \$50?"; (14) "take part in a fight where a group of your friends was against another group?"; (15) "being loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place?" Items were coded as 0 = never, 1 = one or two times, 2 = three or four times and, 3 = five or more times. The sum of these created the delinquency scale (mean = 4.875, SD = 5.790), which has a good level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$) and positively skewed data (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Delinquency Distribution



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health

Independent Variable

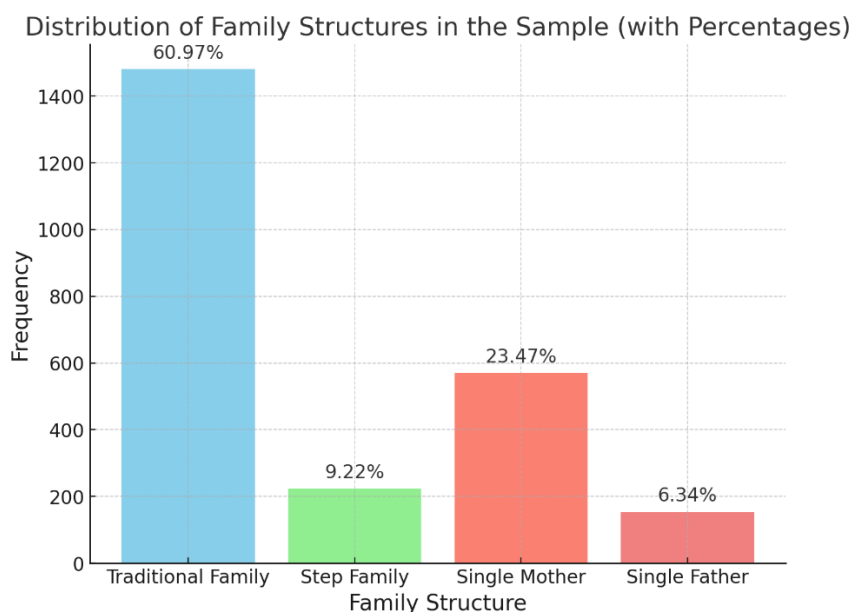
The independent variable comprises four distinct household structures: (1) traditional family household, (2) stepfamilies, (3) single-mother household, and (4) single-father household. Non-resident parental figures (male or female) were not considered nor were resident figures such as older siblings, aunts or uncles, or grandparents. This study restricts its estimation sample to male adolescents living with their biological mother or father in W_1 . The variation in family structure comes from the absence or presence of a resident biological mother or father or resident stepfather residing in the home during W_1 .

The analytic sample ($n = 2,798$) focuses on adolescent males who reported living in one of the following arrangements: (1) with both biological parents ($n = 1,481$), (2) with a biological mother and stepfather ($n = 224$), (3) with a single mother ($n = 570$), or (4) with a single father ($n = 154$).

Consistent with previous literature and data (Dahl & Moretti, 2008; Pew, 2019; US Census Bureau, 2020), figure 2 illustrates the prevalence of these family structures, indicating that roughly 60% of adolescents live in traditional families with both biological parents, nearly



10% with a biological mother and stepfather, and, approximately 25% live with a single mother, and 6% live with a single father (see Figure 2).



Control Variables

To ensure the validity of the results this study controlled for potential confounding variables, specifically demographic factors such as age, race, and socioeconomic status (SES)—with household income serving as the key indicator of SES. Previous research has shown that SES plays a critical role in mediating the effects of family structure on adolescent behavior and outcomes. Lower household income has been consistently linked to higher rates of delinquency in adolescents (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Carlson & Corcoran, 2001; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Flewelling & Bauman, 1990).

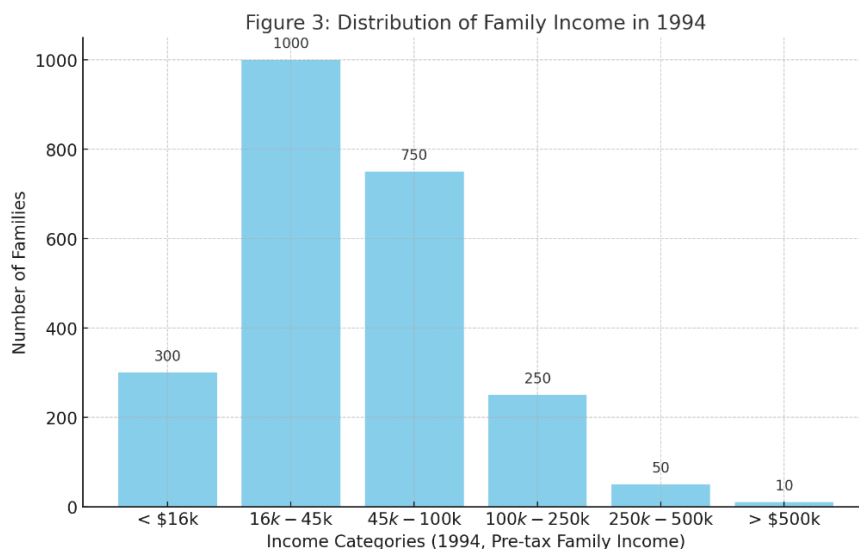
Age was measured in years at W₁ ($M = 15.59$, $SD = 1.78$). *Race* was constructed based on responses to six questions regarding the adolescent's racial origin (i.e., White, Black, Latino, American Indian, Asian, or other). This information was then used to create a dummy variable comparing White ($n = 1,635$; $M = .584$) versus non-white ($n = 1,163$; $M = .416$) respondents.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a well-documented correlate of juvenile delinquency (Rekker et al., 2017), with evidence indicating that adolescents from low-SES households are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those from higher-SES backgrounds (Archambault et al., 2017; Beyers et al., 2001; Rekker et al., 2017). Variations in SES create disparities in access to resources (Galobardes et al., 2007; Myers, 2009) and factors such as privilege, power, and social capital are often assessed through a combination of education, occupation (or job title), and income (Walder, 1995; Woehr, 2018). However, in this study, *SES* is measured solely by household income, as it has a direct impact on access to resources, privilege, and power—more so than education level or job title. Income influences critical factors such as neighborhood quality, school systems, and peer networks, which in turn shape adolescent development and behavior (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Income data were based on parental reports of total pre-tax family income in 1994 (in \$1,000 increments, top-coded at \$999,000) ($n = 2,360$). Income included all sources, such as



public assistance, and was rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, resulting in a six-category variable for analysis. The income categories were: families earning less than \$16,000 (coded 0, roughly the federal poverty threshold in 1994-1995); \$16,000-\$45,000 (coded 1, lower middle-class); \$45,000-\$100,000 (coded 2, middle-class); \$100,000-\$250,000 (coded 3, upper middle-class); \$250,000-\$500,000 (coded 4, upper class); and >\$500,000 (coded 5, wealthy). The mean income among respondents was \$47.7k, with a median income of \$40k, reflecting a positively skewed distribution (SD = .821) (see Figure 3).



Analytic Strategy

To analyze the extensive and complex data from the Add Health study effectively, the analyses were conducted using STATA statistical software. This software facilitates the use of estimation commands that can incorporate large volumes of intricate survey data while accounting for sample design characteristics, thus ensuring unbiased parameter estimates and standard errors.

Initial analyses included frequency distributions to describe response distributions within the sample. T-tests and correlation matrices were employed to assess relationships at the bivariate level. Given the nature of the dependent variable—characterized by positive skewness, over-dispersion, a significant number of zero values, and $\sigma^2 > \mu$ (see Figure 1)—negative binomial regression was initially considered as a modeling technique.

However, to further explore the relationships between delinquency and family structure, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean delinquency scores across the four family types: traditional family (0), stepfamily (1), single-mother (2), and single-father (3). The ANOVA results indicated significant differences among the family structures.

To follow up on these findings, Tukey's pairwise comparison test was performed to determine which specific family structure groups differed from each other. This analysis provided insight into the nature of these differences in delinquency rates among the family types.



In addition to these analyses, a series of negative binomial regression models were estimated to examine the relationships between delinquency and household structure, while controlling for the relevant variables. Each of the four family types was entered into the models. The final model assessed whether age, race, or SES accounted for variations in delinquency associated with household structure. As this study focuses exclusively on adolescent males, sex was coded as M=0 and F=1, with all data equal to 1 excluded. Additionally, cases with missing information were eliminated through listwise deletion.

RESULTS

The aim of this study is to investigate the differences in delinquent behavior among adolescent males from four distinct household structures: (1) traditional families (with both biological parents present), (2) stepfamilies with a resident biological mother and stepfather, (3) single-mother households (with only the biological mother present), and (4) single-father households (with only the biological father present). Hypothesis 1 (H1) posits that young males residing in households with a biological father will be significantly less likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to their peers living without a biological father. Hypothesis 2 (H2) suggests that young males in single-mother households will exhibit higher levels of delinquent behavior than those in single-father households. Hypothesis 3 (H3) states there will be no significant difference in delinquent behavior between adolescent males living in traditional families from those in single-father households.

Table 1 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics for the study's key variables. The sample consists of male adolescents aged 11 to 21, with an average age of 15.59 years. The racial composition shows that 58% of the participants are white, while 42% belong to various other racial and ethnic groups. In terms of household structure, approximately 53% of the adolescents come from traditional families with both biological parents present. Around 8% of the sample is from stepfamilies, where the biological mother lives with a stepfather. Notably, 20% of the adolescents are from single-mother households, and 6% are from single-father households. These statistics indicate a diverse set of family structures, which provide a foundation for exploring how household composition impacts delinquent behavior. Additionally, the socioeconomic status (SES) of the sample shows variability, with a mean score of 1.28 (\$47.7k) and a range between 0 (< \$16k) and 5 (> \$500k), which captures a broad spectrum of backgrounds across the sample.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Min Value	Max Value
<i>Dependent Variables</i>				
DelinquencyScale	4.87	5.79	0	45
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
Traditional Family	0.53	-	0	1
Stepfamily	0.08	-	0	1
Single Mother	0.20	-	0	1



Single Father	0.06	-	0	1
Control Variables				
Age	15.59	1.78	11	21
Race (White)	0.58	-	0	1
SES	1.28	0.82	0	5

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health

Table 2 presents the results of a correlation matrix that examines the relationships between family structure, control variables (age, race, and SES), and delinquent behavior in adolescent males. The findings indicate that living in a *traditional family* with both biological parents is significantly and negatively associated with delinquent behavior ($r = -0.07, p < 0.05$). This suggests that adolescents from traditional families are less likely to engage in delinquent activities, supporting the hypothesis that family stability and the presence of both biological parents contribute to lower delinquency rates.

In contrast, living in a *stepfamily* (biological mother and stepfather) shows a weak, negative correlation with delinquent behavior ($r = -0.02$); however, this relationship is not statistically significant. This implies that being in a stepfamily does not have a strong or consistent association with delinquency within this sample.

Adolescents from *single-mother households* show a positive and statistically significant correlation with delinquent behavior ($r = 0.07, p < 0.05$), reinforcing the idea that the absence of a resident father figure is linked to higher rates of delinquency. This supports the hypothesis that adolescent males in single-mother households are more prone to engaging in delinquent behaviors.

Similarly, there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between *single-father households* and delinquent behavior ($r = 0.05, p < 0.05$). Although the relationship is weaker than that of single-mother households, it suggests that the absence of a maternal figure also contributes to increased delinquency, but to a lesser extent compared to the absence of a father.

None of the control variables—*age*, *race*, nor *socioeconomic status (SES)*—show significant correlations with delinquency. The small negative correlations for *SES* ($r = -0.03$) and *race* ($r = -0.03$) indicate that while adolescents from higher SES backgrounds or those identifying as white may exhibit slightly lower delinquency rates, these associations are not statistically significant.

**Table 2.** Bivariate Correlations for Study Variables (N = 2,798)

Variables	Delinquency	TradFamily	StepFamily	SingleMother	SingleFather	Race (White)	Age	SES
Delinquency	1.00							
TradFamily	-0.07*	1.00						
StepFamily	-0.02	-0.31*	1.00					
SingleMother	0.07*	-0.54*	-0.15*	1.00				
SingleFather	0.05*	-0.26*	-0.07*	-0.12*	1.00			
Race (White)	-0.03	0.18*	0.00	-0.15*	0.03	1.00		
Age	0.01	-0.05*	-0.02	-0.02	0.05*	0.01	1.00	
SES	-0.03	0.33*	-0.01	-0.28*	-0.01	0.21*	0.02	1.00

*p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001

Table 3 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA conducted to assess the differences in delinquent behavior among adolescent males across four family structures: traditional families, stepfamilies, single-mother, and single-father households. The Between Groups sum of squares (SS) is 846.61, with 3 degrees of freedom (df), indicating the extent to which delinquency scores differ between the various family structures. The Within Groups SS is 80,847.97, with 2,425 df, capturing the variation in delinquency scores within each family structure group. The Total SS is 81,694.58, representing the overall variation in delinquency across all participants and family structures combined. The Mean Square (MS) for the between-groups variation is 282.20, while the MS for the within-groups variation is 33.34. The resulting F-ratio of 8.46 shows that the differences in delinquency rates across the different family structures are statistically significant. With a p-value of 0.00 ($p < 0.001$), the analysis confirms that family structure has a significant impact on delinquent behavior among adolescent males. This analysis suggests that delinquency rates vary based on whether an adolescent male is from a traditional family, stepfamily, single-mother household, or single-father household, warranting further investigation into specific group differences through post-hoc comparisons.

**Table 3.** One-Way ANOVA for Delinquency by Family Structure

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	846.61	3	282.20	8.46	0.00
Within Groups	80,847.97	2,425	33.34		
Total	81,694.58	2,428			

Table 4 presents the results of Tukey's pairwise comparison test, which examines differences in delinquency rates across various family structures. The analysis reveals no significant difference in delinquency rates between adolescent males from stepfamilies (biological mother and stepfather) and traditional families (both biological parents). This suggests that residing in a stepfamily does not significantly impact delinquent behavior compared to living with both biological parents. Adolescents from single-mother households, however, show significantly higher delinquency rates compared to those from traditional families, with a mean difference of 1.16 ($p < 0.05$). This finding supports the hypothesis that the absence of a resident father is linked to increased delinquent behavior. Similarly, adolescents from single-father households also exhibit significantly higher delinquency rates compared to traditional family counterparts, with a mean difference of 1.71 ($p < 0.05$). No significant difference is observed between adolescents from single-mother households and those from stepfamilies, suggesting that both groups exhibit similar levels of delinquent behavior, despite differing family compositions. Adolescents from single-father households, on the other hand, show significantly higher delinquency rates compared to those from stepfamilies, with a mean difference of 1.60 ($p < 0.05$). Finally, there is no significant difference in delinquency rates between adolescents from single-father and single-mother households, with a mean difference of 0.55 ($p = 0.76$). This indicates that the absence of either a mother or father similarly influences delinquent behavior. Overall, the results demonstrate significant differences in delinquency based on family structure. Adolescents from both single-mother and single-father households are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those from traditional families. However, no significant differences are found between stepfamilies and traditional families, nor between single-mother and single-father households, suggesting that family composition plays a nuanced role in adolescent delinquency.

Table 4. Tukey's Pairwise Comparison Test for Family Structure and Delinquency

Comparison	MD	SE	95% CI	p-value
Stepfamily vs Traditional Family	0.10	0.41	-0.97 – 1.16	Not Significant $p = 0.99$
Single Mother vs Traditional Family	1.16	0.28	0.42 – 1.89	Significant ($p < 0.05$) $p = 0.00$
Single Father vs Traditional Family	1.71	0.49	0.45 – 2.97	Significant ($p < 0.05$) $p = 0.00$



Single Mother vs Stepfamily	1.06	0.46	-0.11 – 2.23	Not Significant p = 0.19
Single Father vs Stepfamily	1.60	0.60	0.06 – 3.17	Significant (p < 0.05) p = 0.04
Single Father vs Single Mother	0.55	0.52	-0.79 to 1.90	Not Significant p = 0.76

Note: MD = Mean Difference (contrast)

Table 5 presents the results of a negative binomial regression model investigating the relationship between delinquent behavior and household structure, using the traditional family (both biological parents) as the baseline comparison group. The findings are consistent with those seen in the correlation matrix (Table 2), one-way ANOVA (Table 3), and Tukey's pairwise comparison test (Table 4). The model also includes *race* (white), *age*, and *socioeconomic status* (SES) as control variables.

The results reveal that adolescents from *single-mother households* have a coefficient of 0.24, with a standard error (SE) of 0.06, a z-value of 3.84, and a p-value of 0.00. The 95% confidence interval (CI) ranges from 0.12 to 0.36, indicating that this finding is statistically significant. This means that adolescent males in single-mother households show a 24% higher rate of delinquent behavior compared to those in traditional families. This supports the hypothesis that the absence of a resident father is associated with increased delinquency.

Similarly, adolescents from *single-father households* have a coefficient of 0.32 (SE = 0.11), with a z-value of 2.88 and a p-value of 0.00, which is also statistically significant. The 95% CI ranges from 0.10 to 0.53, showing that adolescents from single-father households exhibit a 32% higher rate of delinquency compared to their counterparts from traditional families. This suggests that the absence of a maternal figure also contributes to an increase in delinquent behavior, and the effect appears slightly stronger than in *single-mother households*.

Race, specifically being white, has a coefficient of -0.07, with an SE of 0.05, a z-value of -1.31, and a p-value of 0.19, indicating that this relationship is not statistically significant. The 95% CI of -0.17 to 0.03 confirms that race does not have a meaningful impact on delinquency in this model. Similarly, *age* has a coefficient of 0.00 (SE = 0.01), with a z-value of 0.04 and a p-value of 0.97, suggesting no significant relationship between age and delinquency. The 95% CI of -0.03 to 0.03 further indicates that age does not meaningfully influence delinquent behavior in this sample.

SES, with a coefficient of -0.00 (SE = 0.03), a z-value of -0.02, and a p-value of 0.99, shows no statistically significant relationship with delinquency. The 95% CI of -0.06 to 0.06 indicates that SES does not have a discernible effect on delinquent behavior in this dataset.

This model suggests that household structure (particularly single-parent households) has a significant effect on delinquency, while *race*, *age*, and *SES* are not statistically significant predictors in this model.



Table 5: Negative Binomial Regression Models Investigating the Relationship between Delinquent Behavior and Household Structure (with Traditional Family as the baseline):

Variable	Coefficient	SE	Z	p-value	95% CI
Single Mother	0.24	0.06	3.84	0.00	0.12 - 0.36
Single Father	0.32	0.11	2.88	0.00	0.10 - 0.53
Race (White)	-0.07	0.05	-1.31	0.19	-0.17 - 0.03
Age	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.97	-0.03 - 0.029
SES	-0.00	0.03	-0.02	0.99	-0.06 - 0.06
Constant	1.55	0.23	6.69	0.00	1.09 - 2.00
In(alpha)	0.16	0.04	-	-	0.09 - 0.24
Alpha	1.18	0.04	-	-	1.10 - 1.26

Notes: LR $\chi^2(5)$: 25.74; Prob > χ^2 : 0.0001; Log Likelihood: -6306.92; Pseudo R-squared: 0.0020

Hypothesis 1 (H₁):

Adolescent males living in households with a biological father present will be significantly less likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those without a resident biological father.

The results show that adolescents from single-mother households are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those from traditional families (with both biological parents present) and single-father households. The coefficient for Single Mother is 0.24 ($p = 0.00$), indicating a significant increase in delinquency. This supports the hypothesis that the absence of a resident father increases the likelihood of delinquency in adolescent males. Therefore, we must reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂):

Adolescent males in single-mother households will be significantly more likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those in single-father households.

Both family structures (single-mother and single-father households) are associated with increased delinquency, but the coefficient for Single Father is 0.32 ($p = 0.00$), while for Single Mother it is 0.24 ($p = 0.00$). Although single-father households exhibit slightly higher levels of delinquency (both coefficients are statistically significant), the difference between delinquency levels in single-mother and single-father households is not statistically significant ($p = 0.76$). Therefore, we must fail to reject the null hypothesis.



Hypothesis 3 (H₃):

There will be no significant difference in delinquent behavior between adolescent males from traditional families and those from single-father households.

The coefficient for Single Father is 0.32 ($p = 0.00$), indicating that adolescents from single-father households are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior compared to those from traditional families. This result does not support the hypothesis, as the difference is statistically significant. Therefore, we must fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Summary of Findings:

Adolescent males from both single-mother and single-father households exhibit higher levels of delinquency compared to those from traditional families. While this supports the general idea that the absence of a parent increases delinquent behavior, it also reveals nuances. Specifically, the higher delinquency among adolescents from single-mother households supports Hypothesis 1, which suggests that the absence of a biological father leads to more delinquent behavior.

However, adolescents from single-father households also show significantly higher delinquency compared to those from traditional families. This contradicts Hypothesis 1, as it indicates that the presence of a biological father in single-father households does not sufficiently reduce delinquency. Instead, the absence of a maternal figure in these households also contributes to delinquent behavior, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent than in single-mother households.

Hypothesis 3, which predicted no significant differences between single-father and traditional families, is not supported by the findings, as single-father households do show significantly higher delinquency.

Overall, the results underscore that family structure plays a crucial role in adolescent delinquency. Adolescents in single-parent households, whether headed by a mother or father, are at a significantly higher risk of engaging in delinquent behavior. In contrast, control variables such as *race*, *age*, and *socioeconomic status (SES)* do not significantly predict delinquency in this model, further highlighting that the absence of a parent has a more critical influence on delinquency than other demographic factors. These findings emphasize the importance of traditional, two parent families, as the absence of either parent is linked to a higher likelihood of delinquent behavior.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provide important insights into the role of family structure in shaping delinquent behavior among adolescent males. Specifically, the results indicate that family dynamics—particularly the absence of a biological father—play a critical role in determining delinquency levels, corroborating prior research that links paternal absence to increased behavioral issues (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Juda, 2024). However, these findings underscore the continued relevance of traditional family structures, wherein the presence of both parents contributes to better behavioral outcomes for children.

Adolescents in both single-mother and single-father households exhibit higher levels of delinquent behavior compared to those in traditional supporting Hypothesis 1, which posits that



the absence of a biological father is a significant predictor of increased delinquent behavior. The influence of fathers has been widely documented, particularly in their roles of providing discipline, structure, and supervision. Without a father's presence, adolescents may lack the behavioral boundaries that mitigate risk-taking tendencies, especially among males. This observation aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of paternal involvement in preventing delinquency (Amato & Keith, 1991). Moreover, it raises questions about the significance of traditional gender roles—where fathers embody discipline and mothers provide emotional nurturing—in fostering well-adjusted adolescents. This notion is echoed by researchers like Jordan Peterson and Warren Farrell (The Dr. Jordan Peterson Podcast, EP 187, August 16, 2021), suggesting that these traditional roles may still hold relevance in shaping positive child outcomes.

Interestingly, the results for adolescents in single-father households present a more complex picture. Although these adolescents exhibited higher levels of delinquency than those in traditional families, the increase was less pronounced than that observed in single-mother households. This partially supports Hypothesis 3, which suggested that delinquency rates in single-father households would not differ significantly from those in traditional families. While single fathers may not fully replicate the dual-parent dynamic, their presence appears to offer some protective benefits, albeit less robust than those provided by intact families. This finding invites further exploration into the specific roles that single fathers play and how these roles may differ from those of mothers, particularly in terms of emotional support and supervision.

Contrary to Hypothesis 2, which anticipated a stark contrast in delinquency rates between single-mother and single-father households, the differences were not as dramatic as expected. Both family types were associated with elevated risks of delinquent behavior, indicating that the absence of either parental figure adversely affects adolescent outcomes. This finding challenges the assumption that single-father households are inherently more stable or protective against delinquency compared to their single-mother counterparts. Instead, the absence of either a maternal or paternal figure seems to disrupt the balance of emotional and disciplinary nurturing essential for healthy adolescent development.

The lack of significant effects from control variables such as race, age, and socioeconomic status (SES) emphasizes the overwhelming influence of family structure on delinquent behavior in this sample. This suggests that while factors like poverty or ethnicity often correlate with negative outcomes, the dynamics within the household—specifically the presence or absence of a parental figure—are more critical in determining delinquency levels among young males. These insights have significant implications for interventions, indicating that efforts to reduce delinquency should prioritize strengthening family dynamics, particularly in single-parent households.

Boys raised in intact families benefit from the presence of both male and female role models, which provides a balanced approach to their development. Juda (2024) emphasized that many contemporary challenges faced by boys likely stem from the lack of strong, positive male figures. While this assertion is valid, it is equally important to recognize the vital role that mothers play in a child's upbringing. Mothers excel at identifying their children's strengths, fostering emotional intelligence and self-preservation/aversion to danger (Kofler-Westergren et al., 2010). Conversely, fathers typically focus on boundary-setting and discipline, instilling skills such as delayed gratification that are crucial for developing a strong work ethic, self-control (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Vanassche et al., 2014), grit and anti-fragility (CITE). This



complementary dynamic between mothers and fathers enriches boys' lives by imparting a variety of essential life skills, ultimately leading to the developmental advantages associated with dual parental involvement. The interplay of these roles highlights the importance of both nurturing and structure in boys' healthy development, suggesting that the absence of either can hinder their ability to thrive socially and emotionally.

Theoretical Implications

These findings raise important questions about the roles of gender and traditional parental dynamics in adolescent development. The notion that a masculine father and a feminine mother provide distinct yet complementary roles in shaping child behavior remains relevant. Fathers, traditionally viewed as providers of discipline, may play a critical role in moderating delinquent tendencies, while mothers may offer emotional support that fosters well-being and stability. The imbalance created by the absence of one parent could lead to adverse outcomes, especially in adolescence when boys may require a stronger disciplinary presence. Future research should explore the psychological and emotional mechanisms behind these gendered roles to determine their contemporary relevance.

There is significant room for investigation into the magnitude these roles hold in non-traditional two-parent family structures, such as same-sex parenting, where the distribution of discipline and emotional support may differ from traditional norms. This exploration could provide valuable insight into the adaptability of parental roles and their effect on delinquency and other well-being outcomes in children.

Practical Implications and Future Directions

The study's findings underscore the need for targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by adolescents in single-parent households. Both single mothers and single fathers may struggle to provide the balanced supervision and emotional support that dual-parent households typically offer. Support systems—such as parenting programs, mentoring initiatives, and community resources—should be designed to empower single parents, equipping them with strategies to manage their children's behavior effectively and foster healthy development.

Additionally, future research should delve deeper into the specific aspects of parental involvement that mitigate delinquency. Understanding how different styles of supervision, emotional availability, and discipline vary between single mothers and fathers could illuminate protective factors that can be leveraged in both family types. Investigating the contributions of non-residential parents, such as fathers who maintain involvement despite living apart, would also add nuance to the discussion. These insights could inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at reducing delinquency and promoting well-being among adolescent males.

Lastly, the ongoing increase in single-father households presents a timely opportunity for further research. Gaining a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and advantages faced by single fathers could lead to more effective support mechanisms for this growing family type. The findings of this study suggest that while single fathers can mitigate delinquency to some extent, they may still encounter barriers that prevent them from providing the same level of stability as traditional families.



Policy Implications

Exploring policy reforms to discourage divorce and single parenting could center on fostering family stability. One key strategy involves enhancing marriage support programs, such as subsidized counseling, mediation services, and pre-marital education. These initiatives can equip couples with the tools to manage conflicts and strengthen long-term commitment, ultimately reinforcing the stability that is beneficial for child development.

Reforming alimony and child support policies is another potential avenue. Eliminating child support and alimony would remove financial incentives tied to divorce or having children out of wedlock. The underlying idea is that without these supports, individuals would be more deliberate in their relationship and family planning choices, fostering stronger, more committed partnerships. By reducing the economic appeal of single parenting or divorce, these reforms could promote the formation and preservation of two-parent households—structures that research consistently shows benefit children's emotional and social development.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of the findings. First, using cross-sectional data from Add Health Wave 1 provides only a snapshot in time, limiting the ability to establish causal relationships between family structure and delinquency. Additionally, while race, age, and socioeconomic status (SES) are controlled for, other confounding variables, such as neighborhood context, peer influence, and parental involvement, may also impact delinquency but are not accounted for in the analysis.

Another concern is the simplification of family structures into four categories, which may overlook the complexities within each group. For instance, stepfamilies can vary significantly in terms of the biological father's involvement, and single-parent households may include varying levels of support from extended family or co-parenting arrangements. Lastly, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases related to social desirability or recall inaccuracies.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the evolving landscape of family structures in the United States, particularly focusing on single-father households and their influence on delinquency among young adolescent males. As single-father families continue to grow, accounting for an increasing proportion of households with minor children, it becomes essential to understand the unique dynamics and challenges they face compared to single-mother families and traditional family units.

The findings indicate that while single fathers may provide distinct advantages in terms of involvement and support, the absence of a biological father can still correlate with elevated rates of delinquent behavior in adolescents. This underscores the critical role that parental involvement plays in shaping behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, the demographic differences observed between single-father and single-mother households—such as socioeconomic status, education levels, and family background—serve as essential factors that merit further exploration in the literature.

Given the implications of these findings, future research should prioritize a deeper investigation into the specific characteristics of single-father households and how these may



influence the development of adolescents. Additionally, policymakers and practitioners must consider the unique needs of single fathers and their children to develop targeted interventions that promote positive outcomes.

As family structures continue to diversify, it is vital to broaden our understanding of how these changes impact the development and behavior of children. By addressing the complexities of single-father households, we can contribute to a more nuanced perspective on family dynamics and their implications for adolescent well-being.

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GOING BEYOND THE GENDER PARADIGM:

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT, FAMILY VIOLENCE, AND FATHERING AFTER SEPARATION

Edward Andrew Kruk



ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence, and fathering after parental separation. We review key research findings related to this intersection, including general family violence research, as well as parenting-after-separation-specific family violence research. We then examine the core components of responsible father involvement in children's lives after parental separation, including shared parental responsibility for children, in light of these findings. Finally, we discuss recommendations for socio-legal reform, as well as for therapeutic practice, aimed at the reduction of interparental conflict and prevention of family violence during and after parental separation, to enable fathers to share parental responsibility in the best interests of children and the post-separation family.

Keywords: fathering, family violence, interparental conflict, parental separation, shared parenting



INTRODUCTION

Debates related to the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), and fathering after separation are among the most contentious in the arena of child and family policy and practice. During the family separation process, the safety and well-being of children and parents are at stake when high interparental conflict and family violence are issues of concern. The feasibility of shared parenting and enhanced father involvement in particular are contentious in these cases. Some believe that shared parenting and father involvement may need to be curtailed to lessen children's exposure to conflict (Archer-Kuhn et al., 2023; Jaffe et al., 2008). Others maintain that the well-being of children and parents is largely contingent on maintaining positive attachments and relationships between children and both parents, and that shared parental responsibility is vital in this regard (Nielsen, 2018; Warshak, 2014; Fabricius et al., 2012).

In regard to family violence, although there is little scientific consensus regarding the extent of IPV or its gender directionality, there is less debate in regard to parenting arrangements in the context of family violence. The responsibility to protect victimized children and parents in family violence and IPV situations takes precedence over other considerations, and shielding children and parents from violence entails safety being the overriding concern in the legal determination of parenting arrangements. Differentiating between family violence and more common interparental conflict is also vital. This poses challenges, however, given recent shifts in and expansions of definitions of family violence (Leemis et al., 2022; Harman et al., 2018; Hines et al., 2015). Unpacking these terms is vital to socio-legal policy reform and effective therapeutic intervention to ensure the safety and well-being of all family members.

Recent research has reported an increase in mothers' experiences of family violence when shared parenting arrangements are ordered after separation, including physical violence as well as coercive control (Meier, 2020); and feminist scholars have found that screening of family violence is often overlooked in family law disputes (Archer-Kuhn et al., 2023). Some assert that mental health practitioners lack sufficient education on conducting family violence screening assessments and in-depth knowledge of the nature, dynamics, and impact of family violence (Meier et al., 2019). There is general agreement that evidence-based family policies and clinical interventions to address the legal, emotional and psychological dimensions of family violence within a systematic approach that embraces the complete ecology of family violence are urgently needed.

Family violence has been defined as any form of abuse, maltreatment, or neglect perpetrated towards another family member, including adults and children (Department of Justice Canada, 2022), and encompasses both physical violence and coercive control. Family violence is an umbrella term that includes IPV and child maltreatment, as well as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse. The Wingspread Conference (ver Steeg & Dalton, 2008) distinguished among coercive control, violent resistance, situational couple violence, and separation-instigated violence. In the context of child custody disputes, it is particularly important to distinguish between a long-standing pattern of controlling violence and situational couple violence.

Over the past quarter century, traditional ideas about interparental conflict, family violence and IPV have been scrutinized, leading many to conclude that outdated conceptualizations of IPV are a significant factor in perpetuating the problem of IPV, posing



ongoing challenges for effective intervention (Saini et al., 2023; Dutton, 2012; Spencer et al., 2022). Clinging to antiquated ideas such as the gender paradigm of family violence (which posits that IPV is primarily a unidirectional phenomenon involving male perpetrators and female victims, with family violence essentially a patriarchal mechanism of control and superiority), and gender paradigm-based interventions such as the Duluth model of family violence intervention, underscores the need for a radical restructuring of how IPV is addressed in contemporary society (Dutton, 2012; McNeely et al., 2001; Brown, 2004). Further, according to Mills (2009), we must also attend to the “ground zero” of IPV: how personal experiences and projections in regard to family violence affect one’s understanding. In addition, recognizing the systemic roots of IPV and implementing structural reforms are crucial elements in understanding and addressing IPV as a social problem (Russell & Hamel, 2022).

A component of current controversies regarding the adoption of evidence-based approaches to addressing IPV has been the lack of coordination among the disparate social systems involved in the field of family violence, including academicians and legal and mental health professionals, who often find themselves polarized in regard to needed policy reforms and best therapeutic practices (Russell & Hamel, 2022). As the Canadian Research Centre on Family Violence has asserted, the key to reducing and working toward the elimination of IPV is to address the issue openly and directly (Gill, 2006). Open dialogue is critical toward achievement of the goals of reduction of interparental conflict and the prevention of family violence in all its forms, particularly IPV in the context of parental separation and the living arrangements of children in these situations (International Council on Shared Parenting, 2020).

SEVEN DIRECTIONS TO OVERCOME THE IMPASSE

In the realm of legal determination of children’s living arrangements after parental separation in contested cases, the degree of interparental conflict and presence of IPV are central considerations in the assessment of children’s needs and the best interests of children and families. In addition to the safety of children and parents as a priority, the importance of preserving vital attachments between children and their parents is regarded as critical to the well-being of both children and parents, and vital to the prevention of IPV and other forms of family violence (Vowels et al., 2023; Fabricius, 2020; Nielsen, 2018).

At the core of debates related to the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence and fathering after separation is the question of whether post-separation shared parental responsibility is commensurate with the needs and best interests of children.

Considerable research has been undertaken comparing child and family outcomes in shared parenting versus primary caregiver arrangements (Bauserman, 2012, 2002; Nielsen, 2018; Fabricius, 2020), in addition to research on best practices in cases of protracted high conflict between parents and when family violence and IPV are issues of concern (Nielsen, 2018; Bauserman, 2012).

An in-depth examination of recent research related to the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence, and fathering after separation reveals a number of key findings that have transcended conventional wisdom in regard to the present state of knowledge in regard to the intersection of family violence and family separation (ver Steeg & Dalton, 2008; Leemis et al., 2022; Fabricius et al., 2020; Nielsen, 2018; Kruk, 2013). These



findings may serve as a foundation for reform of current policies and practices, and for overcoming impediments in regard to taking action toward meaningful reform. The following seven sets of findings, drawn from general family violence and IPV research, and parenting-after-separation-specific family violence research, from both an empirical and clinical perspective, are particularly relevant in pointing the way forward toward socio-legal reform.

1. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT AND FAMILY VIOLENCE/IPV

The point of departure in examining the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence and fathering after separation, is to clearly define key terms, and in particular to differentiate between interparental conflict and family violence, including IPV. These are distinct phenomena which have been more precisely defined in the scholarly literature over the past two decades in the context of child custody disputes between parents. This furthers the interests of safety of children and parents, as these distinct phenomena call for very different approaches to the legal determination of parenting after separation. Situations of high conflict between parents, which are almost universal in the context of child custody disputes, typically do not involve IPV (Birnbaum & Bala, 2010). Although there is, at times, a fine line between “normal” family conflict and IPV, it is critical to draw that line. High conflict families manifest poor communication and poor problem-solving skills and may be highly litigious. Often, high conflict is protracted rather than short term, but it is generally responsive to therapeutic intervention (Fabricius, 2020). High conflict families may require significant resources and specialized professional intervention, including the services of family counselors, mediators, and parenting coordinators, as well as legal support. However, high conflict in itself is not a sufficient reason to limit father involvement in children’s lives. The preservation of meaningful relationships with both parents that shared parenting provides acts as an important buffer for children in high conflict situations (Fabricius, 2020; Kruk, 2013; Nielsen, 2018).

Family violence and IPV, on the other hand, are manifested in many forms, from physical and emotional abuse, to coercive control, and legal and administrative abuse. Intimate partner violence may entail a pattern of coercive and controlling behavior that may include physical, emotional, psychological, or financial abuse to establish and maintain power and control over an intimate partner, or it can be episodic or situational (van Steeg & Dalton, 2008). Family violence can also be uni- or bi-directional, involving fear, intimidation and control, and represents a more toxic situation of threats and aggression. It is also more resistant to therapeutic intervention (Johnson, 2008; Karakurt et al., 2019). Intimate partner violence and child abuse may require child protection intervention as well as criminal law proceedings, and may result in a finding that a child needs protection and/or a criminal finding (Li et al., 2020).

Differentiating between high conflict and IPV is vital because although shared parenting between mothers and fathers after separation is a protective factor for children in situations of high conflict, it is contraindicated in situations of family violence.

Whereas shared parenting and father involvement are protective for children in high conflict situations, the safety of children and abused spouses is threatened in shared care arrangements when family violence is an issue of concern. Thus, although a rebuttable legal presumption of shared parenting is optimal in cases of high conflict, a rebuttable legal presumption *against* shared parenting is needed in IPV cases (Fabricius, 2020; Kruk, 2013;



International Council on Shared Parenting, 2020).

Most child and family scholars and practitioners view IPV as a criminal matter; and a criminal conviction of assault against a spouse or a finding that a child needs protection from a parent should be sufficient to deny a parent equal or shared parenting. An unproven allegation of abuse, however, even in the context of a high conflict separation, is not grounds to withdraw parenting responsibilities from a parent, as the routine involvement of both parents is vital to the well-being of children (International Council on Shared Parenting, 2020; Fabricius, 2020).

2. IN REGARD TO FAMILY VIOLENCE/IPV, THE GENDER PARADIGM HAS BEEN LARGELY REFUTED; MEN AND WOMEN ARE BOTH PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS OF IPV AT SIMILAR RATES.

In most of the popular family violence literature, men are represented as primary perpetrators of physical abuse and women as the victims. However, research data utilizing nationally representative datasets and meta-analytic analyses indicate otherwise (Rozmann & Ariel, 2018; Hamel et al., 2012; Archer, 2000; Fiebert, 2014). Consequently, a gender-biased perspective on IPV lacks a broader scientific foundation.

Family conflict research based on self-report survey data, in contrast to gender-specific analyses, has found that IPV rates are roughly equivalent, as men and women are victims and perpetrators of IPV at roughly equal rates, and are equally likely to initiate IPV and other forms of family violence, including child abuse (Dutton, 2012; Spencer et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020). There are some differences (Roebuck et al., 2023), as women are more likely to use legal and administrative abuse in the context of child custody disputes. More women suffer injury and death from IPV, as women are more vulnerable regarding the physical impact of IPV (Rozmann & Ariel, 2018).

Gender symmetry has consistently emerged in current IPV research. This is contrary to what most people assume, largely because the study of violence against women by men has been segregated from other forms of IPV research (Dutton, 2012; Douglas & Hines, 2011). The discrepancies between findings from studies of violence against women and those of broader surveys utilizing more representative samples are striking. Almost without exception, research studies based on studies utilizing a gender paradigm explanation of domestic violence use samples drawn from battered women's shelters or treatment groups for men who batter, which are then generalized to the larger population (Dutton, 2012; McNeely et al., 2001). Research based on self-selected samples of extreme cases is highly problematic, as research conducted in women's shelters is typically vetted by feminist directives that preclude asking questions about women's role in the violence, as this is a form of "victim blaming." As Dutton (2012) noted, research utilizing such self-selected and non-representative samples create a distorted and potentially harmful perception, perpetuating the stereotype that only men are violent in the family and that only women are victims of violence. This stereotype has had a strong effect on the legal determination of parenting after separation in US and Canadian courts, as there is strong evidence of a pervasive anti-male bias in the justice system (Millar, 2009).

In addition, criminal justice statistics on which sociolegal policies are based are skewed, as women are ten times more likely to call police in alleged IPV situations and get



a response (Dutton, 2012). When police respond to cases of domestic abuse, men are treated more harshly by the law enforcement system, particularly in low-level disputes in which men are nineteen times more likely to be charged than women (Brown, 2004). The result is under-reporting of IPV among male victims, and criminal justice statistics of IPV thus reflect systemic biases in the way police handle and subsequently record domestic violence. Also, in the wide array of IPV research, erroneous generalization from non-representative samples enshrines the perception that only men are abusers and only women are victims of violence in child custody law, policy and practice (Lysova, 2022; Machado et al., 2020; Hines et al., 2015).

Partner abuse research has exposed several myths, including the myth that men's assaults have a control motive in the service of female domination, and that women's assaults are motivated mainly by self-defense. In fact, only about 5% of all IPV conforms to the gender paradigm of violent males who assault or batter non-violent females; and self-defence accounts for only about 15% of female-initiated partner abuse (Dutton, 2012). For example, about 6.5% of men and 6.3% of women have experienced partner abuse in the past year, according to the National Intimate Partner Violence Survey of the US Centers for Disease Control (Leemis et al., 2022). In Canada, the *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces* found that 12% of women and 11% of men had experienced some form of IPV in the previous 12-month period (Roebuck et al., 2023). The largest meta-analytic studies directly challenge the gender paradigm: Fiebert (2014) concluded that men and women perpetrate and are victimized by IPV at comparable levels; Archer's (2000) meta-analytic review found that women are more likely to initiate aggression against their male partners. Since these earlier studies, several meta-analyses have found gender symmetry in IPV rates of perpetration and victimization (Rozmann & Ariel, 2018; Li et al., 2020; Spencer et al., 2021; Spencer et al., 2022; Sparrow et al., 2020).

Despite prevalent misperceptions surrounding the gender paradigm, gender symmetry in IPV levels has been found in studies since the early 1990's. Using a nationally representative sample, Stets and Strauss (1992) found that 28.6% of physically violent couples were female violent; 23% were male violent; and 48.2% were mutually abusive, a consistent finding replicated across studies (Whitaker et al., 2007). Comparing the incidence of men using severe physical violence against non-violent women with women using severe physical violence against non-violent men, Stets and Strauss' national survey data indicated that "unilateral severe violence" against non-violent partners was three times as common for female perpetrators as for male perpetrators. In a more recent meta-analysis of research on the extent and gender directionality of IPV, Rozmann and Ariel (2018) concluded although there is high variance between studies, on average there is no difference between genders regarding patterns of violence and rates of victimization.

In sum, the notion that men are the perpetrators of violence and women are the victims of IPV has given way to a gender symmetrical perspective (Spencer et al., 2021, 2022; Russell & Hamel, 2022), which needs to be at the forefront when we examine situations of IPV in the context of child custody disputes. This is the basic flaw of the gender paradigm, which dismisses IPV research that has established that partner abuse rates are comparable across sex and gender: motives vary, but women's motives are the same as men's; initiation rates are equivalent; most men's violence is not of the battering type; and children who observe IPV are more likely to become perpetrators. The result is that efforts to reduce IPV have neglected half of all victims and half of all perpetrators. More comprehensive analyses of the state of



knowledge on IPV (Hamel et al., 2012; Rozmann & Ariel, 2018; Russell & Hamel, 2022) have refuted the gender paradigm.

3. MOST IPV IS RECIPROCAL ABUSE RATHER THAN UNIDIRECTIONAL VIOLENCE, AND SITUATIONAL RATHER THAN REFLECTING A CYCLE OF COERCIVE CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR.

In the arena of child custody, most cases of high conflict involve no violence and IPV; when spousal violence does exist, however, it usually involves bilateral violence, and situations in which the female partner is the primary or sole instigator.

Contrary to the gender paradigm which assumes a uni-directional model of male violence against women, most IPV is bi-directional. Whitaker's (2007) nationally representative sample found, in line with earlier research (Stets & Strauss, 1990), that about half of all IPV is reciprocal. In the case on *non-reciprocal* IPV situations, however, women are the initiators in over 70% of cases. Women's use of IPV against their intimate partners, therefore, is not primarily defensive; women in intimate relationships are twice as likely as men to use uni-directional violence yet is less disapproved of than male-to-female violence. Female initiation of partner violence is the leading reason for a woman becoming a victim of violence herself (Stith et al., 2004). McNeely and colleagues (2004) concluded that domestic violence is a human, not gender-specific, issue, as women are as violent as men in domestic relationships, and comment specifically on men's "legal and social defenselessness;" Archer (2000) cites the overlooked norm that men should restrain themselves from physical aggression towards women, even when women are themselves assaultive.

Although IPV can be a pattern of coercive controlling behavior that can include physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial abuse to establish and maintain power and control over an intimate partner, the majority of IPV is a one-time situational or episodic occurrence that comes about under conditions of stress, such as separation, and often exacerbated by misuse of drugs or alcohol (Johnson, 2008). Again, this is contrary to the dominant view that violence is an expression of patriarchal privilege and entitlement, of men's abuse of power over women, which ignores women's violence against men.

As Mills (2009, p. 3) stated,

The child who I saw being hit by his mother is three times more likely to become violent in intimate relationships than a child who was not hit. The moment that he hits a woman, it is legislated that he be taken out of the context of his biography and into an automatic legal process in which he will be held absolutely accountable for any violence he committed. He will be defined as a product of patriarchy, and his masculine privilege will account for the sole source of his aggression.

4. THERE ARE DIFFERENT FORMS OF IPV, ACROSS A WIDE SPECTRUM, AND DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SEVERITY OF IPV.

There is a great deal of research on levels of IPV severity. Johnson (2008) distinguished among three levels of severity, and concluded that the most injurious and ongoing type, intimate terrorism, is relatively rare, compared to situational couple violence (the most



common), and violent resistance. The Canadian General Social Survey found that of all types of IPV, 2% is female initiated intimate terrorism, and 3% is male initiated intimate terrorism, a total of only 5% of IPV (Conroy, 2021).

Johnston and Campbell (1993) studied different types of IPV in the context of child custody disputes; of the five types on IPV they identified, ongoing or episodic male battering was the least common. The most common was mutually controlling interactive violence, followed by male controlling interactive violence, separation and divorce violence, and psychotic and paranoid reactions. They found that the classic cycle of violence paradigm applies to a very small percentage of IPV situations in the context of child custody disputes.

More recently, the recognition that IPV comes in many forms and covers a wide spectrum of abusive behaviors, has taken hold. This includes not only physical violence, but also psychological and emotional abuse, coercive control, sexual abuse, and legal and administrative violence, which are often overlooked. A particularly harmful form of emotional child abuse is that of children witnessing the abuse of a parent, tantamount to serious forms of physical and sexual abuse, as well as parental alienation.

5. PARENTAL ALIENATION IS A WIDESPREAD AND OFTEN OVERLOOKED FORM OF FAMILY VIOLENCE AND IPV.

Parental alienation disproportionately affects men and fathers, as non-resident parents, with mothers, as resident parents, more likely to abuse their power as gatekeepers of the father-child relationship (Hines et al., 2015). Parental alienation is essentially the unwarranted removal of a fit and loving parent from the life of a child, a mental condition in which a child (usually one whose parents are engaged in a high-conflict separation) allies strongly with one parent and rejects a relationship with the other parent without legitimate justification (Lorandos & Bernet, 2020). Parental alienation results in impaired functioning in behavioral, cognitive, and affective domains; and negative attributions of the target parent's intentions, hostility toward or scapegoating of the parent, and unwarranted feelings of estrangement on the part of the child (Harman et al., 2018). Parental alienation is a form of complex trauma, and a form of IPV and child abuse. It is also a systemic problem, as the adversarial system pits parents against each other in a battle to "win" custody and control of children, and creates conditions in which each parent is threatened by the potential loss of their children, leading to mutual denigration of the other parent (Kruk, 2018).

The adversarial system produces poor outcomes for both children and parents. Fully half of first-time violence occurs during separation in the context of adversarial divorce, where parents are prevented from communicating, manipulated into an adversarial battle over children, and children's need for safety and unthreatened relationships with both their parents is obscured (Fernández-Kranz & Nollenberger, 2020; Halla, 2013). In research on separated fathers affected by parental alienation, fathers were less likely to blame mothers than the adversarial system for their estrangement from their children (Kruk, 2011). Adversarial divorce is a form of collective abuse of children and their fathers, as fathers are systematically removed as primary caregivers, and more likely to be alienated from their children's lives (Millar, 2009). Parental alienation is associated with legal and administrative aggression tactics (Hines et al., 2015) used by some alienating parents to gain and maintain power over their children and the other parent (Harman et al., 2018, Harman & Matthewson, 2020).



The effects of parental alienation on both fathers and their children are profound. Child absence results in a pronounced reaction of grief and loss on the part of the targeted parent, leading to a situation of acute post-traumatic stress. While fathers experience a grief reaction containing all the major elements of bereavement, children lose the capacity to give and accept love from a parent (Kruk, 2018). They are manipulated to hate the targeted parent, despite their innate desire to love and be loved by both of their parents. An alienating parent's denigration results in the child's emotional rejection of the parent, and the loss of a capable and loving parent from the life of the child. The severe effects of parental alienation on children are now well-documented (Harman et al., 2018). Self-hatred is particularly disturbing among affected children and is one of the more common symptoms in situations of parental alienation. Teaching hatred of the other parent is tantamount to instilling self-hatred in the child. Children internalize the hatred targeted toward the alienated parent, are led to believe that the alienated parent did not love or want them, and experience severe guilt related to betraying the alienated parent.

Their self-hatred (and depression) is rooted in feelings of being unloved by one of their parents, and from separation from that parent, while being denied the opportunity to mourn the loss of the parent, or to even talk about the parent. Alienated children also exhibit severe psychosocial disturbances due to exposure to parental alienation. These include disrupted social-emotional development, lack of trust in relationships, social anxiety, and social isolation. They have difficulties forming and maintaining relationships and tend to discard people whenever they experience a negative reaction to them. They have a lack of tolerance for others. They have poor relationships with both of their parents. As adults, they tend to enter partnerships earlier are more likely to divorce or dissolve their cohabiting unions, and are more likely to have children outside any partnership, and are more likely to become alienated from their own children. Low self-sufficiency, lack of autonomy, and a lingering dependence on the alienating parent are characteristics of alienated children. They have a risk of becoming psychologically vulnerable or dependent. Alienated children experience difficulties controlling their impulses, and struggle with addiction and self-harm. They are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, and abuse drugs, as well as succumb to behavioral addictions, and are more likely to be promiscuous, foregoing contraception and becoming teenage parents.

They are more likely to play truant from school and leave school at an early age. They are less likely to attain academic and professional qualifications in adulthood. They are more likely to experience unemployment, have low incomes, and remain on social assistance. They seem to aimlessly drift through life (Verhaar et al., 2022; Kruk, 2018; Baker, 2005).

The incidence of parental alienation is much higher than assumed by both the public and professional service providers, and widespread dismissal of parental alienation by professionals has been identified as a serious concern of affected parents and children alike. Harman et al. (2019) reported that 36% of US and 32% of Canadian parents report being victims of parental alienating behaviors. As with high parental conflict versus IPV situations, it is important to distinguish between moderate and severe parental alienation. Moderate parental alienation may be seen as a form of high conflict; but severe parental alienation is a much more pathological form of IPV based on coercive control; it is a type of complex trauma, as well as a form of emotional child abuse linked to physical abuse and neglect (Kruk, 2018).

Countering widespread misinformation about parental alienation, which has been



likened to the preponderance of “woozling” about IPV, remains a challenge (Nielsen, 2014). A moral panic has resulted from the claim, unsupported by scientific evidence, that mothers are losing custody of children to abusive fathers claiming to be victims of parental alienation (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2023; Meier et al., 2019). Harman et al. (2023) examined gender and child custody outcomes across 16 years of judicial decisions in which allegations of IPV and parental alienation were levied. On court file analysis of a representative sample of 500 cases in which parental alienation was determined to have occurred, Harman found that alienating mothers’ claims of abuse were not discredited more than fathers’ claims of alienation, and substantiated allegations of IPV were rare, with 90% of abuse allegations in cases of parental alienation determined to be untrue or otherwise unsubstantiated. In addition, Sharples et al. (2023) found that regardless of whether the alienating parent was a mother or a father, they were more likely to have a substantiated claim of abuse against them than the targeted parent. Denying parental alienation as a form of abuse serves to protect abusive parents, regardless of gender.

The recognition of parental alienation as a form of IPV and child abuse is vital to the well-being of parents and children (Rowlands et al., 2023; Templer et al., 2017); and the reduction and prevention of parental alienation should go hand-in-hand with the goal of reducing IPV.

6. BATTERER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS ARE LARGELY INEFFECTIVE, AND MOST IPV TRAINING AND INTERVENTION MODELS ARE OUTDATED.

Gender-based intervention programs for victims and perpetrators, particularly the “power and control wheel”-based Duluth model, lack scientific foundation and have been demonstrated to be ineffective in reducing the incidence of IPV (Dutton, 2012; Karakut et al., 2019). Within a gender paradigm understanding of IPV, there is continued advocacy for a monolithic criminal justice response involving mandated interventions and an almost exclusive focus on punishment of fathers, based on the view that IPV is perpetrated exclusively by men against women. Intervention programs for IPV perpetrators based on a “punish to deter” philosophy, laws mandating arrest and imprisonment in IPV cases, “no drop” prosecution, “primary aggressor” arrest policies in cases of reciprocal violence, and lack of diversion and restorative justice approaches have resulted in an escalation rather than a decrease of family violence (Russell & Seisler, 2022).

In regard to victim services, men’s experiences of female-perpetrated IPV are largely ignored by professional service providers, policymakers, and the criminal justice system, and the paucity of support services to address the needs of male victims, who are often met with a mean-spirited cultural response when they disclose their victimization, renders them powerless to address IPV in their ongoing relationships (Roebuck et al., 2023; Machado et al., 2020; Douglas & Hines, 2011). Both external and internal barriers to seeking help for their victimization renders men highly vulnerable to ongoing and heightened abuse (Lysova et al., 2022; Machado et al., 2020). The role of false accusations of intimate partner violence against men to engage public systems in extending abuse, in situations where men themselves are victimized, is often reported (Roebuck et al., 2023). Men are thus less likely than women to seek help from formal and informal support due to the lack of available resources and the social stigma they experience, and consistently report that services for male survivors of IPV are inadequate or non-existent (Rozmann & Ariel, 2018).



7. PREVENTION IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF IPV AND FAMILY VIOLENCE.

Given that fully half of first-time IPV occurs in the context of an adversarial approach to the determination of child custody after separation (Kruk, 2013; Fernández- Kranz & Nollenberger, 2020), a non-adversarial approach that steers parents toward collaboration, negotiation and mediation is urgently needed. A rebuttable legal presumption of shared parental responsibility is now cited as the most effective strategy to prevent both first-time IPV and other forms of family violence, including parental alienation, during and after separation (Fabricius, 2020; International Council on Shared Parenting, 2020). A warm relationship with both parents within a shared parenting arrangement is a protective factor for children in high conflict families; the benefits of a shared parenting arrangement on children's well-being exist independent of parental conflict (Fabricius, 2011).

Scholars have made a strong case for the need for shared parenting as the foundation of family law, as a protective factor for children in high conflict separations (Vowels et al., 2023; Fabricius, 2020; Nielsen, 2018; Kruk, 2013). Yet arguments for the antithetical position, that children need to be protected from harmful conflict, and will do much better with one stable parent in their lives, continue to block the passage of shared parenting law in many jurisdictions (Meier et al., 2019). This latter position has been critiqued in that it makes several problematic assumptions: that conflict is not in fact a normal part of everyday life; that conflict between parents is intractable and cannot be resolved; and that family violence increases with legal orders of shared parenting. Yet fully half of first time inter-parental violence occurs during and after the separation transition, within the context of adversarial divorce. Fernández-Kranz and Nollenberger (2020) examined the effects of shared parenting legislation on IPV in Spain, finding that the policy significantly decreased family violence, with IPV falling by almost 50%, and with a significant reduction of the number of female homicides committed by intimate partners after the reform. Moreover, these effects were largest among couples in which the mother was more likely to seek sole custody before the policy change and therefore had the largest policy effects. Halla (2013) found that shared parenting laws in the US decreased IPV by 23% in states that passed these laws between 1976 and 1984.

There is little disagreement among scholars of different theoretical orientations and advocates with opposed ideological stances on the issue of family violence and shared parenting. The position of both shared parenting advocates and women's advocates in the field of family violence are essentially the same: shared parenting advocates favor of a legal presumption of shared parenting *rebuttable in family violence situations*, which is essentially equivalent to the position of the National Association of Women and the Law of a *rebuttable legal presumption against shared parenting* in family violence situations. It is widely assumed that the views of these groups are diametrically opposed; in fact, they are two sides of the same coin (Kruk, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The seven sets of research findings above provide a means to break through the present impasse in relation to addressing family violence and IPV in the context of parental separation. They set the stage for the recommendations below, aimed at the reduction of interparental conflict and the prevention of family violence and IPV in the context of parental separation and child custody disputes. They also provide the basis for the responsible



involvement of fathers continued meaningful involvement in their children's lives following separation. These recommendations for socio-legal reform, policy and practice at the intersection of family violence/IPV and shared parenting/father involvement after separation are drawn from the conclusions of the 2020 conference of the International Council on Shared Parenting (ICSP), a scientific organization devoted to the study of the feasibility of shared parenting in the post-separation lives of children and families. The main focus of the conference and the recommendations below is the principle that the safety of children and parents should be the main priority and primary consideration about addressing interparental conflict, IPV, and fathering after separation.

In the arena of child custody, although most cases of high conflict over the issue of parenting involve no violence, the incidence of family violence and IPV are significantly elevated during and after separation. A high proportion of first-time family violence occurs during and after parental separation. The adversarial "winner-take-all" child custody system seems almost tailor-made to produce the worst possible outcomes, when parents become polarized when the stakes (regarding one's relationship with one's children) are high, and what started as disagreements over child caregiving arrangements are likely to become intense conflicts, with the potential to escalate into situations of violence. The threat of losing one's children in a custody contest increases the possibility of first-time violence. Thus, the ICSP concluded that in previously non-violent families, sole custody determinations and primary residence decrees are associated with increased conflict and first-time violence (Fabricius, 2020; Kruk, 2013).

The assumption that in *non-violent* high-conflict cases shared parenting is not a viable option was challenged at the ICSP conference. In fact, research has shown that shared parenting is associated with decreased parental conflict levels. A high-conflict case not involving violence has a much higher likelihood of escalating to violence when one's relationship with one's child is threatened by loss of custody. The sole custody/primary residence regime elevates the risk of IPV in these cases (International Council on Shared Parenting, 2020).

In cases where IPV does exist, it usually involves bilateral or reciprocal violence. Cases of family violence in the context of child custody disputes come in different forms, including ongoing or episodic male battering, female-initiated violence, male controlling interactive violence, separation and divorce violence, and psychotic and paranoid reactions. Mutual violence is the most common type, with male battering (the classic "cycle of violence" paradigm) constituting only one-fifth of family violence in separation and divorce cases (Johnston & Campbell, 1993). Not all acts of intimate partner violence in contested custody cases have motivations and expressions derived from a structurally derived male assumption of entitlement and need for control (Dutton, 2012).

The issue of false allegations of violence, and the issue of unreported and hidden cases of family violence, present major challenges in the determination of children's post-separation living arrangements. On the one hand false IPV allegations are often used to deprive children of contact with their parents; this is of particular concern to fathers, as spouses in high conflict divorces routinely make false or exaggerated allegations to gain a tactical advantage in the custody contest (Trocmé & Bala, 2005; Birnbaum & Bala, 2010). On the other hand, research has shown that false denials by abusers are also problematic, and that shared parenting orders can overlook the presence of family violence



in couple relationships (Meier, 2020; Archer-Kuhn et al., 2023).

However, most high-conflict child custody cases do not involve IPV, and relatively few contested child custody cases involve substantiated cases of child abuse, including children witnessing abuse of a parent. Less than one-quarter of all child abuse allegations in child custody cases are substantiated after investigation (Harman et al., 2023). It was concluded that if the “child in need of protection” standard were to be applied in a consistent fashion in child custody disputes involving allegations of family violence, the problem of IPV in custody cases could be addressed by means of investigations by trained professionals; without this standard the current adversarial framework of child custody determination will continue to increase the likelihood of first-time violence in separating families with no previous history of violence or abuse.

There is no debate that judicial determination of custody in cases of established family violence is needed; it is erroneous, however, to assume that high conflict cases, in which parents disagree on custodial arrangements for children after separation, commonly involve serious family violence. This places children at risk of losing one of their parents via a sole custody or primary residence order and increases the risk of family violence in the majority of contested custody cases that did not previously involve violence.

In cases of family violence where there is a finding that a child needs protection from a parent, the safety of children requires that the abusive parent has limited, supervised, or no contact with children because of potential harm to the children and the spouse. Parents with a proven history of severe violence will need different resolutions, many non-violent litigating parents in conflict over the care and custody of their children are best served, in the interests of prevention of first-time violence, by a shared parenting approach to child custody.

On the question of protracted parental conflict, there is little debate that exposure to ongoing and unresolved high conflict is harmful to children. What is under debate is the amount of parenting time that is advisable in such high conflict situations. Recent studies have found not only that shared parenting is not harmful in high conflict situations but can ameliorate the harmful effects of high conflict: a warm relationship with both parents is a protective factor for children, and the benefits of shared parenting on children’s well-being exist independent of parental conflict. Further, shared parenting is positively correlated with parental cooperation, and reduction of conflict and power imbalances. In light of the fact that parental conflict is highest during the separation transition in the context of “win-lose” adversarial proceedings, shared parenting is beneficial for children in both low and high conflict situations (Fabricius, 2020).

Comparing parental outcomes in joint versus sole custody families, shared parenting is associated with a significant reduction of parental conflict levels. There is no evidence that to support the contention that shared parenting increases parental conflict, research does not support a presumption that the amount of parenting time should be limited in cases of high conflict, and high conflict should not be used to justify restrictions on children’s contact with either of their parents (Fabricius, 2020; Nielsen, 2018; Kruk, 2013).

The conclusions of the 2020 ICSP conference were divided into recommendations for theoretical development and further research on the one hand, and law reform, policy and professional practice on the other. Primary among these was the need for a more inclusive conceptualization of family violence, beyond the gender paradigm and encompassing different



forms of violence, including parental alienation; and the need to recognize IPV, particularly violence against women, as a criminal offense, with corresponding reforms in the family and criminal court systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEORY DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

Two recommendations were made at the ICSP conference in regard to theory and research in the arena of the intersection of shared parenting and family violence, as follows:

1. The first recommendation posed the question that lies at the heart of current discussions and debates in regard to IPV as a public health crisis: Should the issue of family violence/IPV be framed as gender-specific and viewed primarily as “violence against women”, or rather conceptualized as a more gender-neutral manner such as “partner abuse”? In regard to separating and divorcing families where family violence is an issue of concern, it was concluded that an exclusive focus on fathers as perpetrators and mothers as exclusively victims of violence is unwarranted, given findings of gender symmetry in the family violence research literature. The gender paradigm in the arena of IPV further came under scrutiny at the conference in light of data that indicates that fully half of IPV is reciprocal, and that female to male violence is not, as assumed, primarily defensive. The fact that female-to-male violence has been overlooked is increasingly becoming an issue of focus in family violence research.

2. At the same time, mothers and children are affected by family violence in a different way than fathers. Violence against women results in greater injury, and gender-based family violence is a serious concern during parental separation and divorce. The impact of family violence is more pronounced for mothers; of those victims of family violence who report being injured, two-thirds are women (Spencer et al., 2021, 2022). Lockdowns during the Coronavirus pandemic left many women trapped with their abusers and exposed to greater danger. All types of violence against women, including family violence, have intensified since.

The issue of the effects of children witnessing family violence is also a serious matter: children witnessing parental abuse is now the most prevalent form of substantiated child abuse. Thirty-four per cent of cases of substantiated maltreatment of children in Canada are situations where children witness the abuse of a parent by the other parent or parent figure (Fallon et al., 2022). Child outcome studies conclude that witnessing parental abuse and family violence is one of the most serious forms of child abuse, with devastating outcomes for children’s security and well-being (Fallon et al., 2022).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAW REFORM, POLICY AND PRACTICE

The ICSP conference offered five recommendations in regard family law reform, policy and practice in the arena of the intersection of shared parenting and family violence, as follows:

1. Shared parenting is a viable post-separation parenting arrangement that is optimal to child development and well-being for the majority of children and families, including for children of high conflict parents. Shared parenting also prevents first-time family violence, as fully half of first-time IPV between parents occurs in the context of an adversarial battle over the care and control of children. The ICSP thus supported a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting in contested cases of child custody as the foundation of family law reform. In the



absence of a finding of IPV, sole custody and primary residence orders clearly pose serious risks to children and parents; sole custody in cases in which family violence and child abuse are not present is a flawed and dangerous policy which compromises children's safety and well-being, and has markedly increased the risk of post- separation violence in families with no previous history of violence.

2. A consensus was achieved that shared parenting is an optimal arrangement for the majority of children and families, including high conflict families, but not to situations of substantiated IPV and child abuse. The ICSP thus supported a rebuttable legal presumption against shared parenting in family violence cases. This is in accordance with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the position of the National Association of Women and the Law: In every proceeding where there is at issue a dispute as to the custody of a child, a determination by the court that domestic or family violence has occurred raises a rebuttable presumption that it is detrimental to the child and not in the best interest of the child to be placed in sole custody, joint legal custody, or joint physical custody with the perpetrator of family violence.

3. It was concluded that IPV be regarded as a criminal law matter, and that barriers to criminal prosecution of perpetrators of family violence and to protection of victims of family violence be recognized and removed. It was acknowledged that gender-based family violence is of particular concern in this regard, as women are disproportionately the victims of severe violence resulting in injury and death, and require the full protection of the criminal justice system. Criminal law at present does not protect women as it should, and using family law as a means to adjudicate whether IPV has occurred poses major risks. In addition, the ICSP called upon child protection authorities to recognize children witnessing IPV and the abuse of a parent as serious form of child abuse, and as a child protection matter which requires immediate investigation to determine whether a child is in need of protection from a parent or parents, and immediate action to ensure children's safety and well-being.

4. The ICSP conference focused on parental alienation as a common form of IPV/family violence in contested child custody cases, and concluded that it should be recognized as such by practitioners, policy makers, legal practitioners, and judicial and legislative bodies. It was recognized that shared parenting serves as a bulwark against first-time family violence and parental alienation. A major conclusion of the conference was that parental alienation is an egregious form of both family violence and child abuse.

5. In regard to the development of policies, guidelines and procedures respecting parenting and co-parenting after separation in the context of family violence, the ICSP drew attention to needed reforms in professional practice in the legal and mental health fields in four key areas:

(1) Family Violence and the Education and Training of Mental Health and Legal Family Practitioners, and Child and Family Legislators and Policymakers

Establishing standards for the education and skills training of mental health and legal practitioners in the field of shared parenting, and the education of child and family legislators and policymakers, are urgently needed, in the following areas: trauma, IPV and parental alienation in intimate relationships and its consequences for shared parenting; procedures, instruments and skills to screen for IPV and assess safety risks; specialized skills and interventions to ensure safety and provide specialized processes in IPV cases; and alternatives to shared parenting when violence is a factor.



(2) *Screening for IPV/Family Violence*

Separating parents must be able to negotiate safely, voluntarily and competently in order to reach a fair agreement. Because abuse can significantly diminish a person's ability to negotiate safely and effectively, family professionals should never proceed without first screening for abuse. The presumption against shared parenting in cases of IPV/family violence suggests that few families in which violence is or has been present are suitable for a shared parenting arrangement. Family members should be interviewed separately and in a safe environment to assess: the risks or threats of family violence; the safety needs of children; each family member's ability to negotiate voluntarily and competently, and represent their needs and interests; the extent of power imbalances and their impact on shared parenting arrangements; and the need for safe and appropriate alternatives to shared parenting.

As aids to assessment, screening instruments ought to be carefully designed and should not replace high levels of investigative interviewing and assessment for those cases in which IPV/family violence is an issue of concern.

(3) *Safety and Cases of Historical Family Violence Where Specialized Interventions May Enable Shared Parenting*

Minimizing risk and maximizing safety ought to direct the development of protocols, interdisciplinary collaboration and research on the effectiveness of shared parenting where past IPV/family violence is no longer an issue of concern and support services for abused persons and their children are available. Provisions for safety should be in place prior to considering shared parenting as an option in these situations. These provisions should include policies to warn and protect endangered parties and requirements to report threats of harm. Screening for abuse and maintaining safety provisions are ongoing obligations throughout the entire process. Specialized intervention in cases of historical family violence require safety considerations for victims as well as the development and use of specific skills and interventions to: ensure safety before, during and following shared parenting negotiation; compensate for power imbalances; and terminate shared parenting negotiation safely and effectively.

(4) *Alternatives to Shared Parenting in Cases of IPV/Family Violence*

The following principles should guide professional practice in regard to the obligation to ensure safe alternatives to shared parenting in cases of family violence: safety is the first priority; and every community should offer an array of marital dissolution models that include legal negotiation, adjudication, mediation, negotiation, and facilitated settlement conferences. Jurisdictions should provide education about the benefits and risks of available alternatives and dedicate the resources necessary to assure safe and timely access by victims of violence to marital dissolution alternatives. Funding for the participation of community-based advocates in marital dissolution systems should also be made available. Victims of violence should not be compelled into shared parenting arrangements unless legal representation is authorized and economically accessible. The need to protect and nurture children living in the context of family violence/IPV should be addressed specifically in contested custody cases.



CONCLUSION

The reduction of interparental conflict and the prevention of family violence/IPV on the one hand, and continuing the responsible involvement of fathers in their children's lives in the context of parental separation and child custody disputes on the other, should be our primary goals when addressing issues related to the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence, IPV, and fathering after separation. To address these aims, we need to rethink the limitations of our current strategies and to reformulate our current theories of family violence and IPV.

Given the reality that IPV has reached epidemic proportions, and represents a global public health crisis, it behooves us to recognize that our present efforts have yielded little in the way of moving in the direction of reducing and eliminating IPV, and we need to stop redoubling these failed attempts, and seek new evidence-based solutions, theoretical frameworks for understanding IPV, and paradigm shifts in intervention programs with children and families, particularly during high stress and high risk periods such as parental separation. Traditional punitive and adversarial means have clearly exacerbated the crisis, and radical reformulations are necessary.

This article has explored seven sets of pertinent research findings which provide a foundation for socio-legal, policy and practice reform. It has discussed new directions for breaking the present impasse in regard to policy and practice at the intersection of interparental conflict, family violence, IPV and fathering after separation, in the form of seven recommendations for theoretical, policy and practice reform. These findings and recommendations, however, will be challenged within the present polarized climate surrounding family violence and IPV, parental alienation, and shared parental responsibility after parental separation and divorce. Efforts by well-meaning organizations have tried but failed to bring together scientists, policymakers, practitioners and advocates who cling to self-serving ideologies and false binaries, ignore research evidence that does not conform to their world views, and refuse to recognize points of common interest and convergence which provide a basis for the resolution of points of divergence and difference. It is this lack of dialogue which more than any other factor has resulted in our present impasse and inability to make inroads into addressing the public health crisis of IPV. The key to reducing family violence is to address the issue of family violence openly and directly, and that continues to elude us, at the expense of the children and families most directly affected by our inaction.

Given the plethora of new research over the past quarter century in regard to family violence and IPV, parental alienation, shared parenting, and the changing roles of fathers and mothers, there is considerable urgency in regard to examining the implications of this research with respect to legislative, policy and professional practice reforms. The need for a paradigm shift in regard to understanding family violence and IPV in their many forms as bi-directional phenomena affecting both women and men, mothers and fathers, and in regard taking action to address IPV as a public health emergency with intervention programs aimed at reducing and eliminating IPV in all its manifestations, is urgent. It behooves us to go beyond the gender paradigm in regard to understanding the full range of family violence and IPV (including parental alienation) in the context of parental separation. There needs to be a vital distinction made between high conflict cases where there have been relatively minor, isolated non-violent acts, and IPV where there has been a pattern of abuse that has traumatized parents and their children. And given that it is responsibility of social institutions



to support parents in the fulfilment of their parenting responsibilities to their children's needs, when such support is not forthcoming, representatives of social institutions should be held to account.

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FALSE RAPE REPORTS TO POLICE FORM A VERY LARGE PROPORTION OF CASES, AND THIS IS AMPLY EXPLAINED

Steve Moxon



ABSTRACT

Contra ideologically-driven, thereby scientifically-compromised claims through misrepresenting data, rape reports to police in large proportion are false, as shown by: survey findings that one-in-fourteen women admit falsely alleging male assault, 40% thus anticipating; great excess of police-recorded over crime-surveyed totals; robust studies (all reports comprehensively investigated, any found false intensively further checked) revealing rates of 30%-50%; similar estimation by best placed observers -- police investigators -- notwithstanding rape myth training. Principally for emotional gain, in often trivial circumstances, motivation varies. False (including non-deliberate) reporting is underpinned by victimhood conferring female sexual attractiveness, male consent-seeking being a turn-off; females providing only non-verbal hard-to-interpret consent cues, and female erotic self-focus (projecting female-perpetrated sexual coercion, found at male-equivalent levels).

Keywords: confabulation, emotional gain, erotic self-focus, false accusations, rape myth acceptance, sexual assault



INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding its being long recognised and accepted that a high proportion of rape incidents go unreported, the received opinion that false reporting of rape to police is rare continues, as ever, to be contradicted by those in the best position of all to assess: the very people engaged in the investigation and trying of rape cases -- police officers & the judiciary (as raised, e.g., by McMillan, 2018, and pointedly discussed by Saunders, 2012). All lines of evidence, as herein put forward and discussed, converge to support their position.

There is nothing mutually exclusive to a low level of reporting actual incidents of a crime type and a high level of its false reporting, but with the latter found to be of a low incidence in most crime types it is assumed (or, rather, insisted) this applies also to rape, and any evidence to the contrary is not merely ignored but fiercely resisted (as outlined below). The *false rape is rare* trope is a corollary of the ideological notion that rape is a major social problem impacting a large proportion of women, and even that it is ubiquitous as *rape culture*: see, for example, *Why Rape Culture is a Dangerous Myth* (Gittos, 2015). The mindset of the received opinion that rape is everywhere cannot countenance that false rape reporting exists, either at all or of no more than a tiny percentage of the whole caseload.

By any reliable measure, reasonable definition, common understanding or social experience, the notion of *rape culture* does not reflect reality. That rape is not and never has been (throughout evolutionary history) a particularly salient threat to females is revealed by the absence of violent males in female persecutory delusional ideation. Instead, familiar females are what feature as the ogres in both the persecutory delusions of women mental health patients (Walston, David and Charlton, 1998) and in female nightmares (Schredl, 2010). [Dreaming, according to control-mastery theory (e.g., Gazzillo et al., 2020), is a mechanism to rehearse dealing with ever-salient major threats.] Note, therefore, that an exaggerated fear of rape is very unlikely to drive its false reporting.

The *false rape is rare* trope would appear to serve an ideological imperative of demonstrating supposed generic oppression of females by males – that also is absent any scientific basis; only evidence against, as in the ubiquity of positive attitudes towards females and negative towards males (Moxon, 2018). With the conceptualisation not being robust to evidence and logical argument, there is refusal to discuss, and instead further entrenchment, in the fertile ground provided by the implicit negative attitudes towards males through evolved policing of male sexual access. Having been repeated so incessantly, the falsehood has grown to the extent that in elite discourse it is difficult to gain the perspective to see around. It has come to be believed, and over time the hegemonic elite view, that has been institutionalised. Rape complainants are deemed *victims* by the Ministry of Justice in England & Wales, notwithstanding this explicitly contravenes the basis of jurisprudence of innocence until proven guilt. Likewise, the foundation of science in objectivity, yet *victim* instead of *complainant* (or *putative victim*) is ubiquitous in the field of psychology, as O'Donohue & Fisher (2023) complain in a whole paper, *Accusation is not proof: procedural justice in psychology*. By complete contrast, the popular understanding, being based in social reality and outside of institutional ideological capture, remains more in line with that unofficially of the police and judiciary.

The following evidential lines, all providing data converging on the conclusion that false reporting of rape is commonplace, constituting a large proportion of rape reports to police, will be considered in turn and in this order:



- Major female propensity to falsely allege assault against a male is found in new research.
- Motivation to make a false report essentially is *emotional gain*, through evoking male protectiveness or sexual interest.
- Estimates of the very high incidence of false reporting by police rape investigators -- those best placed to make them -- are from experience, not bias.
- The large excess of police-recorded annual rape totals over those estimated from crime survey samples indicates false rape reporting.
- The few robust false rape report studies -- those where all cases are comprehensively investigated, with all those found to be false further checked -- similarly show very high rates.
- Inherent difficulty for males to ascertain consent provides a background for honest but false rape reporting (confusing female consent protocols, stemming from female disdain for male overt consent-seeking and non-verbal female modes of communicating and interpreting consent).
- Female erotic self-focus erases objectivity and consideration for the male's perspective on consent.

MAJOR FEMALE PROPENSITY TO FALSELY ALLEGE ASSAULT AGAINST A MALE FOUND IN NEW RESEARCH

The line of evidence of most obvious relevance yet not first investigated until 2021 is of female propensity (willingness in principle) to target a male with a false allegation. Bertsch & Matthews asked women in anonymous survey if they could imagine in the future falsely alleging assault against a male. Of their half community half college student sample, 39.6% answered positively to varying degree, 31% stating they knew another woman who had made such a false claim, with significant minorities claiming to know two, or three or more such others. Seven per cent admitted to already having made a false allegation; with two of this seven per cent doing so directly to an authority figure. Note these percentages likely would rise considerably should the whole sample be followed-up in longitudinal study, given that much of it is of young females, for whom the combination of predilective and situational factors that may precipitate a false allegation as yet would have had only a small portion of their lives to manifest. Note also that respondents hardly would be unaware that disclosure to any third party is highly likely to lead to a report to police, either on their behalf or through persuasion to report directly.

The authors point out that their data likely considerably understates the reality, given the wide variability in scores on the post-survey questionnaire about the degree of honesty in the answers supplied. This disparity is to be expected as anonymity cannot remove all responder reticence in a survey of what after all is criminal intent, with individuals implicitly cognising question-and-answer as a social scenario, notwithstanding interaction not being face-to-face. Furthermore, the officiousness of survey protocol evokes wariness of sanction from authorities



for any disclosure, albeit it also likely prompts implicit deontic cognition: an onus to act responsibly. Answering the questions about honesty of reply in the terminal checking questionnaire serves as an indirect and thereby what may feel a *safer* means of disclosing what was avoided in responding to the direct questions in the survey's main body. The upshot is that the finding of the best part of half of women envisaging falsely alleging assault by a male likely would increase to a majority should the additional findings regarding honesty of reply be factored in, suggesting female false allegation against males may be a generic predilection.

That the phenomenon cannot be regarded as being confined to women in some way abnormal is confirmed by the psychopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism scores across the whole sample accounting for only a small amount of the variation in responses. Excepted are the women of the 7% subset (those who said they had already made a false allegation against a male of assault). These scored highly in psychopathy, over-sensitivity and entitlement, and were strong believers that women are highly sensitive to things men say or do, and deserved special treatment. These measures appear to be facets of narcissism, which is considered a continuum (as in the long and commonly used *Narcissistic Personality Inventory*) rather than as either within the normal range or a personality disorder. Seven percent is anyway a high proportion to warrant the label *abnormal*. Moreover, as afore-mentioned, the seven percent is despite at least half the sample being of student-age women, who as yet have had little time to experience the combination of factors that could give rise to making a false allegation. As for their individual motives – what precipitated their predilection to make a false allegation into actually making one -- embarrassment was the most common, then revenge, followed by excitement, with fear the least common. This is in line with the research into the motives of those found to have lodged a false rape report, as herein outlined.

The likely level of reporting to police the study results suggest outstrips the estimated 0.6% of adult females (aged 16 and over) in England & Wales who say they have ever made a complaint of rape or attempted rape to police. [The Office of National Statistics (ONS) in 2023 state 4.1% of adults since age 16 claim to have been raped (including attempts), that minus the 9% of this total who are male leaves 3.7%, of which only 16% reported to police.] Furthermore, this 0.6% datum is likely a large over-estimate (as discussed below). So there would appear to be a substantial disparity between this and the results of the Bertsch & Matthews study, that would amply account for false rape reporting even if this constituted not just a substantial proportion but a majority of rape reports. A high proportion at least should be expected.

Note that a caveat of the study is that although the authors introduce and discuss their research in terms of rape, this is not specified to participants, who were not asked what they were envisaging in their responses. This would be for the good reason that not spelling out (nor asking to be spelt out) what respondents are being asked to admit imagining themselves doing serves to reduce the demand characteristics of the survey, thereby to some degree counteracting response reticence. In making salient the male-on-female nature of assault, participants thereby were prompted to envisage rape, as this is the obvious and damaging form of male to female assault, that women implicitly anticipate easily attracting third party support (male protectiveness) in respect of what would constitute reproductive usurpation; the prevention of this being the very deep basis of social *policing* of males. The seriousness with which rape is seen and the ease with which it evokes support serve to reduce the threshold of believability, facilitating false complaint. Conceivably, participants instead may have envisaged partner violence as the form of male assault, though it would be intuited as less believable and more difficult to allege, given the need to display physical injury and the common intuition that males



hold back from physical violence specifically if a female would be the target (confirmed by Cross, Tee & Campbell, 2011), leaving male perpetration aberrational, as all lines of evidence in respect of partner violence reveal (Moxon, 2020).

MOTIVATION TO REPORT FALSELY IS FOR EMOTIONAL GAIN, BY EVOKING MALE PROTECTIVENESS OR SEXUAL INTEREST

The embarrassment, revenge and excitement motives identified by Bertsch & Matthews are echoed in research both old and new into the basis of false rape reporting. In what remain (along with their replication by others) the most comprehensive studies of false rape reporting (as herein discussed in detail, countering routinely repeated falsehoods about them), Kanin (1994) found between a quarter and a half of cases are trivial and spiteful revenge against a rejecting or non-reciprocating male, the best part of a further half serving to cover embarrassment by providing an alibi to cover some suddenly foreseen consequence of an illicit sexual encounter (often the fear of pregnancy -- presumably in that it would give it away). Up to a fifth are complete inventions with no cited perpetrator, simply to gain attention or sympathy. Revenge or anger, avoiding trouble/providing an alibi, and attention-seeking are similarly found in analysing cases deemed *unfounded* that had been reported to the Los Angeles Police Department, in a study by O'Neal, Spohn, Tellis & White (2014), with the addition of two further categories: mental illness and guilt/remorse. These five are found to be overlapping categories, so that in general motivation is "varied and complex, often resulting from a need to alleviate social and personal distress". This resonates with the very recent invocation of the psychological mechanism of (salving) *cognitive dissonance* to explain the long-recognised circumstance underpinning false rape reports to police of regretted sexual intercourse producing in effect retroactive withdrawal of consent. Demarchi, Tomas & Fanton (2021) describe "the reduction of a state of cognitive dissonance induced by the gap between social norms and the shamefully perceived behavior".

A strong echo of this is apparent in the most comprehensive of the recent research, by De Zutter, Horselenberg & Van Koppen (2018), showing that the major motivation is "emotional gain", and who cite the list of motivations put forward by Kanin as being confirmed as valid by their own work, though insufficient without their expansion of them. They propose that: "gain is the predominant factor. In the proposed list, complainants file a false allegation out of material gain, emotional gain, or a disturbed mental state. The list can be subdivided into eight different categories: material gain, alibi, revenge, sympathy, attention, a disturbed mental state, re-labelling, or regret". To test the validity of this typology, proven-false rape reports to the Dutch National Police were analysed. "Complainants were primarily motivated by emotional gain. Most false allegations were used to cover up other behavior such as adultery or skipping school. Some complainants, however, reported more than one motive. A large proportion, 20% of complainants, said that they did not know why they filed a false allegation". This last observation indicates an implicit, deep-seated basis of some or much of what drives false rape reporting, that together with the apparent triviality of the precipitating circumstances suggests an easy readiness to have recourse to the ploy without giving much thought to the possible consequences, as if it were generally acceptable and usual behaviour. Hence the more expansive, partly derivative list of motivations that Savino & Turvey (2011) distil from the experience of police rape investigators, in their *Rape Investigation Handbook*: revenge, need for attention, profit, explanation for pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, alibi for inappropriate absence, (attempt to get) new housing, (contest over) child custody, attempt to veil a recurrence of drug or alcohol use, and change of heart after a sexual encounter.



It may not be immediately clear as to what is the basis of a female expectation that falsely alleging rape could facilitate *emotional gain*, until is realised the fact of and implicit understanding by women and girls that female vulnerability is sexually attractive (Goetz, Easton, Lewis & Buss, 2012; Rainville & Gallagher, 1990). Indicating own vulnerability may be a signal of infancy, akin to babyface (baby-like facial features), which is thought to be an evolved borrowing of infant signals by women to confer sexual attraction (Wilson & McLaughlin, 2000). Attention seems, however, to be evoked less through sexual interest per se than deep-seated, seemingly evolved male protectiveness. Evident from very earliest ages is the human seemingly implicit cognition that the male must protect the female (Euverman, 2009). That this is extremely deep-seated (in our evolutionary history) is shown by the parallel in chimpanzee males' protectiveness towards females: readily risking their own lives to defend them (Sagan & Druyan, 1993) as do human males. Boys and girls play games about boys *protecting* girls (Best, 1983; Kinney, 1999). Boys as young as four frequently say boys protect girls (Kagan, 2001). In mixed adult focus groups discussing violence, "the single most frequent (>30%) type of comment involved men's protecting women. In contrast, women were never discussed as protectors of men" (Hollander, 2001, p 92). An evolved origin appears well-evidenced. Even where either sex could be victim or perpetrator, as in partner violence, there is both more concern for female victims and greater denigration of male perpetrators (Hammock, Richardson & Lamm, 2017). Many studies old and new show males are viewed as culpable, irrespective of circumstances, even when exclusively the victims.

Damsel in distress behaviour is ideal for use in evoking third-party male female-protective behaviour as instrumental to relieving or distracting from a specific problem within a set of circumstances in which a female finds herself. In also co-opting male sexual interest, the appeal to male protectiveness is made considerably stronger still. Additionally, or alternatively, it would be ideal as itself proceptive behaviour, to selectively draw the sexual attention of a male in whom the female has a particular interest, or to engender the sexual interest of males generically, encouraging their approach and rivalry between prospective suitors, enabling the female to make a more informed choice between them.

A rape report is the perfect prompt to evoke male protectiveness, given the evolutionary-biological / psychological understanding that the basis of the evolved in-group policing of males is so as to ensure differential allocation of sexual access accords with mate value (as indicated by rank in the male hierarchy). Any attempt by a male to circumvent this policing by direct sexual co-option of a female -- as most severely in rape -- is likely to be met with the greatest sanction. Consequently, a female (who, necessarily, will have evolved to know this implicitly) has no better ploy to distract attention away from circumstances in which she finds herself suffering some embarrassment. It's worth trying even if the potential adverse impact is trivial, given there is so little risk of it boomeranging back on herself, such is the exclusive focus she displaces on to the putative male perpetrator in respect of any wrongdoing. Indeed, it has utility simply to gain attention per se, even when no cover is required for past behaviour, whether or not the added dimension of proceptivity has become a primary motivation. Almost whatever the circumstances it is a win-win scenario for the female false accuser, as females surely intuit. Only the seeming unnatural imposition of dispassionate supra-authoritative institutional rape investigation poses any threat to impunity, but women are unlikely to intuitively anticipate such a threat, as it has no antecedent in the evolutionary past, and, therefore, there has been no selection for a cognitive adaptation to deal with it.



POLICE RAPE INVESTIGATORS' ESTIMATES OF THE VERY HIGH INCIDENCE OF FALSE REPORTING IS FROM EXPERIENCE, NOT BIAS

A line of evidence of most obvious importance, with a research history, though, with no good reason, often relegated in importance, is how rape reports are viewed by the best placed third parties: police rape investigators. That their estimates of the proportion of rape reports that are false -- those deliberately false, at least -- are more likely to be accurate than not, is shown by the research into the ability of police to detect deception. In a meta-analytic review, Wright & Wheatcroft (2017) point out that “consistent findings suggest that police officers are able to detect high-stakes deception; this implies that, at least in some contexts, police officers utilise reliable cues to deception”. With cues discriminating between lying and truth-telling here being reliably detected by large majorities of policemen, it seems they do not rely on inaccurate stereotypes. Officers are found to make very good use of cues that *indirectly* detect deception (Vrij, Edward & Bull, 2001). In separating truth from lies in videotaped police interviews, police officer “accuracy rates were higher than those typically found in deception research and reached levels similar to those obtained by specialized lie detectors in previous research” (Mann, Vrij & Bull, 2004).

Of an un-named English county police force’s officers with recent experience of dealing with rape cases, on average they estimate 53% of rape reports as being false (McMillan, 2018). Very similar data is obtained in the USA: the modal estimate is 50%, median 30%, and mean 36% (Venema, 2018). A mere 6% give a percentage not above the upper bound of what is often cited as the supposed actual range of false rape reporting of 2%-8%. This is an echo of Mennicke et al.’s (2014) finding that 81% give an estimate well over this low range. Police officer estimates of high levels have always been the case: a range of 50% to 70% (Metropolitan Police – London -- back in 1985, Blair), and 60% (US police and judges in 1980, Feldman-Summers & Palmer).

These high rates, as estimated by both police and the judiciary, have been ascribed by Saunders (2012) to conflation of false rape reports with “false rape accounts” (reports containing discrepancies though not necessarily false as a whole); but, this questionable distinction aside, Saunders' research is completely invalid in being *not of female* rape victims: “The analysis draws on original qualitative data produced in the course of a separate empirical research project examining prosecution decision-making in *male-on-male* rape cases”. Not only can it not be assumed but it would not be expected that males behave akin to females in respect of making false rape reports, because of the obvious lack of empathy for male rape victims corresponding to that for females (e.g., Osman, 2011); this presumably rooted in there being no risk of usurping reproductive choice in the case of male victims. Furthermore, Saunders states: “It is important to emphasize that the male rape study did not set out to examine false allegations of rape, either quantitatively or qualitatively, and was not designed to that end”. In any case, Saunders' distinction between a false account and a false report, quite apart from the interchangeability of her terminology in normal usage, is to ignore the basis of investigation and due process. Discrepancies in the investigation of crime of any type are highly significant as indicators of the reliability of the testimony of the putative victim; this being crucial specifically in rape cases, given the putative victim is almost invariably the sole witness other than the accused, and usually there is no possible corroborating evidence. Discrepancies are key to the determination that what occurred was either a rape or not non-consensual sex, and that the scenario is consistent with the identification of the individual accused (or group of potential perpetrators to sift for the culprit). If discrepancies lead to an investigatory process ending with the rape complaint being deemed false, there is little basis on which to overturn this conclusion without



a comprehensive review, including not least re-interviewing the putative victim: an effort beyond the scope of a desk-based reassessment by a criminology academic.

The 2%-8% range, supposedly, of the actual rate of false rape reporting is spurious, as explained here in due course, but is the basis of claims that police officers greatly over-estimate, with the disparity presumed to be due to officers' negative attitudes to complainants. This would seem an unwarranted, indeed pejorative assumption, not resembling police attitudes. Officers will tend actually to favour the putative victim and reserve negative attitude for the putative perpetrator, as they have actively chosen first to join the police -- a decision surely bound up with a decision to fight crime and support victims of crime -- then to be a part of a rape investigation team, from which they have full freedom to transfer. Inasmuch as they may not favour the putative victim, officers are abiding by their training. The job of police fundamentally is to be impartial, in being fully mindful of the possibility of innocence as well as guilt of those accused of a crime. It is contrary to their role to believe the complainant and dub her *the victim*, as they are politically pressured to do, before investigation can determine if victimhood actually is the case. Nevertheless, the police approach to dealing with rape complainants, as pioneered several decades ago by the FBI in the USA, has long been to be supportive and sympathetic, irrespective of the incident being substantive or otherwise, as experience has proved that false complainants have to be given the space to allow free admission. Confrontation is known to produce stubborn adherence to the false report. Consequently, police have every good reason to adhere to protocols, notwithstanding any jadedness in dealing with rape complaints. There is little reason to suppose (and no evidence of) any motivation other than both to bring perpetrators to justice and assist rape victims.

Yet a sub-meme of overall ideology regarding rape is that police investigators are hidebound by what is judgementally, and highly inappropriately dubbed *rape myth acceptance*. The same has been presumed of juries, who are blamed for a supposedly low conviction rate, but this is an extreme misrepresentation of data. In England & Wales the conviction rate in respect of adult female complainants is 67%, which is extremely high; higher indeed than for other crimes. To arrive at the oft-cited figure of 5%, data instead is taken from early in the police & judicial process, before the overwhelming majority of cases fall in the usual stages of attrition that occurs with crime of all types. This is then inappropriately compared to the post-attrition data (the courtroom outcomes) re other crimes. This sleight of hand is based on an unstated false assumption that attrition is unique to rape cases. The claimed evidence for jury bias is shown to be anything but by Waiton (2024), who points to major methodological flaws – not least the use of mock juries where any of the attributes of real juries (notably any element of deliberation) are absent – fatal problems with the measurement scale (see below), and profoundly one-sided interpretation (in particular, no recognition of bias in the other direction: *in favour* of the complainant and/or against the defendant).

In being comprised of individuals randomly selected from the general population, and who, therefore, are highly unlikely to have gained any kind of overview of rape cases, jurors would be considered more likely than police rape investigating officers to be biased against rape complainants. Yet in a study of juries trying rape trials over a 15-year period to 2021, Thomas (2023) found no evidence at all of *rape myth acceptance*. With this being the case for these ordinary members of the public in a public duty setting, it is far less likely still that police officers would be otherwise, given their far greater familiarity with rape cases. Thomas tellingly finds that rape conviction rates are significantly lower when the complainant is male, undermining



any notion that sexism towards females is at play when the complainant is female; so there is no basis for the supposed *rape myths*.

There is a large academic literature of this ideological construct, but it is absent the validity and reliability necessary for it to be considered at all scientific, with claims to the contrary being just the sort of transparent circularity paralleled in the scientifically invalid construct of sexism (Moxon, 2018). The empty circularity is highlighted by Waiton (2024) in an excoriation of the *rape myth* construct. In her paper, *Rape Myths: Is Elite Opinion Right and Popular Opinion Wrong?*, Reece (2013) writes:

The claim that rape myths are widespread may be challenged on three grounds: first, some of the attitudes are not myths; secondly, not all the myths are about rape; thirdly, there is little evidence that the rape myths are widespread. To a troubling extent, we are in the process of creating myths about myths.

In the *short form* of the usually employed *Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale* (IRMA), the supposed myths are that it's not rape if there's no fighting back, or no threat with a weapon, or if drunk; that rape is caused by an ambiguous *no*, dressing provocatively, teasing or leading a man on, by men getting carried away or through a male's sex drive being out of control; that rape is secretly desired, is a turn on, is no big deal if the woman had wanted to make out, and it's impact is exaggerated; also, that rape accusation is to get back at a man. These supposed *rape myths* self-evidently are often pejorative assumptions about and tendentious interpretations of popular understanding and/or what actually are at least partially accurate, as in being a contributory factor (if they were to be expressed with more nuance), if not in some instances hardly myths at all; interspersed with inversions of extreme ideological notions about rape that truly are themselves outlandish myths about rape. What is deemed a *rape myth* is a belief antithetical to being instrumental to upholding extreme ideological notions about rape, that would fail to uphold extreme ideology of supposed male oppression of the female; notwithstanding that it may be a correction of a truth inversion. *Rape myth acceptance* scales actually measure not the degree of belief in myths about rape but the degree of lack of adherence to ideology about rape and the wider hegemonic ideology regarding men-women – a point strongly made by Waiton (2024). The key supposed *rape myth acceptance* that is of concern to ideologues is that women lie about rape.

With the concept of *rape myth* being so empty, it is no surprise the evidence is that training to counteract *rape myth acceptance* has no impact at all on police rape investigators. Ostrander (2018) finds no association at all (to a high level of significance), and in a recent review of both specialist training programmes and specific interventions to address police attitudes in respect of rape, Hine & Murphy (2019) conclude “neither are currently effective at changing officers' attitudes”. According to Sleath & Bull (2012), whether or not police have had special training has no effect on (what the researchers pejoratively interpret as) “victim blaming” in rape cases. In another review, Parratt & Pina (2017) conclude that “studies indicated that sexual assault training was related to possibly some variety of benefits for officers' skills but not rape beliefs, including rape myths and victim blaming” (p. 48) Detectives specialising in sexual assault cases acknowledge in assessments that *rape myths* are false yet still hold their belief in a high rate of false rape reporting (Schwartz, 2010). It is likely that officers answer in the way they are politically required to do, but the attempt at indoctrination continues to fail. This is true of police officers generally. US police patrol first responders estimate 33% of all reported rape cases are false, despite giving answers that on a *rape myth* scale show no *rape myth acceptance* (ibid).



Even a force as relentlessly subject to pressure to conform to the hegemonic ideology as is the Metropolitan Police (London) confounds expectations of the efficacy of training, and this is in the midst of the most concerted effort to date to 'reform' its rape policing, the current *Operation Soteria*. In a new review of the attitudes of Met officers it is found that "only 26% agreed with the statement that 'very few reports of rape are false'" (Casey, 2023, p. 164). There is nothing published other than this headline statistic in a single sentence, and the researchers refuse to discuss it (even in informal email exchange), suggesting that breakdowns of the data would further point up the complete failure of *rape myth acceptance* training. Police officers are found actually to score lower on the IRMA Scale even than psychology and law students, with the sole exception of scores on the *she lied* sub-scale (Sleath & Bull, 2015). Similarly, Gekoski et al. (2023) revealed police officer awareness of *rape myths*, but they purport nevertheless *rape myths* were employed, chiefly "victim fabrication" (an oxymoron revealing the bias of the researchers); that is, "women lied".

It becomes clear, and is the overall conclusion of Ostrander (2018), that it is not their attitudes towards rape or rape complainants but professional experience of dealing with rape cases that leads police officers to estimate high rates of false rape reports are common. If there is any negative attitude toward rape complainants – and given the bogus, ideological rather than scientific construct of *rape myth acceptance*, any finding of such is likely spurious – this then would stem from the experience-based conclusion that many or even most complainants are not in fact rape victims. Researchers appear to have (wilfully) misconstrued the direction of causality here, inasmuch as the research is other than worthless bar the findings of police officer estimates of high rates of false rape reporting.

THE LARGE EXCESS OF POLICE-RECORDED OVER CRIME-SURVEYED RAPE IS A MEASURE OF FALSE REPORTING

An estimate of the rate of false rape reporting can be obtained by comparing two independent, different types of national datasets attempting to measure rape in England & Wales: police recorded crime (PRC) and the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW). With seemingly little or nothing to be gained in making a deliberately false claim of rape in an anonymous self-completion survey, the CSEW provides the best available baseline. Follow-up questioning as to whether the incident was reported to police then provides a basis to calculate a total to directly compare with the total that police actually recorded.

The comparison would appear to be bedevilled in that the CSEW concerns prevalence whereas the PRC incidence, but the PRC counting rules changed in 2016 so that there is just one record for each *victim-offender relationship*, irrespective of how many instances of rape occurred. Consequently, both datasets essentially are of prevalence. Although there is multiple-perpetrator rape, which in adding to the number of *victim-offender relationships* despite no increase in the number of complainants would over-state the total in its being taken as a measure of rape complainant prevalence, it is generally thought to be a tiny percentage of rape -- such that, as the ONS and Police confirm, there is no attempt to record it and hence no statistics.

The only big adjustment needed to ensure the two datasets are roughly comparable is to remove from the PRC total those reports that are historical (occurring more than one year previously), given that the CSEW data is in respect only of rapes taking place within the previous year.



This checking against each other of two very differently produced datasets on rape has been carried out previously by Collins (2019), with the data revisited by Bradford (2022), who find a very large disparity indicating false rape reporting: very roughly 60%, varying from 50% on 2015 data, to 80% on data from 2019. With annual datasets now resuming after the suspension of the CSEW in the COVID hiatus, now is an opportune time to repeat and update the exercise.

From the Office of National statistics' (ONS) Crime in England & Wales Annual Supplementary Tables year ending March 2023, table S42a contains the percentage of the female population aged 16-59 who responded in the survey to state that within the past year they were raped: 0.5%. Bear in mind, however, that this is considerably if not greatly inflated, for two major reasons. First, there is no way to assess the male party's honest belief or otherwise in consent, nor anything of the particular circumstances (which might be a commonplace of foreplay or longstanding interaction within a sexual relationship that no reasonable person or jury would consider rape). A retrospective claim by the penetrated (or allegedly penetrated) party that consent was absent in no way is sufficient to amount to rape. Second, the questions within the CSEW do not ask about rape per se, instead about various forms of penetrative behaviours -- vaginal, anal, oral; penile or using an object -- most of which pertain to a newer definition of rape wider than the legal one. Instead of the respondent determining whether behaviour and circumstance amounts to rape, coders are employed to judge if a respondent's answers warrant such classification, when this may be more in accord with a wider definition and would not be agreed by the respondent herself or a jury. These are serious caveats rendering the 0.5% datum highly suspect if not meaningless, but in being likely far larger than the reality, the results of comparing with police-recorded totals will be a conservative estimate of false rape reporting. It entails considerably *understating* the disparity between CSEW and PRC annual rape totals, thereby underlining the size of any false rape reporting rate found in the comparison.

To obtain an estimate of an annual total, the most up-to-date population of England & Wales (the ONS figure for mid-2021 of 59,642,000) has to be multiplied by the percentage of the population that is female and aged 16-59 (29.5% is the mean across local authority areas, according to LG Inform -- the Local Government Association), giving 17,594,390; 0.5% of which being 87,972.

Of those who indicate they have been raped, only 16% then answer that they reported to police, so to be comparable to the PRC statistic, 87,972 becomes 14,075. (Note, presumably in order to increase the reliability of the statistic about reporting to police, the effective sample size is increased by asking about the most recent rape, irrespective of whether this was within the previous year. This potentially introduces error through change over time in the willingness to report to police, but being very similarly 15% back in 2013, evidently it is stable.)

Turning now to the police-recorded data, for the year ending March 2023 police across England & Wales recorded a total of 45,966 rapes of females aged over 16. (ONS Table A4a line 68) As this is only about 1% more than for the previous year, it appears not to be a volatile measure. Of these, 24% are "non-recent," that is, before the 2022-2023 year. (ONS Other Related Tables, Table F15 line 16) So to be comparable to the CSEW dataset the 45,966 total has to be reduced accordingly, to 34,934. Note, of course, that a sub-set of the 24% that are "non-recent" additionally will be false rape reporting, as addressed below.

The CSEW-estimated 14,075 is just 40% of the police-recorded total of 34,934, with the disparity of 60% indicating false rape reporting -- fully in line with the findings of Collins (2019)



and Bradford (2022). Furthermore, this is likely a considerable under-statement of the problem, given the afore-explained strong suspicion of CSEW large over-estimate. As for PRC, this is incessantly complained of as *under*-recording rape. So the main errors in the CSEW and PRC are in opposite directions serving to increase the disparity, leaving 60% a likely *under*-estimate. There is the caveat that the CSEW data, generated from a relatively small sample size, as the ONS concedes, has a “large margin of error”. Another potential source of error is failure to weight towards lower SES individuals to reflect what might be suspected is the more common milieu of rape. However, these errors are fairly small, so hardly likely to cancel out the CSEW over-estimation, let alone reduce the estimated rate of false rape reporting to 50% or less, to be more in line with that found in other lines of evidence.

In respect of the historical cases excluded from the comparison (24% of police-recorded rape of female over-16s), there is the likelihood that many of these also are false reports. *False memory* (e.g., Loftus & Pickrell, 1995) is necessarily a major problem here, with there being no time limit at all on how long ago was a rape incident at last for it to be reported. A science literature too large to briefly review here attests to not just the extreme fallibility of memory even over short time-scales, but that memory is not retrieval of some neurally encrypted copy of the event but a new construction using separately stored generic facets or elements implicitly to serve current perspective. Confabulation is how memory always works, not an aberration. Therefore, accurate memory is unlikely if not impossible, and is not to be relied upon. Memory of events many years ago would be surprising if it were not a distortion or even completely invented when this is of significant instrumental benefit in becoming a complainant. Specifically with respect to sexual misconduct allegations, Miller, London & Loftus (2023) emphasise this “reconstruction”: that “as time passes, one’s susceptibility to misinformation and false memory production increase alongside natural processes of memory deterioration”. Greenwood (2024) concludes that the delay in historical sexual abuse cases should be considered to be an abuse of process.

Historical rape reports in particular are likely to be driven by Criminal Injuries Compensation (CIC) (as it is termed in England & Wales), as the normal time limit for claiming of two years after a crime is waived specifically in the case of sex crime. The two-year time limit instead runs from the date of belated complaint to police. Compensation is paid with no requirement of proof that a rape occurred, and even if the report is shown to be false there is no requirement to return compensation. Furthermore, there are no means of challenging a claim for psychiatric injury, which is worth up to £27,000. This is notwithstanding there being no psychiatric sequelae diagnostic of rape: the concept of *rape trauma syndrome* has no validity. O’Donohue, Carlson, Benuto & Bennett (2014) point out:

there have been several critiques of RTS and empirical evidence exists that RTS is not generally accepted by the relevant scientific community”, (so we) “comprehensively evaluated RTS and determined that it is vague and imprecise, its evidential status is questionable, it is inconsistent with the most common sequelae of trauma, it ignores important mediating variables and it may not be culturally sensitive. In light of these critiques, we recommend no further use of this model in courts or in clinical practice.



THE FEW ROBUST FALSE RAPE REPORT STUDIES SIMILARLY SHOW VERY HIGH RATES

Studies of rape reporting to police are liable to severe compromise through the lack of comprehensive investigation and proper recording of cases. The most exhaustive investigation is required not or not so much to *detect* a false rape report -- rape investigators point out that for many or most cases this is quick and easy -- but subsequently to fully establish falsity, with no possibility of being actually genuine. Without this, cases are simply left as recorded rapes even when police have firmly concluded they are not genuine. This is the reality for deliberately false rape reports. Instances of honest-but-false reporting, which could arise for a variety of reasons, including, in extremis, false memory construction or mental illness (see, for example, Goodyear-Smith, 2022), are more likely not even to be discovered; as is reporting that may be neither honest-but-false nor deliberate fabrication but somewhere in-between, being reckless or tendentious in relating the circumstances and regarding issues of consent.

Universal and rigorous investigation obviously is impossible in the vast majority of police departments given inundation with crime reports, lack of resources, and an aversion to diverting what limited resources there may be, given often no return on invested time and resources in trying to solve rape cases with the all-too-well-known especial difficulties they entail. Most importantly there is the necessarily strict criteria to clearly establish deliberate falsity that err very much on the side of avoiding the inclusion of false positives (cases not actually false). The greatest problem is that now longstanding police crime recording protocols specifically for reported rape incidents have become so stringent as to make it almost impossible for police to record an outcome indicating a false report.

In the wake of changes in UK police crime recording practices, a joint Home Office and Ministry of Justice report (George & Ferguson, 2021) find:

Police focus group participants reported ... a more automatic recording of all suggestions of a rape offence prior to any kind of exploration or investigation. Some investigator survey participants discussed how this resulted in rape cases being over-recorded, with the perception that cases were officially recorded as rapes *too easily*. ... they also thought this new approach meant they were unable to cancel the crime report for cases that turned out not to be rape offences. ... Police survey and interview participants suggested the need for changes to crime recording practices to allow for offences to more easily change to a *no-crime* when information emerges to suggest a legally defined rape did not occur. Some also suggested allowing time to assess the validity of the crime before officially recording so that recorded offences are based on evidence.

From a new independent report under the auspices of the Home Office (Stanko, 2023), the imposition of new measures by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary:

... has made force crime registrars highly risk averse and consequently reluctant to authorise *no crime* decisions. Qualitative interviews with police officers, crime management teams and Force Crime Registrars indicated that the bar is set too high for *no criming*. Investigators report that they often do not bother requesting *no crime* decisions as the process is so onerous and unlikely to be authorised. ... The bar for *no criming* is now that beyond reasonable doubt a crime did not happen, that is to say



evidence is required that proves a crime did not happen – the same as for a conviction. ... In-depth case file analysis and interviews found examples of investigating officers stating explicitly that offences were being recorded for ‘Home Office reporting rules only’.

The consequence of this is that now a large proportion (19% in 2021-2022) of rape cases in England & Wales that previously would have been categorised *no-crime* simply remain as *rape incidents* (as necessarily all reports are initially recorded ahead of usual subsequent re-categorisation as *rape crime*). *No-criming* has simply been re-badged in the police recording procedure in a default mechanism designed to misrepresent the absence of a crime incident as instead being one.

The near impossibility of recording a reported rape as not actually being rape is mirrored in the USA and other countries. Consequently, studies of false rape reporting yield very low levels that are *an artefact of police investigating & recording protocols*, radically understating the rate of false rape reporting as a whole, and almost all studies severely or radically understate specifically the rate of deliberate false reporting. A case in point is the most cited recent review paper on “false rape”; that of Lisak et al. (2010), who find an unsurprisingly low rate of 6% given all evidence is from “intermediaries” whose “summaries varied in detail, depending on the extent of the investigation that was pursued”. Lisak et al. thereby invalidate their own review. With a false allegation by Lisak’s own appropriate definition one that has to have been very heavily scrutinised, then all of the cases not well investigated necessarily would escape categorisation as false, irrespective of their nature, not least even those so obviously false to be thus determined by police with minimal investigation required. The same fatal flaw is behind the 5% rates found in a review of recent US data by De Zutter, Horselenberg & van Koppen (2017) and in a meta-analysis of some US studies by Ferguson and Malouff (2016). These are in the wake of the introduction of much more stringent US criteria to determine false or *unfounded* (baseless) rape, that, given the great majority of rape reports in almost all police areas will not be comprehensively investigated, guarantees only a very low percentage of false rape reports recorded as such, notwithstanding many more will have been detected. Consequently, the 5% supposed rates will be but a small fraction of the actual rates. De Zutter et al. indeed do point out that 5% is a conservative rate (and even then is five times the rate of false allegation of other crimes). Through the less strict recording criteria formerly pertaining, previous studies (e.g., Greenfield, 1997; MacDonald, 1973) showed considerably higher rates, of the order of 20%, but necessarily these too are serious under-estimates given investigative shortfalls. Again, the rates found are *artefacts of police investigating & recording protocols*.

By contrast, a very few studies avoid this problem by researching outcomes only from a police force with a strict protocol of the most thorough investigation possible of all rapes without exception, irrespective of merit: the one by Kennedy & Witkowski (2001) – in Michigan City, Detroit (a false rape report rate of 32% of the total caseload) – which is a replication of the two by Kanin (1994) – in the US Midwest (a rate of 41%), and also at a pair of Midwestern universities (a rate of 50%). Prior to Kanin’s, and clearly his model, in the early 1980s there were the unpublished studies by McDowell, belatedly published by Gross (2009) -- US Air Force bases globally (a rate of 45%) and a major US mid-western city and a city in the south-west (a rate of 60%).

These studies were all done in police jurisdictions that are not busy, so unusually are not inundated with cases, and the full necessary resources are available and properly allocated. The



studies used not samples but the complete set of all rape reports over a number of years; that is, reports of completed, not attempted rape – and Kennedy & Witkowski also removed those initially lacking prima facie credence and retracted by the complainant before a fuller investigation ensued. Each and every case file was checked by the study researchers. For both the Kennedy & Witkowski and Kanin research the criteria for a false report for the police and the study authors alike was not just full admission of falsity (and of what was central to the allegation, not something peripheral to it) rather than mere retraction, but additionally confirmed as genuinely false and not retracted for some other reason, by following-up in further investigation to whatever extent necessary until its basis was fully uncovered and then *confirmed by the complainant*. This even included checking that the revised account of events by the complainant matched that of the accused. Furthermore, in all instances of recantation the complainant would be told that she is to be charged with making a false complaint, and that this carries a sanction of both a jail term and a heavy fine. Yet, despite this, no complainant retracted her recantation. With this exhaustive documented investigatory process in place there was no scope for short-circuiting a finding of a false report. Even if an investigator might imagine somehow circumventing the rigour and cross-checking, they would be deterred by the self-incriminating paper trail they would leave. The prior McDowell investigations were not quite this rigorous in respect of inconclusive cases, but not far short in their having to be re-evaluated by three independent reviewers, all of whom had to agree for the case to be re-categorised as false.

These studies by Kennedy & Witkowski and Kanin, and also by McDowell, are the *gold standard* in research to ascertain the rate of false rape reporting, being the closest possible design to something akin to a laboratory experiment, with the only flaw that which is unavoidably common to all this kind of research, of small sample size. Unwarranted criticism nevertheless has been plentiful, seemingly so as to try to uphold the ideological line, though whether more through self-unaware implicit gross bias than absence of good faith it is not possible to distinguish. De Zutter (2017) falsely states (page 1) that Kanin makes the “extreme claim ... that all allegations are false” (Kanin makes no such claim, stating that a 50% rate was found in his follow-up studies, 41% in the earlier studies, and that caution should be exercised in seeing these percentages as fully representative across the USA); that “Kanin’s figure has not been replicated” (yet this is explicitly what Kennedy & Witkowski did in 2001, yielding a percentage comparable to Kanin’s, of barely significant difference); and that this “will probably be a consequence of methodological flaws” (without any indication of what any such could be). Huntington, Berkowitz & Orchowkic (2022) actually do cite a supposed methodological flaw, but it’s a false claim that Kanin relies on a definition of a false report as simply recantation. Recantation was followed-up exhaustively in Kanin’s studies (and in their replication) to ensure there was no possible case of false confession, thereby addressing the very flaw in methodology that relying merely on recantation would introduce. Chancellor (2001) makes exactly the same entirely misplaced criticism.

Lisak’s (2007) critique is not only entirely empty but actually the very shortcomings of his own research: that Kanin supposedly did not either scrutinise the police’s processes or employ independent checkers. On the very contrary, notwithstanding the inherent rigour of internally cross-checked police procedures, Kanin examined the case notes in each case, and, if there were any need for supplementary information, this was requested and granted, including even if required from the complainants themselves. By contrast, Lisak (2010) failed to examine police documentation, instead relying on “summaries” provided by “intermediaries”, with (as



Chancellor, 2001, points out) a significant percentage of rape reports not even coded, and almost half were not properly investigated. Lisak even makes a beside-the-point complaint that Kanin did not independently define a false report, when he could not have bettered the police's definition, which was as exacting as it is possible for it to be, and clearly the one to be used to maximise the rigour of any study. Lisak also took unwarranted issue with the police department's use of a polygraph (lie detector) on the complainant, failing to note that this was not only voluntary but offered to both the defendant and the complainant – and anyway this was not police policy at the two universities studied in Kanin's follow-up studies. To claim there was a special intimidation of the complainant is particularly false, as the defendant was the party more likely to be intimidated. Indeed, the complainant was well supported in being given the opportunity to have presented her own polygraph data vis-a-vis that of the defendant. Notwithstanding that polygraphs are far from error-free (for which reason their use today is discouraged), results with caveats can be usefully indicative, so the offer of voluntary use to both parties did not detract from but instead added to the strength of the police's investigatory process.

Rumney (2006), in the other oft-cited review – a meta-analysis showing the findings of false rape reporting range from 1.5% to 90% -- at first makes a similar unwarranted criticism of Kanin regarding checking police procedure, but then corrects himself in pointing out that in the police recording the details and circumstances of the false reports Kanin's findings can be considered "*particularly reliable*". Indeed, Rumney states that Kanin's 41% statistic is surely an under-estimate given the highly restrictive definition of a false report. It is of course a lower bound in the broader consideration of cases to additionally encompass those that are false not deliberately but honestly if mistakenly reported; a point made by Bradford (2022) and Collins (2019).

INHERENT DIFFICULTIES MADE FOR MALES TO ASCERTAIN CONSENT

Providing a basis or the background for even honest but false rape reports (and perhaps those that could be said to be recklessly or gratuitously made rather than deliberately false) is inadvertent failure in communication regarding consent or non-consent. A major problem here is that women impose costs on men for overt consent-seeking. From the statements by women in a focus group, Graham et al. (2004) conclude that "a partner verbally 'asking' for sex was widely regarded as a turn-off" (page 19). This was particularly true of the younger participants, who are variously quoted: "the asking is . . . the biggest turn-off ever"; "I wish [he] wouldn't ask. That's a turn-off"; "It's not something that's a turn-on". Conversely, "being 'surprised' or 'overpowered' by a partner was described as arousing". This is very well attested elsewhere and long familiar, and just the sort of standard sexual interaction falsely dubbed a *rape myth*. The very behaviour that risks being misconstrued and labelled *rape* is just that which is a female preference and which females place on males as an expectation.

Not just a "turn-off", overt consent-seeking behaviour evokes disdain for the male, as is often remarked upon in on-line discussion: that a male who verbally requests permission for sex is seen as overly polite and unattractive. Brady (2022), in analysing comments by predominantly female adolescents on a website, also concludes that participants see "verbal sexual consent negotiations as awkward and a 'turn-off'." Using focus groups, this time of both sexes, Shumlich & Fisher (2020) find that "the majority of participants agreed that affirmative consent kills the mood and that they will be negatively perceived by a partner as inexperienced or only interested in sex". It would seem that females as well as males do see the problem, likely in the way it



reflects back upon them, even if the main or direct impact is on the male, given the major sex difference found was that females were anyway much less likely to say they would straight-out ask for sex -- just as would be expected with initiation seen to be the prerogative of the male, leaving the onus on the male to ensure consent. It's not just that for the male an opportunity for sex may be lost, but the absence of behaviour that is the very antithesis of seeking verbal consent is a risk for males of profoundly negative assessment and sexual rejection, destroying future opportunity for sex, and not only with the one individual but generically, inasmuch as reputational damage is caused (loss of status -- mate value). Negative female responses aside, trying to obtain affirmative consent anyway is an obvious major risk in inviting overt rejection in so clearly setting oneself up for a fall, as voluminous on-line discussion attests.

The problem is much deeper than simply preferences for mode of negotiating consent, as this is not naturally overt (by verbal means). Shumlich & Fisher (2018) find "... direct discussion of sexual consent was exceedingly rare and that most sexual interactions included indirect, veiled, and coded behaviours that require inference of sexual consent or non-consent." Only 13% of people said they would be likely to discuss issues of consent with a partner, according to research by the Family Planning Association (2018). Hardesty et al. (2022) go so far as to conclude that sexual behaviour and affirmative consent "are at odds because they are logically incompatible", with consent being the result of "an accumulation of gestures exchanged over time". This is fully in line with what Willis & Jozkowski (2022) find, using vignettes:

... participants perceived the targets as more likely to be willing to engage in sexual activity as consent cues -- communicative and contextual -- accumulated. ... This finding is consistent with several qualitative studies that have indicated people perceive consent communication as a process comprising multiple cues (Beres, 2010; Humphreys, 2004; Jozkowski et al., 2018). Our study helps verify this qualitative work and suggests that an accumulation of subtle cues may be perceived by people as indicating consent in the absence of an explicit affirmative communication of consent.

It is not only that women preferentially use non-verbal cues and very much so in comparison to men, but they also better perceive and interpret male non-verbal cues – as would be expected given the evolutionary-biological imperative for females to be extremely competent in sexual encounters so as to effect the right mate choice and not to risk conception with either a low-mate-value male or a male not willing to pair-bond. Indeed, issuing subtle consent cues may be part of how females assess males. Willis & Marcantonio (2023) state:

[in] extending previous evidence that women more commonly than men use non-verbal cues to communicate their sexual consent or interpret that of others (Hirsch, Khan, Wamboldt & Mellins, 2019; Humphreys, 2007), we found that women were also more likely to report that they can infer somebody's willingness based on non-verbal cues like eye contact and facial expressions. Men's diminished endorsement of these types of communication may result from being less familiar with using such implicit cues themselves

The problems all this causes for establishing consent is neatly encapsulated by Righi, Bogen, Kuo & Orchowski (2021):



Specifically, whereas consent was *defined* as a verbal provision of affirmative consent, both male and female adolescents believed girls typically *conveyed* consent non-verbally in sexual encounters. Adolescent girls indicated that they would convey sexual refusal through non-verbal cues, whereas adolescent boys reported they would proceed with sexual activity until they heard the verbal expression of 'no'. Regardless of gender, participants shared the perception that adolescents who previously engaged in sexual activity can expect that sexual activity will happen again without the need for verbal consent, particularly within established relationships.

The upshot is potentially wide scope for either maliciously, frivolously, recklessly or honestly-if-misguidedly contesting that consent pertained. The basis of much disputed consent to sex is likely to be *inherent* male lack of facility to communicate or interpret consent/non-consent in non-verbal terms, just as should be expected in that this appears to be a female strength, if not essentially a female mode of communication here. It's likely an evolved mechanism to set a test for males to detect subtle consent cues, whilst being able to detect cues from males that the males themselves may not even be aware of emitting. The dynamics of the interactions surrounding consent serve the evolved female sexual gate-keeping function, necessary for females as the gestating sex and, therefore, the limiting factor in reproduction.

All in all, there would appear hardly male fault here. The problems males have are compounded by the risk of rejection in the overt, verbal consent-seeking required to try to circumvent their difficulty with non-verbal cues, making them reluctant to employ it. Worse still, the risk of rejection is increased by the crudeness of the attempt (in comparison to the competent use of non-verbal cues), rendering the male unattractive, and potentially so not just to the particular female but females generically inasmuch as there is also entailed loss of status (mate value). Consent seems to be a minefield for the male because of how the male has evolved to function: unlike the female, the male seemingly is not in control or perhaps even aware of the fine-scale dynamics of courtship. Yet despite being the disadvantaged party in this mechanism, the male is expected to take sole responsibility if and when it goes awry.

FEMALE EROTIC SELF-FOCUS ERASES OBJECTIVITY AND CONSIDERATION FOR THE MALE'S PERSPECTIVE ON CONSENT

Further fertile soil for false allegation of rape against a male is the predominantly *non*-relational nature of women's sexuality in what is termed *erotic self-focus* (Fertel, 2021, 2015; Meana, 2010), that is found to be ubiquitous for women and far greater than it is for men (with large effect sizes); this being readily recognised by women and men both. The phenomenon is the internalisation of oneself as the object of desire in a sexual encounter: a woman is in substantial part her own erotic subject, as she focuses on her own desirability without consideration for the experience or even the attributes of the partner (Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004; Bogaert, Visser & Pozzebbon, 2015; Lehmler, 2018). For men, consideration of a partner's mood is important in their own sexual arousal (Janssen et al., 2008), but no factors concerning the partner were found to be important to female sexual arousal (Graham et al., 2004). Indeed, according to Prekatsounaki, Janssen & Enzlin (2019), "the affirmation of one's sexual desirability is the most important correlate of sexual desire in women."

With such deep narcissism and irrelevance of partner in the context of sexual intercourse, it hardly would be surprising if female consideration for any perspective on the issue of consent were restricted to that of the female party herself. That is, as to whether or not



the male party attempts to or obtains consent may not be expected to register in the female party's mind; only her own subjective understanding of the situation, notwithstanding its being dynamic and interactive.

What may be related to *erotic self-focus* are women's sexual fantasies, which concern receiving pleasure rather than giving it (Leitenberg and Henning, 1995), and their own responses and how their imagined partners respond to them (Ellis and Symons, 1990). As is well known, *rape fantasy* is a common fantasy experienced by women. According to Bivona & Critelli (2009), in a review combined with their own research, previous estimates of the proportion of women who have ever had a rape fantasy (a median across nine studies of 42%) are under-estimates through methodological flaws; likewise, the estimates of the percentages of women who have them frequently or are their preferred form of sexual fantasy (a median across eight studies of 14%). They themselves find fully 62% of women have had rape fantasies, and that these "exist on an erotic-aversive continuum, with only 9% completely aversive, 45% completely erotic, and 46% both erotic and aversive". In respect of the erotic category, "in a large majority of these fantasies, the non-consent was feigned or token (85%); and in over three-fourths, the self-character's level of consent changed during the fantasy from resistant to willing (77%)." (p. 41) With the erotic-aversive fantasies, the fantasiser "initially consented and seemed to enjoy the sexual interaction". (p. 41)

These findings suggest the phenomenon may reflect or key into adaptive cognition regarding courtship by the female party, that entails suspending consent in coyness for a period in order to assess the male's mate value (genomic integrity) and/or ardour (as further indication of mate-value but also reliability as a prospective pair-bond partner). Females crucially need a period of time to evaluate suitors to then decide whether to accept or reject them, being well aware that they may mistakenly reject an actually high-mate-value male or, conversely, mistakenly accept an actually low-mate-value male. The assessment has to be dynamic, with initial or early assessment always liable to reversal, just as in much rape fantasising. In this process, *no* means *provisionally no*, as might be some early form of *yes*, and if sex takes place consent is not unlikely to be ambiguous. It may even be withheld to test if the male has the persistence and spirit to overcome, as it were, the female, with this itself being further evaluation of mate value.

It is surprising that this obvious evolutionary-biological/psychological understanding previously has not been put forward to account for female rape fantasies, especially given the ambiguous results of research, that thus far has left no hypothesis hitherto proposed as pre-eminent (Bivona, Critelli & Clark, 2012). An explanation of avoiding blame for sexual behaviour is not supported. Instead, there is some evidence for openness to sexual experience, and moderately so for sexual desirability -- the theory considered the most plausible, that the female fantasises about a male finding her irresistible. This spread of findings is congruent with an evolutionary explanation of dynamic potential mate assessment. Inasmuch as this indicates important female psychology, which it appears to do, there is a basis here of female (mis-)construal as non-consensual what is an ambiguity as to consent emanating from the female herself. The female, in being internally conflicted, may be blind-sided to consent she is giving.

The most problematic manifestation of women's narcissism with respect to sexual interaction is female-perpetrated sexual coercion, which, along with deficits in emotion regulation, narcissism is found to underlie (Escarguel, Benbouriche, Tibbels & Przygodzki-Lionet, 2023; Lyons, Houghton, Brewer & O'Brien, 2022) -- in contrast to men, for whom it's the



other two *dark triad* personality traits, of machiavellianism and psychopathy. Research in recent decades into its extent has been ignored, but there is renewed interest in the topic. *Madjlessi & Loughnan (2024) find that of a sample of UK men “39.80% experienced attempted or completed forced vaginal/anal penetration” (overwhelmingly by women). New analysis of US data shows female perpetration of sexual coercion is at similar levels to that by males. DiMarco & Savitz (2023) conclude: “The 12-month data of the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reports of 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2015 indicate that men are 'forced to penetrate' at rates similar to the rates women are 'raped' (using CDC definitions). And the lifetime data indicates about 80% of these forced-to-penetrates are done by women”, and point out (2024) that “... worldwide, approximately 17% of heterosexual women have sexually coerced a man sometime during their lifetime.” Examining self-report of victimisation and perpetration, and for the first time of large datasets of representative samples (US national), Stemple, Flores & Meyer (2017) analysed four surveys conducted independently by the CDC and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) from 2008 to 2013: “Taken as a whole, the reports we examine document surprisingly significant prevalence of female-perpetrated sexual victimization, mostly against men and occasionally against women. The findings are sufficiently robust so as to compel a rethinking of long-held stereotypes about sexual victimization and gender” (p. 1). Even more surprising, of the male victims, “57.6% reported that the incident involved an attack, meaning the offender hit, knocked down, or otherwise attacked the victim. Of those who were attacked, 95.7% reported that they were injured in the incident “(p. 4). Note this is in marked contrast to rape of females, which usually is non-injurious. Indeed, it has long been well-known that rape of a female rarely entails injury. Slotboom, Hendricks, & Verbruggen (2011) find no significant difference in the rates of male and female adolescent sexual aggression in self-reports (10% of males and 8% of females). Similarly, Ybarra & Mitchell (2013) find that female 18 & 19-year-olds self-report *perpetration* of attempted or completed rape almost as much (48% of the total) as do males, with *half saying that the victim was completely responsible.**

The combination of levels of sexual coercion by females at similar levels to that by men and very high rate of *victim blaming* by females amounts to a complete refutation of received opinion in respect of false allegation of rape; if not, indeed, an inversion of it. The data suggest that the erasure of female objectivity and consideration of male perspective through female erotic self-focus facilitates women projecting their own sexually coercive behaviour on to the male partner, either simply in expression of extreme narcissism or instrumentally as cover for own perpetration, in making a false rape report to police.

CONCLUSION

With converging multiple independent lines of evidence it is clear that there is not inconsiderable measure and ample motivational & situational basis of a very high incidence of female false rape reporting. A large, indeed very large proportion of rape cases recorded by police would be expected to be false, and even a majority or an overwhelming proportion may not be unlikely. Albeit quantification is extremely problematic, it is untenable to maintain that the incidence is similar to most other crime types, nor that it is substantially more but <10%. Even ≈30% would be conservative, being more like the lower band of a range, that might be 30%-60%. A best-informed estimate expressed as a single percentage rather than a range would be 45% or 40%. Not the majority of rape reporting but well over a third, approaching half of the caseload.



IMPLICATION

It is or should be impossible to ignore that how police and the judiciary in England & Wales, as in the USA and elsewhere, have been mandated to treat rape cases is profoundly and dangerously unfair to defendants, actively supporting those who are not rape victims but instead malicious, reckless or hapless perpetrators of what is a particularly serious false allegation. One not just potentially but usually leading to the destruction of an innocent male's life, whether convicted or not. Simply *the process* of being interviewed, charged, arraigned and tried for rape is far more damaging than is being convicted of most other crimes types. Most concerning of all is the effective inversion of the burden of proof from the prosecution on to the defence, as in England & Wales where in law the onus is on the defendant to show he had taken steps to ascertain consent. The measures in law and guidance that try to engineer more rape convictions would need to be reversed if there is to be at least some degree of fairness to defendants in rape trials, thereby to reduce what must be suspected is an alarming rate of wrongful or unsafe conviction as well as unwarranted trials, charging and arrests on the basis of no or insufficient prima facie evidence.

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MALE ALIENATION AND REJECTION SYNDROME

Jerome Teelucksingh



ABSTRACT

One of the undiagnosed epidemics of our time is Male Alienation and Rejection Syndrome. Men and boys regularly experience this rejection and alienation as a result of societal pressures, stereotypes and failed relationships. Additionally, in the aftermath of divorces or separations, the loss of children in custody battles contributes to the alienation and rejection of men that exacerbates mental health issues.

Keywords: alienation, emotions, hurt, male, pandemic, rejection



Few persons would disagree that an increasing number of males feel marginalized and sidelined in society. They have been experiencing hurt and helplessness due to rejection and alienation. Male Alienation and Rejection Syndrome (MARS) is prevalent, and many of us often fail to see the devastating effects. Boys and men have often displayed the symptoms of this syndrome. These symptoms include depression, suicidal thoughts /attempts, addictions, anxiety, mood swings, low self-esteem and difficulty forming healthy relationships. Additionally, the rejection from girlfriends, wives, children, neighbours, family members and colleagues at work have contributed to the frustration experienced by many men.

Authors of books such as *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* and *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* illustrate societal pressures and repercussions on white masculinity in the USA (Savran, Robinson). However, the changes are not restricted to white masculinity or the USA, it is a reality for global masculinities.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and in the post-epidemic era, many men were psychologically and emotionally scarred. Some were infected and feared for their lives; others lost relatives and friends. Working and studying at home, amidst the pandemic, had its benefits, but it also resulted in less of human interaction. Additionally, men who became unemployed experienced emotional distress. The alternative lifestyle dubbed by some as the *new normal* and the scenario of being quarantined created alienation among men.

Unfortunately, there is an absence of yearly statistics reflecting the numbers of mental health problems facing men. And, the greater tragedy is that there are few non-governmental organizations or government agencies that provide support for the alienated man who endures hateful allegations and criticism. Therapists also need to be more familiar with subtle signs that boys and men are experiencing a decline in mental health. There is still the prevailing, outdated perception that men are privileged. Herb Goldberg in *The Hazards of being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege* deals with men who are victims of patriarchy and hurt themselves when they use self-control to restrict emotions (Goldberg).

Many times in the court of public opinion, we have wrongly judged men as the reason for a breakdown in a relationship or marriage. The reality is that often the woman is guilty of provoking the man. Coping mechanisms or strategies can be offered to help men navigate the emotional turmoil they might be experiencing. Men in these situations need to undergo counselling by a religious leader or psychologist or therapist. These men should be guided or socialized to channel these negative emotions. Failure to do so could result in mental health issues. Unfortunately, some husbands and fathers who experience MARS cannot afford the specialized services of medical health professionals. The majority of these men rely on emotional support from a network of sympathetic family, friends and co-workers.

Warren Farrell in *The Liberated Man* identified men who are “emotionally constipated” and “emotionally incompetent” (Farrell, 71). It seems obvious that a boy or male teenager who is mocked or ridiculed by friends and relatives, for expressing his emotions would later find it more difficult to have any emotional display as a man. It is also a tragedy that whenever a man expresses anger or hurt, his emotions are often identified as *toxic masculinity*. However, the display of emotions is healthy and must be released or it will affect his emotional and psychological mindset.

The Men’s Bureau of Trinidad and Tobago coupled with centres, supported by the government, all focus on helping men. These safe spaces are easily accessible throughout the



country for men to seek treatment. However, men are either unaware of these places, or some men believe they can handle their problems. Unfortunately, in the rest of Caribbean, a common coping mechanism involves going to the rumshop or bar and this only worsens the scenario. There are other negative coping strategies by men across the world, and unfortunately these coping mechanisms include addictions, self-harming behaviours (as suicides) and depression. These contribute to a shortened life span of both boys and men. Other positive coping strategies include joining a men's support groups or seeking professional help from psychologists, psychiatrists and/or counsellors.

There are particular societal or cultural expectations that often exacerbate men's struggles during relationship breakdowns. Indeed, societal or cultural expectations expect the man to be resilient and strong. It is often difficult to repair a relationship in a therapeutic setting because often the men complain of not having time or interest to attend sessions. There are warning signs or red flags that therapists should specifically look out for when working with men experiencing high levels of distress after a relationship breakdown. These red flags include one or more of the following- withdrawal from friends, risky behaviour, change in eating and sleep patterns, feeling powerless and worthless, negative attitudes and being disconnected with society. There is no textbook solution or ideal formula to help men. Unfortunately, the therapy available is often general and not specifically designed for men of different backgrounds experiencing varying levels of alienation and rejection.

Parental alienation affects boys whose parents are separated or divorced. Men undergoing divorces and the resulting separation from a child or children have experienced MARS. A few mental health professionals believe that parental alienation is not a diagnosable syndrome whilst others do not understand its seriousness. These mental health professionals would use the term when dealing with their patients who have undergone separation or divorces. There is need for a team of psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors to provide advice and counselling to the alienators or programming parents whose campaign of denigration involves brainwashing or distorting the boys' perception of the alienated partners.

Many boys are innocent victims of the fallout of separations and divorces. The ensuing parental relationship distress affects the mental health of the estranged young male. These young minds are indoctrinated and programmed by the alienator to despise, mistrust and mistreat the alienated parent. Such boys experience intense levels of sadness, rejection and loneliness. The continuous usage of emotionally manipulative tactics makes it difficult to repair the damage inflicted on a young child or older children. One solution is that Caribbean governments could begin training social workers to unravel the feelings of hurt and pain experienced by these children.

Men who have endured divorces or separations have complained that the courts are biased in their judgments. These affected men reveal that they have unconditional love for their child or children and are willing to support their child or children financially; however, the result of the custody battle is predictable as the lawyers and judges give custody to the girlfriend or wife. The legal fraternity (lawyers and judges) need to be trained to understand that a divorce or separation does not mean that the female is automatically awarded custody of the child or children. Furthermore, the legal fraternity in these civil proceedings involving child custody litigation should be trained to identify psychological manipulation and undue influence of a child by an unscrupulous alienating parent. It is painfully obvious that for any country to be



progressive, it needs to move away from outdated thinking that the female is the only option to care for the child or children and the region also has to rewrite its outdated child custody laws.

The Caribbean and other countries urgently need a reunification program so the traumatized child can spend time with the alienated parent to repair the damaged relationship. Persons need to be aware that males who experience MARS can be saved and return to a normal life.

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PRESUMPTION OF MALE DISPOSABILITY IS BASED ON FLAWED HYPOTHESES

Peter Wright



ABSTRACT

This article examines the concept of male disposability, the notion that humans are an inherently male-sacrificing and female-preserving species that broadly prioritizes women's needs and wants over men's in order to maximise reproductive success. It critiques several prominent theories circulating in academia and social media, exposing their flawed logic. The conclusion advocates for a discarding of male disposability theories in favour of approaches that more accurately and compassionately contextualise the lives of men and boys.

Keywords: fallacious reductionism, gynocentrism, male disposability, Maria Kouloglou, reproductive strategy



Both men and women evolved to be protective of women because one man can impregnate several women, while a woman will usually only bear one child at a time, so it makes sense for societies to keep women safe so they can reproduce. [...] Even if we were to assume that male disposability is, on some level, instinctual, it doesn't mean that society cannot minimize it. The real question is, do we *want* to eliminate male disposability? (Kouloglou, 2019)

In the above quote, sociologist Maria Kouloglou asks a rhetorical question of whether it's possible to minimise male disposability, or perhaps even eliminate it. However, like many theorists, she also entertains the idea that male disposability is “instinctual” and biologically hardwired for the purpose of prioritising women's lives over men's lives, thereby ensuring the reproductive success of the human species. The implication of the “disposability instinct” is that every womb is a precious incubator of human life, necessitating that males sacrifice themselves for women and, by extension, that wider society accumulates gynocentric institutions and conventions to further support that imperative.

In the following I outline similar theories made in support of the “instinctual” male disposability model. The proposed evolutionary mechanisms behind male disposability serve the belief that humans are, or somehow should be, a gynocentrically oriented species for whom women's needs and wants must always be prioritised relative to men's needs and wants if we wish to ensure reproductive success. If women are supported and considered more valuable than men, then according to this theory more babies will be born. In this sense the two concepts of male disposability and gynocentrism are inextricably linked, forming a conceptual dyad.

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY THEORIES

Evolutionary theories asserting the necessity of male disposability are not new. Lester F. Ward (1841-1913), a scholar of biological and sociological disciplines, proposed a theory that humans are a gynocentric species designed to prioritise women, and on that basis he underlined the necessity of male disposability in the service of women (Ward, 1888, 1903). Ward was a passionate advocate for first wave feminism and women's liberation and, in a spirit comparable to that of today's *difference feminists*, he spoke about biological differences between the sexes while theorising that women are superior due to higher evolutionary and reproductive value:

Now it is correctly interpreted as an expression of the general law that the primary purpose of the male sex is to enable the female, or type form, to reproduce, after performing which function the male form is useless and a mere cumberer of the ground. (Ward, 1888)

The female is not only the primary and original sex but continues throughout as the main trunk, while to it a male element is afterward added for the purposes above explained. The male is therefore, as it were, a mere afterthought of nature. (Ward, 1903)

Ward delivered his “gynæocentrism theory” speech in the year 1888 to an enthusiastic group of first wave feminists, which included Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Phoebe Couzins, Mary Willis, Jennie June and many others well known (Ward, 1903). The title of the speech *Our Better Halves* (Ward, 1888), consisted of an elaborate theory of women's biological superiority based on evolutionary and reproductive roles, concluding that women deserve to be valued more highly



than males who were described as mere disposable helpers in the evolutionary scheme. In a later work titled *Pure Sociology* (1903), Ward elaborated on his gynæocentric theory which received international acclaim and stirred widespread academic debate (Wright, 2022, 2023).

Ward's feminist audience rejoiced in his deductions because they seemed to prove the claim of women's pre-eminence at a time when the proposition was doubted. Historian Cynthia Davis states that Ward's lending of scientific weight to assertions of female superiority, "*led conservatives to identify Darwin as modern feminism's 'originator,' and Ward as its 'prophet'*" (Davis, 2010).

First wave feminist Charlotte Perkins-Gilman (1860–1935) claimed Ward's theory of gynocentrism was the most important contribution to "the woman question" ever made (Gilman, 1911a; Davis, 2010). Commenting on Ward's theory to sceptics, Gilman declared, "*You'll have to swallow it. The female is the race type; the male is her assistant. It is established beyond peradventure*" (Gilman, 1911b). While lauding the theory as a groundbreaking contribution to the status of women, Gilman further expanded on it by suggesting that women were more evolved than men, and that women were also continuing to advance at a faster rate than men (Davis, 2010).

Since the introduction of Ward's theory, a plethora of arguments for female superiority and concomitant male disposability have been proposed, many of them building on Ward's original thesis, while others have constructed new cases for the same conclusion. Such arguments are too numerous to detail in this article, which will confine itself to a few examples that have proliferated in recent decades, particularly those circulating on social media which have gained a considerable, albeit uncritical acceptance. As with Ward's theory, the following examples rest on an assertion of instinctual male disposability in service to women's biology.

Claim: It is women who fall pregnant, give birth and care for offspring, and very few males are necessary for the perpetuation of the species. Only one male is needed to fertilise a hundred women, therefore most males are redundant for perpetuation of the species and are best suited to serve as expendable resources.

Fact: Fathers' contributions to offspring are referred to as paternal investment, which involves emotionally invested care such as feeding, playing, grooming, and interacting with the child in ways that benefit that child's survival in their local environment, including the teaching of social, physical and emotion regulation skills (Corpuz, 2021; DelPriore, 2021; Geary, 2015). Furthermore, men's collective provision of survival infrastructure such as a safe environment, clean water, food, medical care, sanitation and habitation are also essential for infant survival.

When paternal investment and male infrastructure provision are diminished, children become more vulnerable to predation, starvation, diseases and death (DelPriore, 2021, Geary, 2015), which is why larger populations of men are essential for facilitating reproductive success. Author Peter Ryan summarises the situation as follows:

The truth is that whilst women have an important reproductive role in giving birth and caring for small infants, this function is merely one activity in a vast web of activities that have to occur for genes to be successfully passed on from one generation to the next. A community can have as many women as it pleases and as many children as it likes and the reality is that it will all amount to precisely nothing in evolutionary terms if basic survival requirements are not addressed. The reality is that the



reproductive role of women whilst important, is no more important than many other activities and hardly the overwhelming priority it is presented as. (Ryan, 2022)

Claim: Women's hypergamous behaviour (marrying upward) indicates that human relationships are prioritised around women's desire for protection, provision and status as provided by high value males. This exclusive female imperative is classed as an evolutionary survival mechanism which, in practice, renders lower value males overlooked and essentially superfluous in the reproductive scheme.

Fact: Observations of extreme hypergamy in the behavior of modern women can be equally explained by the rise of cultural narcissism in affluent societies (Twenge & Campbell, 2009), a motive that differs from baseline hypergamy, but which nevertheless involves comparable behaviors of self-enhancement and status-seeking (Wright, 2023). However, narcissism as basis for marrying-up is arguably *maladaptive* in the sense that it contributes to dysfunctional relationships (Green, 2019) and is implicated in plummeting birth rates, suggesting that the status-seeking does not qualify as an adaptive evolutionary imperative.

Narcissism as an alternative motivation for women's desire to mate upward can be discerned by asking women to rate their own beauty (Wright, 2023). Hypergamy, as an innate reflex, doesn't require a woman to overestimate her own attractiveness nor desirability as she seeks to secure the attention of high value males. Narcissism, however, does entail an overestimation by women of their own attractiveness and desirability as they seek to secure high value male partners. If a woman significantly overrates her own beauty or value, it may suggest that her mating-up proclivity is driven by narcissistic motivations. If she rates herself more accurately, then her desire to mate up is likely driven by a modest, adaptive hypergamy which is an evolved trait – not to mention a trait that exists in both females and males. As an adaptive strategy employed by both sexes, hypergamy does not necessitate an exclusive male disposability any more than it necessitates a one-sided female disposability.

Claim: Neotenous features in women (retention of child-like features into adulthood) prove that they evolved to be prioritised and pampered more than males, this due to the human and mammalian instinct to care for juveniles. Males have no neotenous features, which explains the lack of motivation to extend care and consideration toward them: it's the way nature designed it.

Fact: Women's somewhat neotenous presentation does exist on average, but can be explained in larger part today by the use of cosmetics, feigned childlike gestures, youthful clothing, and increasingly plastic surgeries which are employed to stimulate men's caring reflexes above and beyond the more modest responses men would show in response to naturally occurring neoteny (Wright, 2018). Such enhancements are learned techniques rather than biological endowments, and their use by women represents a supernormal "hacking" of the human nervous system (Wright & Elam, 2016). In comparison to other primates, human males also display a significant degree of neoteny (somewhat less than human females), though male neoteny is not artificially enhanced to the degree we typically see in women today who employ the kinds of artifice mentioned above (Wright & Elam, 2016). In summary, female neoteny, while evoking a degree caring reflexes in males, is an insufficient basis on which to draw the conclusion that male disposability is a necessary counterpart to it.



Claim: Women are the gatekeepers of sex who unilaterally decide which males get to have sex, and males generally comply with this exclusive female choice.

Fact: This argument restates the fallacy that humans are a tournament species in which male animals typically compete with each other for sexual access to females, and females choose the most dominant males while rejecting the rest. Humans are more accurately classified as a “mutual mate choice” species in which males are also choosy about women’s psychological and physical qualities when it comes to long-term pairbonding and parental investment (Stewart-Williams & Thomas, 2013, 2013b; Miller, 2013; Stewart-Williams, 2018).

Independent confirmation of the mutual mate choice model comes from a 2009 study which investigated stereotypes about sexual gatekeeping. It found that the majority of men do say no to sex in a variety of situations instigated by women, and that men and women were statistically similar in their reported prevalence of gatekeeping. In addition, the men that engage in sexual gatekeeping were found to do so just as often as women (Brian, 2009).

Claim: Robert Briffault (1876–1948), a social anthropologist, formulated a law that governs the behaviour of all animals and humans today; “*The female, not the male, determines all the conditions of the animal family. Where the female can derive no benefit from association with the male, no such association takes place*” (Briffault, 1927).

Fact: Popular among laypersons, ‘Briffault’s law’ is an outdated model of evolutionary biology and psychology, especially as applied to humans. To this we can add that Robert Briffault repeatedly insisted that his “law” applied only to animals and not in any way to humans, a fact that has been curiously omitted by those who continue to recite it as proof of female-determined relationships and male disposability in the human context (Wright, 2023b).

Claim: More females than males reproduced during human history, proving that women determined which males had sex, and they selected only the highest value males for this task.

Fact: Some studies have found that fewer males than females reproduced overall, with evidence pointing to a complex array of causes. Prominent among them is the practice of polygyny (one man selecting multiple women to father children with) which reduces the number of males contributing to the gene pool. This is sometimes referred to as the Genghis Khan effect (Sample, 2014) whereby high-status males sequester multiple wives, leaving fewer women available for the remaining men to reproduce with. These practices indicate that female choice may be a negligible factor in various models of polygyny.

The skew in human reproduction is considerably lower than that found in most other mammals, with findings indicating fairly small reproductive differences between men and women comparatively (Ross, et al., 2023). Moreover, reproductive inequality is not a uniform outcome cross-culturally; e.g., in more monogamous societies the reproductive skew is lower or absent, because reproductive opportunities are more evenly distributed between males and females (Ross, et al., 2023). Such cross-cultural differences indicate that reproductive skews, along with assumed male disposability, are linked to social practices and are not hardwired to form a pre-determined outcome.

Claim: Men go to die in wars for the primary purpose of prioritising and protecting women, thus indicating that women are more valuable to the human species than all other values.



Fact: Historically, men fighting and dying in wars has been for the sake of defending broader affiliations such as religious faith, king, country, democracy, lands or on behalf of entire family networks, and not simply for the sake of women's protection. The medieval invention of romantic chivalry popularised the idea of a man going into battle on behalf of a woman; for example, the first troubadour, William IX of Aquitaine (1071-1126), had a picture of his naked mistress painted on his shield, claiming that he was glad to bear her image in battle as she had borne him in bed. This demonstration of gynocentric chivalry represented a new trend of men going to war with women's exclusive protection in mind, or simply to impress a woman, though it is a misrepresentation to extend this sentiment further back into history where widespread evidence of it is lacking (Wright, 2018).

Claim: Throughout history it has been primarily males who have carried out essential infrastructure jobs, and also males who suffered 90% of workplace injuries or deaths in those jobs. This indicates that men have evolved to willingly dispose of themselves due to a biological urge to provide services to women and children at the expense of their own lives. Naturally it is lamentable to lose a male loved one, however the deaths appear to be in accord with natural evolutionary processes.

Fact: There is no evidence that male workplace deaths represent an instinct to die; they are accidents rather than pre-programmed deaths. Stated differently, human males are not comparable to male spiders, Atlantic salmon, octopuses, and certain insects which are genetically programmed to die after fertilising a female.

When infrastructure is carefully designed and maintained it is relatively safe, with no male injury or death on the job. In practice however, safety short-cuts are sometimes involved in the workplace which come with a secondary byproduct of injury and occasionally death. Human male deaths, if and when they do occur in the workplace, are typically avoidable accidents. Furthermore, accidental male deaths that occur while tending infrastructure are deleterious to human species as a whole because it takes out one male (or many males) who would otherwise be maintaining and improving survival infrastructure to a more optimal level – thus the loss results in potential infrastructure deterioration for women, children or other men who also rely on these services.

DISCUSSION

There is no evidence that humans are a gynocentric species whose survival depends on acts of male disposability. Men have always engaged in sacrificial gestures for the benefit of the wider family unit, and such acts were typically balanced by commensurate gestures from women and other family members. In the modern era, however, a series of fallacious biological arguments have been constructed whose purpose is to normalise men's disposability as a matter of "instinct" (Kouloglou, 2019), one allegedly built into the human genome to ensure women's wellbeing and reproductive success. Such arguments overlook human history in which men and women lived in a family and community context, and whose lives and labours were a cooperative contribution toward it; not gynocentrism but *team family*.

As with all family members, women were occasionally prioritised to receive protections or assistance in recognition that they were valued members of an extended family. This, however, is not motivated by gynocentrism: it's more accurately classified as *storge* (the Greek word for "family love"). To demonstrate the principle that all family members were protected within the traditional family nexus, I recently conducted an informal poll (below) to gauge people's attitudes



regarding protections extended to various family members. I prefaced the poll with the comment that there is debate about whether traditional societies were broadly family-centric, or were more gynocentric (woman centered) in overall character.

There were 825 respondents to the poll which asked which family member, in a traditional society, might men have assisted out of a burning house first? Note that one of the four possible answers included a pregnant woman, because pregnancy is frequently cited as the basis on which women both deserved, and received priority consideration over other family members in traditional settings.

Poll question: In a traditional society, which family member do you think men would have assisted out of a burning house first?

Frail elder grandparents	13.3%
Young children	73.3%
Fit nonpregnant woman	2.8%
Ablebodied pregnant woman	10.5%

825 votes · Final results

2:44 PM · May 21, 2024 · 12K Views

As suggested by the responses, most people believe that protection and provision are based on the shifting needs of various family members; the person who presents with the greatest need is catered to and cared for first. Respondents did not affirm a *women first* cliché, but instead children and frail grandparents were given priority over both pregnant and non-pregnant women. In the traditional family context, the principle of *all-for-one and one-for-all* applies, and with this principle it is reasonable to assume men, boys, fathers, uncles or grandfathers would also be protected too if they were injured, old, sick, hungry or in need of some kind.

CONCLUSION

Scientific rationalisations of male disposability are at best misguided, and at worst intentionally fabricated to normalise neglect of male issues. Many of these theories remind of Rudyard Kipling's "Just So Stories" in their efforts to explain, or retrofit how male disposability came to be an acceptable reality.

When carefully analysed, the catalogue of theories tends to collapse under the weight of their own illogic. Moreover, they tend to work as a mental constraint that stymies our willingness to address male disposability head on, whereas pushing these spurious theories to one side allows the mind to act in a less dissonant manner, and therefore more efficiently in efforts to support men and boys. In the spirit of an effective advocacy for men and boys, I recommend we apply Occam's razor to these unnecessary theoretical encumbrances.



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Peter Wright, creator of the blog *Gynocentrism and Its Cultural Origins*, is a gender-relations historian and an advocate for men's health. He has published numerous essays, edited a three-book series of writings by Ernest Belfort Bax, and published 14 books including *Red Pill Psychology: Psychology for Men in a Gynocentric World* and *Chivalry: A Gynocentric Tradition*. He currently works in the disability sector and lives in Queensland, Australia.

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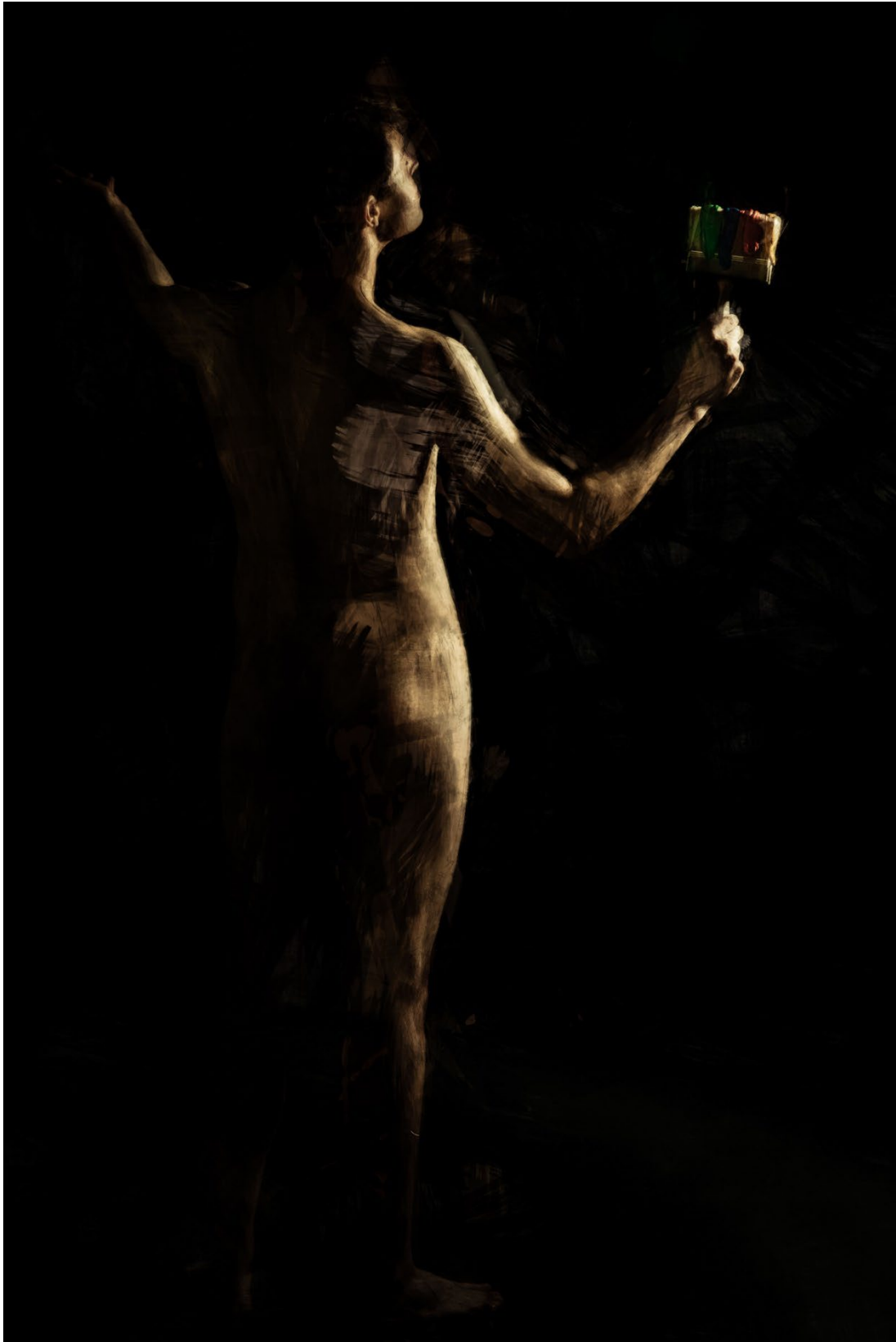
41,000 years ago, our early ancestors created art in caves along the shores of the Cantabrian Sea. They engaged in an act as timeless as childhood itself: marking their existence with the simplest tool at hand - a print of their own hand.

This discovery in Spanish caves inspired me to create a series of photographs that explore the human body as a painting tool. The resulting works were body imprints - a human negative - crafted with various materials.

During my initial experiments, I realized that the process of creating art with the body was more captivating than the resulting paintings themselves.

The culmination of this exploration is *Antibodies*, a series of digital paintings that depict the human body as both subject and canvas, while simultaneously serving as the tool for creating its own negative.











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

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